

**University-Level Program Assessment Results
(Abbreviated Report)**

April 2020

Office of Student Learning, Outcomes Assessment, and Accreditation (SLOAA)
A division of the Office for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
University of Rhode Island

Note: This is an abbreviated report; the full report, which provides aggregate results for all academic degree programs by College, is designed for internal use only and made available to University/College leadership. Please email for more information (assess@uri.edu).

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OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT REPORTING OVERVIEW

Student learning outcomes assessment is an essential part of ensuring a high-quality education through ongoing improvement at the program-level. Since 2012, the University of Rhode Island has followed a [cohort-based system](#) for biennial assessment reporting by all accredited and non-accredited undergraduate and graduate academic degree programs. Assessment reports provide critical information about:

- what is important to programs, evidenced in the learning outcomes they publish to describe what “graduates know and can do”, and by the outcomes examined each cycle;
- the critical, key, or signature assignments faculty use across courses to learn the most about how well their students are able to demonstrate their learning; and,
- the numerous ways programs think about improvements to student learning, such as changes to pedagogy (e.g., ways of teaching), changes to curriculum (e.g., pre-requisites, new courses/new topics), structural changes (e.g., more field work, better internship site placements), and improvements to the assessment process to make results more valuable (e.g., revised rubrics, broader faculty engagement).

Programs are assigned to one of two reporting cohorts ([Appendix A](#)) and are expected to submit an assessment report every other year at graduation (per the faculty contract) following Faculty Senate approved campus policies on assessment (April 2010), and in compliance with New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) expectations for learning outcomes assessment and program improvement practices. Programs within colleges are distributed between the two cohorts and reporting results and feedback for programs in each cohort are shared annually. The [annual](#) reporting updates do not represent all programs in a college and cannot be compared, however, the summary of reporting every two years presents the status of learning outcomes assessment across URI, at the [institution-level](#).

Biennial results for 2018 and 2019 are included here in an institution and college-level summary:

- **Part I:** [institution and college-level results for Cohort I \(2018\) and Cohort II \(2019\)](#) undergraduate and graduate programs (represents all URI programs); historic reporting trend data for three biennial reporting cycles.
- **Part II:** detailed information about reporting expectations, report type, peer review, and program recognition
- **Part III:** [institution and college-level results for Cohort II only](#) for undergraduate and graduate programs (represents the most recent reporting cohort, May 2019)

This reporting cycle afforded a unique opportunity to examine the direct evidence from program reporting results in light of the indirect evidence from the triennial survey of Chairs ([Appendix B](#), Fall 2018, 47% response rate). These sources provide for optimal insight into the institutions’ position and capacity to conduct meaningful and manageable assessment at the

program-level. The reflections, conclusions and recommendations (page 5) reflect the integration of both sources.

HIGHLIGHTS AND KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PAST THREE REPORTING CYCLES (2014/2015, 2016/2017, 2018/2019)

Summary of Direct Evidence

Undergraduate Programs: Nonaccredited program compliance with reporting on new assessment activity is **has increased slightly** (from 84% to 90%), and the quality of those reports has **consistently improved** (from 85% to 100%). However, the use of results from assessment (completion of Section II) is **trending down** (from 91% to 75%), which indicates that programs are less likely to follow-up, implement recommendations and re-assess for impact on learning. Despite the decline in compliance for programs submitting Section II, however, the quality of reports of those submitted Section II is **trending up** (from 62% to 86%). This could suggest programs have a better understanding of reporting expectations, are finding greater value in results, and/or are finding a value added in assessment and using results to improve student learning experiences.

Accredited program reporting compliance has **remained stable** with almost universal compliance during the past two full reporting cycles (2016 & 2017 and 2018 & 2019). This is largely due to the change in reporting demands for accredited programs in 2016. Performance scores are also high (above 90%).

