

**Outcomes Assessment Summary Report: Academic Programs
2017-18 Academic Year
Prepared by Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Research
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Introduction

This document summarizes the results of the outcomes assessment process for academic programs at New Mexico Highlands University (NMHU) for the 2017-18 academic year. The document has four sections: 1) overview of the outcomes assessment process at NMHU; 2) level of participation in the outcomes assessment process; 3) summary of outcomes assessment results; and 4) analysis of assessment results.

Overview of Outcomes Assessment Process at NMHU

Assessment of student learning outcomes at NMHU involves several distinct but inter-related tasks, each with different timelines and different entities responsible for oversight. Those tasks include assessment of our common core (General Education Assessment), assessment of academic programs (Annual Outcomes Assessment, Program Review, and Program Specific Accreditation), assessment of educational efforts of the university as a whole (University-Wide Assessment), and Co-Curricular Program Assessment. This summary document will focus on two of these tasks: Annual Outcomes Assessment, and University-Wide Assessment.

University-Wide Assessment: The goal of university-wide assessment is to determine the extent to which the university is imparting the knowledge, traits, and skills we value into all of our baccalaureate and graduate degree recipients. After surveying faculty and staff, the following four traits were adopted as our expectations for our graduates:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Annual Outcomes Assessment: Every major academic program must conduct an annual academic program outcomes assessment. The immediate goal of this assessment is to gather specific data regarding how effectively the program is meeting its program-specific student learning objectives. This information can then be used to develop improvements to program curriculum.

Academic program outcomes assessment begins with the development of an assessment plan. A well-developed plan is the key to collecting useful and valid data. Each assessment plan defines several learning outcomes and identifies the means through which those learning outcomes will be assessed.

Collection of Assessment Data: At the end of each academic year, each academic program collects student outcome data to determine the extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes defined by that program. These data are coded in a standardized Excel spreadsheet, which lists the learning outcomes for the program. Students in the program who have been included in the assessment

process are coded as a 1 (indicating that student met the criterion for that assessment) or a 0 (indicating that the student did not meet the criterion). If a student was not assessed on a particular outcome, the student was coded N/A for that outcome. This system allow us to determine the percentage of students within a program who met the learning outcomes. Furthermore, each learning outcome is linked to one or more of the four university-wide traits, allowing us to determine the extent to which students have been assessed for achievement of these traits.

These assessment data are then used to complete an annual assessment report. This report uses the assessment plan as a starting point, then incorporates the data to indicate the extent to which each learning outcome has been achieved.

Participation in Outcomes Assessment Process

All academic programs are expected to submit an annual outcomes assessment report. However, compliance with this expectation has been somewhat inconsistent. Although no departments have indicated a refusal or unwillingness to complete the reports, in a number of cases the reports have simply not been produced. The table below shows the number of reports that have been submitted by school and by level (undergraduate vs. graduate) for academic year 2017-18.

School	Undergraduate	Graduate
Arts and Sciences	14/19	10/13
Business / Media Arts	7/7	9/9
Education	0/4	2/4
Social Work	1/1	1/1

The second number in each cell indicates the number of academic departments expected to submit a report; the first number indicates the number of departments that actually submitted the report. For example, in the School of Arts and Sciences 14 out of 19 undergraduate programs submitted an outcomes assessment report.

Summary of Outcomes Assessment Results

The outcomes assessment data submitted by each program were analyzed and aggregated to determine the extent to which our students are achieving the learning outcomes specified by our academic programs.

Across all programs, approximately 6800 student assessments were performed. Of course, many students were included in multiple assessments.

Across all programs, an average of about 85% of students met the learning outcomes on which they were assessed. At the individual program level, the percent of students meeting their learning outcomes ranged from 64% to 100% (in other words, this was the percent of students within a given program who met the learning outcomes for that program).

The percent of N/A responses was also evaluated (an N/A would indicate that a student was not assessed on a particular outcome). At the individual program level, the percent of N/A responses ranged from 0% (indicated that all students were assessed on all outcomes) to over 70% (indicating that most students were assessed on only a subset of outcomes).

Finally, we examined the extent to which the four university traits were assessed. All academic programs had learning outcomes that were linked to all four of the university traits. However, there was some unevenness in the extent to which the traits were assessed; certain traits (e.g. master of content knowledge) appeared to have broader coverage than other traits (e.g. effective use of technology).

Analysis of Assessment Results

The number of total assessments conducted in academic year 2017-18 suggests that the assessment process is fairly thorough in its coverage. However, certain gaps still remain. The learning outcomes for many programs are focused primarily on upper-division students, so lower-division students are often not included in the assessment process. We are working to expand coverage of the assessment process to include learning outcomes that apply to lower division students. Also, the percentage of N/A responses was rather high for some programs, indicating that many students were not being assessed on all outcomes.

Overall it appears that most students assessed have met the learning outcomes for their programs. However, some programs did have a relatively low percent of outcomes met, suggesting that these programs may need to evaluate: 1) their curriculum, to determine if the level of challenge of their coursework is appropriate for our students, and/or 2) their learning outcomes, to determine that the outcomes are an appropriate measure of student success within their programs. At the opposite end of the spectrum, for some programs 100% of students achieved all learning outcomes. This may suggest that program rigor could be increased, and/or that more challenging learning outcomes need to be developed.

Finally, additional steps need to be taken to ensure that all academic programs are able to participate fully in the outcomes assessment process.