Graduate Programs: Nonaccredited program compliance with reporting on new assessment activity is **held steady** over the three cycles (from 75% to 74%), and the quality of these reports has **improved** (from 87% to 70% and back to 96%). The compliance scores for programs who follow-up and use results from assessment (Section II) has **trended down** (from 100% to 76% to 21%), and performance scores have **fluctuated** as well (from 100% to 67% to 42%). Note that the number of programs submitting follow-up reports is quite small, so minor shifts in compliance and performance impact reported percentages.

Accredited program reporting has **improved** during the last two cycles (from 56% to 100%) largely due to a change in reporting demands in 2016. Report quality has also remained high.

Summary of Indirect Evidence

Indirect evidence gathered through the triennial campus climate survey of Chairs, Department Heads, and faculty in functionally equivalent roles (Fall 2018 survey results) indicates that both report compliance and report quality continue to be effected by competing demands on faculty time (teaching, research, and service obligations, including assessment reporting), coupled with the lack of appropriate “credit/recognition” for participating in program-level assessment work.

Anecdotal information indicates an open acceptance of assessment as the responsibility of a teaching professional at the *course-level*, however, program-level assessment is considered a very different experience with little to no incentive to participate. Additionally, survey respondents additionally indicate the lack of leadership valuing the effort as a barrier to their implementation of assessment results.

Reflections

- The activity of *doing* assessment – which at URI means examining student work, reporting findings, and making recommendations for change as appropriate – continues to appear less burdensome than that of actually taking action, implementing the recommendations that were made, and re-assessing the outcome for its impact on student learning. In fact, use of results is a national assessment issue and is considered to be a critical path by which faculty will find the greatest value in program-level assessment of student learning.
- Graduate programs started off strong, with the very first “report” being an “Assessment Plan”. The majority of graduate programs then appear to have had difficulty engaging in consistent program assessment and reporting.

Conclusions

- Issues with “use of assessment results” are present across undergraduate and graduate programs. Policy requires programs to juggle new assessment activity and follow-up assessment activities, which can place a significant burden on program faculty, especially if faculty do not feel the work is valued or sufficiently credited (see climate survey).
- In addition to the assessment climate, which influences the campus’ capacity for doing and valuing program-level assessment, there are other mitigating factors that can affect the success of an assessment program including, but not limited to:
 - changes and turnover in faculty roles (e.g., Graduate Program Directors, Chairs) due to contracts, sabbaticals, etc.;
 - the size of graduate programs;
 - the nature of interdisciplinary programs which requires faculty/courses from various programs to support a separate program’s assessment process.

Recommendations

Within SLOAA, the following actions will continue:

1. **Promote** models for excellent use of assessment results
2. **Support** colleges to create outlets for programs to learn from each other
3. **Identify and recognize** program faculty who have demonstrated successful program assessment processes.
4. **Develop** topical workshops and information sessions to simplify the process and enhance the value, focusing on graduate program assessment and use of results within graduate and undergraduate programs.

External to SLOAA, the following actions can be considered:

1. **Identify** ways to “count” leadership in assessment in ways that reward faculty effort, are considered in workload, and effect promotional processes.
2. **Encourage** colleges to visibly partner with SLOAA to promote and support assessment activity.
3. **Integrate** program-level assessment more fully into program review, budgeting and strategic planning.

PART I: REPORTING EXPECTATIONS, REVIEW PROCESS, AND RECOGNITION

INSTITUTION ASSESSMENT REPORTING EXPECTATIONS

- Expectations for assessment reporting compliance were set by [campus-wide policies](#) approved by the Faculty Senate in April 2010: All programs will report biennially (100%).
- Expectations for report quality (see Section III below) is defined by performance criteria within the [scoring rubric](#) used by peer reviewers. All reports are expected to achieve (or exceed) a score of “satisfactory”.

REPORT TYPE

There are two types of academic programs and two types of report forms:

1. Non-accredited program assessment report templates were adapted from the NECHE E1A template:
 - b. **Section I** addresses a new learning question.
 - c. **Section II** provides an update on the use of results from prior assessment for program improvement.
2. Accredited program assessment report templates are comprised of the NECHE E1B and S-Series templates to capture key performance indicators, trend results, job placement rates, in addition to highlights about unique student learning initiatives.

REPORT REVIEW: METHODOLOGY AND FEEDBACK LOOP

Reports are submitted to the Office of Student Learning, Outcomes Assessment, and Accreditation (SLOAA) and scored by teams of trained faculty peer reviewers using a standardized rubric to provide feedback. There are unique rubrics for the non-accredited and accredited program reports. The results yield both [compliance](#) and [quality performance](#) measures which are summarized by SLOAA to gauge the efficacy of assessment efforts at URI.

The results are shared with deans’ offices, and program faculty receive their report feedback and detailed rubric scores:

1. **Compliance Scores** indicate whether a program reported with their [cohort](#) biennially as expected. When warranted, terms and conditions are negotiated with SLOAA to excuse a program from reporting. Both excused programs *and* programs who do not submit a report (missing report = noncompliant) are expected to submit an Interim Report in an off-year of reporting to ensure the program is on track to complete a report during the regular cohort reporting cycle. SLOAA provides feedback on interim reports.
 - **Excusals** explain the difference between the actual number of programs who submit a report (n) and the [number of programs expected to report in a cohort](#) (N). “Missing” reports are included in the cohort N.
2. **Quality Performance Scores** indicate the *quality* of the assessment process used by a program to examine student achievement of a student learning outcome(s). Rubric scores indicate whether a program is engaged in a “best practice” assessment process

that should yield meaningful results about learning. Scores do not evaluate faculty teaching, nor the student learning results.

Quality performance score criteria for **Non-Accredited Programs:**

Score	Description
Advanced	The section/report exceeds expectations.
Satisfactory	The section/report meets expectations.
Developing	The section/report does not meet expectations.
Missing	The section/report of the report was expected and not submitted.
N/A	The section/report was excused from reporting that round; section of report was not expected

Scores of "Satisfactory" or "Advanced" are considered to meet/exceed URI reporting expectations.

Quality performance score criteria for **Accredited Programs:**

Score	Description
Satisfactory	The report sections (3) are complete.
Unsatisfactory	The report is missing information.
Missing	The report was not submitted.

Score of "Satisfactory" is considered meeting URI reporting expectations.

Program Report Recognition

Student learning outcomes assessment requires faculty to move outside their expected course-level assessment efforts, to engage with other faculty who teach in their program, to define and then ensure the curriculum offers students the opportunity to master the critical outcomes for the program: the knowledge, skills and abilities expected for all graduates of the program. Broad faculty engagement is critical for bringing value to the assessment process and enhancing URI's [climate of assessment](#) and improvement. Faculty are committed to assessment within their own classroom, however, assessment across a program takes significant time and effort which is recognized as a time-consuming professional accomplishment by the Learning Outcomes Oversight Committee (LOOC), SLOAA, and the Graduate School. Faculty from programs who present outstanding efforts in learning outcomes assessment each year are publicly acknowledged at a Faculty Senate each spring.

APPENDIX A: COHORT LIST

**Cohort list is updated as needed; this version represents
program cohort assignments as of December 31, 2019.**

URI Assessment Reporting Designation of Programs in Cohorts

Note: *Accredited Program

Undergraduate/Graduate Programs	Cohort I # of Reports Due May 2020		Cohort II # of Reports Due May 2021	
	UG	G	UG	G
General Education Program (first report expected 2021)			1	
College of Arts and Sciences				
Anthropology BA			1	
Art History BA	1			
Art BA, BFA			1	
Chemistry BA/BS* & Chemistry and Forensic Chemistry BS*; MS, PhD	1*			1
Chinese BA			1	
Communication Studies BA; MA		1	1	
Computer Science BA, BS; MS, PhD; Statistics MS; Cyber Security Professional Science MS	1			3
Criminology and Criminal Justice, BS			1	
Economics BA, BS	1			
English BA; MA (LIT), PhD		1	1	
Film Media BA	1			
French BA			1	
Gender and Women's Studies BA			1	
German BA			1	
History BA; MA	1			1
New - International Studies and Diplomacy BA (first report due 2020)	1			
Italian BA			1	
Journalism BA	1			
Landscape Architecture BLA*	1*			
Library and Information Science MLIS*				1*
Mathematics BA, BS; MS, PhD	1			1
Music BA/BM* (Comp, Ed, Perf); MM* (Ed, Perf)	1*			1*
Philosophy BA			1	
Physics BA, BS & Physics and Physical Oceanography BS; MS, PhD	1			1
Medical Physics MS* (first report due 2021)				1*
Political Science BA; International Relations MS (Cohort II); MPA (Cohort I)	1	1		1
Public Relations BA	1			
Sociology BA, BS			1	
Spanish BA			1	

Undergraduate/Graduate Programs	Cohort I # of Reports Due May 2020		Cohort II # of Reports Due May 2021	
	UG	G	UG	G
New - Sports Media and Communication BA (first report due 2021)			1	
Theatre BA			1	
New - Music Therapy, BOM* (first report due 2023, Cohort II)				
New - Global Language and Area Studies BS (first report due 2021)			1	
Writing and Rhetoric BA			1	
College of Business Administration				
Accounting BS*, MS*	1*			1*
General Business Administration BS*; MBA (SIMBA)*; PhD*				2*
Entrepreneurial Management BS*				
Finance BS*; MS*		1*		
Global Business BS*				
Innovation and Entrepreneurship BS*				
Management BS*				
Marketing BS*				
Supply Chain Management BS*				
Textiles, Fashion Merchandising, and Design BS; MS		1	1	
Textile Marketing BS	1			
New - Healthcare Management, MS (projected first report due 2022, Cohort I)		1		
New - Doctorate of Business Administration* (first report due 2023, Cohort II)				
New - Supply Chain Management, MS (first report due 2022, Cohort I)		1		
Schmidt Labor Research Center				
Labor Relations and Human Resources MS				1
College of Engineering				
Chemical Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
Civil Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
Biomedical Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
Computer Engineering BS*; MS, PhD			1*	
Electrical Engineering BS*; MS, PhD			1*	
Industrial and Systems Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
Mechanical Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
Ocean Engineering BS*; MS, PhD		1	1*	
College of the Environment and Life Sciences				

Undergraduate/Graduate Programs	Cohort I # of Reports Due May 2020		Cohort II # of Reports Due May 2021	
	UG	G	UG	G
Animal Science and Technology BS (Animal and Veterinary BS) (AVS)	1			
Aquaculture and Fisheries Technology BS	1			
Biological and Environmental Sciences (BES) MS, PhD				1
Biological Sciences BS & Biology BA	1			
Marine Biology BS	1			
Plant Sciences BS	1			
Environmental and Natural Resource Economics (ENRE) BS; MS, PhD	1			1
Environmental Science and Management BS; Master of Environmental Science and Management MESM/MS		1	1	
Geology and Geological Oceanography BS (Geosciences)	1			
Marine Affairs BA, BS; MMA, MAMA, PhD	1			1
Medical Laboratory Science BS*	1*			
Cellular and Molecular Biology BS	1			
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SAFS) BS			1	
College of the Environment and Life Sciences				
Wildlife and Conservation Biology BS	1			
New - Biotechnology BS (first report due 2021)			1	
New - Cytopathology MS (first report due 2022, Cohort I)				
The Feinstein College of Education and Professional Services				
Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies (program ended; new program being developed)				
Education BA* (Early Ed, Elementary Ed, Secondary Ed); MA*(Reading Specialist, Special Ed); MA (Adult Ed); PhD (Joint with RIC)	3*			2, 2*
Human Development and Family Studies CSP MS		1		
New - Professional Leadership Studies BA (first report due 2021)			1	
New - Adult Education Online-Education, MA (first report due 2021)				1
New - Nonprofit Administration BA (first report due 2021)			1	
College of Health Sciences				
Communicative Disorders BS; Speech-Language Pathology MS*	1			1*
Health Studies BS	1			
Human Development and Family Studies BS; Developmental Science MS; CFT MS*		1, 1*	1	
Kinesiology & Health and Physical Education (HPE) (moving to FCEPS Fall 2020) BS*; MS		1	1*	
Nutrition and Dietetics BS*; Nutrition MS; MSDI (Dietetics)*; Online MS*1	1*			1, 2*

Undergraduate/Graduate Programs	Cohort I # of Reports Due May 2020		Cohort II # of Reports Due May 2021	
	UG	G	UG	G
Psychology BA, BS, Clinical PhD*; Behavioral Sci PhD (Cohort II)		1*	1	1
Doctor of Physical Therapy DPT*				1*
College of Nursing				
Nursing BS* (Nursing RN BS online); MS*; DNP*; PhD	1*			1, 2*
College of Pharmacy				
Pharmacy Pharm.D.*	1*			
Pharmaceutical Sciences BS; MS, PhD		1	1	
Graduate School of Oceanography				
Oceanography MS; MO; PhD				3
The Graduate School				
Interdisciplinary Neuroscience MS, PhD (first report due 2021)				1

APPENDIX B: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE 2018 ASSESSMENT CLIMATE SURVEY

**Survey completed November 2018
Findings reported November 2019**

University of Rhode Island 2018 Assessment Climate Survey

Executive Summary

November 2019

Overview and Rationale

The purpose of the survey is to look at progress in the University's implementation of program-level student learning outcomes assessment and give guidance for future policies. Chairs' perceptions were chosen as a particularly useful indicator.

Survey content is organized into six major domains: (1) chairs' personal attitudes toward assessment; (2) institution-wide faculty norms regarding the value of assessment; (3) leadership commitment, including peer leader commitment; (4) infrastructure support for assessment; (5) department-level implementation; and (6) university-wide implementation. A final item addresses chairs' perception of URI's progress towards developing a useful, sustainable assessment system.

The survey was administered as an online survey to all URI department chairs (and the directors of department-equivalent academic programs) in Fall 2009, Fall 2012, Fall 2015, and Fall 2018. Currently it consists of 56 5-point rating items and one open-ended question. The response rate in 2018 was 47%, somewhat below the average for past administrations (58%).

Key Findings

There is evidence of forward progress in chairs' views: the value of assessment for their own departments remains high; infrastructure support for assessment is going steadily up; university-wide faculty norms have risen significantly; and university-wide implementation has also risen significantly. Significant item-level changes are consistent with those trends.

There is reason to continue to focus on enhancing forward movement: Leadership Commitment remains the lowest domain score and has not changed significantly from past administrations. A new Peer Leadership Commitment sub-domain received somewhat more positive ratings (mean = 3.2) than Administrative Commitment (mean = 2.7) in 2018.

Chairs' modal view of URI's current stage in the establishment of program-level assessment is "External Demand", with administrative leaders requiring faculty compliance (endorsed by 51%

in 2018). The stage denoted “Tentative Commitment” received the second highest endorsement (47%).

While infrastructure support for assessment (enabling viable assessment reporting) and perceived peer norms (indicating general faculty supportiveness) are continuing to move steadily forward, leadership commitment to motivate assessment as an internally useful process remains a stumbling block for chairs’ views of overall progress.

Recommendations

Recommendations based on these findings include the need to provide:

- (1) more resources to chairs and their colleagues for assessment-related duties;
- (2) greater recognition and reward for faculty peer leaders who demonstrate and promote the value of program-level assessment; and,
- (3) visible and explicit incorporation of program-level assessment goals, results, and impacts into program review, strategic planning, and external promotion of our quality.