

Meta-assessment Analysis Report for the College of
Business Administration

Submitted to the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment

May 30, 2014.

Section 1: Purpose and Introduction

Meta-assessment is an important tool for helping ensure that all programs at Sam Houston State University are engaging in a meaningful and effective continuous improvement assessment process. Continuous improvement assessment is an important best-practice in higher education as it helps programs determine whether key objectives are being met, identify areas for improvement, and develop actions for implementing changes that will have a positive effect on the student learning environment. Meaningful and effective assessment is also the corner stone of many discipline-specific accreditations, as well as University accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

In Fall 2013, the Director of Assessment formed an ad-hoc committee of faculty and College administrators from the Colleges of Business Administration, Criminal Justice, Education, Fine Arts and Mass Communication, Health Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and Sciences. Using a locally developed rubric (Appendix A) the ad-hoc Meta-assessment Committee evaluated 2012-2013 assessment plans for the 135 academic degree programs documented within the Online Assessment Tracking Database. Each unit assessment plan was independently evaluated by two anonymous reviewers; one from within and one from outside the College from which the assessment plan originated.

The results from the meta-assessment review have been used in multiple ways. First, completed rubrics were distributed to the departments and programs to serve as formative feedback for use in continually improving unit-level assessment plans. Second, college-level data were analyzed by the College to identify the general strengths and weaknesses within their units' annual assessment processes. This information has been used by the College to determine what training, resources, and strategies are necessary to address any general weaknesses identified within its units' annual programmatic assessment efforts. A summary of the College's findings are provided within this report.

Section 2: Plan for Distributing Completed Rubrics to Units

Midway through the 2014 Spring semester, the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment distributed the completed rubrics to Dr. Doug Berg, the College of Business Administration's (COBA) Assistant Dean in charge of Assessment. The Dean of the College, Dr. Mitchell J. Muehsam was copied on the correspondence. Dr. Berg met with Dr. Muehsam on several occasions in March of 2014 to review the results. Furthermore, a plan was developed as to how COBA would distribute the completed rubrics with the goal of improving the Colleges' assessment efforts.

COBA, as part of its assessment process, has in place Goal Assessment Teams (GATs) and Major Assessment Teams (MATs). The GATs are charged with planning and implementing assessment efforts that address student learning objectives targeting broad based objectives that are not major specific (e.g., critical thinking, communication skills, etc.), while the MATs are charges with planning and implementing assessment efforts that address major specific student learning outcomes. As the just completed Meta-Assessment project targeted major specific assessment efforts, Dr. Berg developed a continuous improvement plan focusing on the MATs.

Starting the first week of April, Dr. Berg scheduled meeting with the leaders of the various MATs in COBA. At the meetings, Dr. Berg distributed the completed rubrics and provided the narrative as to how the Meta-Assessment was conducted. Dr. Berg acted quickly to arrange the meetings with two goals in mind. First, the MAT leaders needed to be informed of the Meta-Assessment results and, secondly, the leaders needed time to plan how to best use the results to improve assessment efforts.

Section 3: Feedback and Suggestions for Improvement of the Meta-assessment Rubric and Process *Please describe the process by which feedback was collected from the College on the meta-assessment process. Provide any suggestions for the improvement of the meta-assessment rubric and process.*

Within the College of Business Administration (COBA) a multi-stage process was used to collect feedback on the meta-assessment process. Dr. Berg (assistant dean for assessment) met with Dean Muehsam to review the rubric and results. Initial reactions to the rubric were discussed and noted. Next, Dr. Berg met with COBA's Major Assessment Team (MAT) leaders to provide an overview of the meta-assessment process and results. A few weeks later, after providing the MAT leaders time for reflection, Dr. Berg solicited feedback from the MAT leaders as to meta-assessment process and rubric. In soliciting feedback, the MAT leaders were provided the prompts listed below. Dr. Berg collected and shared the resulting feedback with Dean Muehsam and the two of them summarized the College's reaction to the process to include suggestions for improvement.

Feedback prompts

- Should the move from “Developing” to “Acceptable” to “Exemplary” be a function of quantity or quality?
- Should the concept of alignment with college/division goals be expected and as such absence of alignment is indicative of “Developing” as opposed to existence indicating “Exemplary”. At the very least, existence should only suggest “Acceptable”. The College's goal will be very broad based (e.g., provide quality educational environment) and, as such, the programs evaluation of any student learning outcome (SLO) is, by definition, aligned.
- Does the successful attainment of the goal(s) clearly indicate that the academic program is producing quality students? If so, this would be “exemplary”.
- Perhaps, instead of having support documentation as the path to “Exemplary” status, having a more complete description of the motivation for the goal is sufficient (preferred?). In general, can “support documentation” be replaced with “support documentation or more detail”?

The above process provided an opportunity for the MAT leaders to offer constructive feedback on the meta-assessment rubric and process. Following is a summary of the MAT leaders' feedback for each prompt.

Should the move from “Developing” to “Acceptable” to “Exemplary” be a function of quantity or quality?

- I would say that the move from “Developing” to “Acceptable” to “Exemplary” should be a function of quality.
- Moving “up the scale” should be a function of quality; “more” of something does not make it better in my opinion, and can often make it less effective
- I think it should be potentially both. Having a great deal of one without the other is not helpful.
- It would of course be good to have both quantity and quality achieved but that is a problem because greater quantity (more assessment goals/objectives/activities, etc.) may reduce the quality of the procedures and outcomes. Quality would be associated with better procedures and more accurate outcomes so it would be a better indicator for assessment.

Should the concept of alignment with college/division goals be expected and as such absence of alignment is indicative of “Developing” as opposed to existence indicating “Exemplary”. At the very least, existence should only suggest “Acceptable”. The College’s goal will be very broad based (e.g., provide quality educational environment) and, as such, the programs evaluation of any student learning outcome (SLO) is, by definition, aligned.

- I agree
- I agree the MAT objectives should be aligned with the college goals. However, even if the goals are broad, such as provide quality educational environment, there need to be definitions of, metrics and/or examples of what those college goals mean. For example, a definition and example of what quality means would be needed to ensure understanding and resulting alignment.
- The goals and objectives would be aligned with the college/division unless a discipline deviates substantially from what is intended by the college/division. Alternatively, the college/division may change direction so the discipline has to catch-up with the change. To keep a uniform rubric with the same anchors, the term “Developing” would apply to both of these situations. Acceptable would indicate alignment. Exemplary would indicate some forward thinking on the part of faculty to the extent that they are leading the direction of the college/division.

Does the successful attainment of the goal(s) clearly indicate that the academic program is producing quality students? If so, this would be “exemplary”.

- Existence of goal alignment should indicate “Acceptable,” and absence of goal alignment should indicate “Developing.” In that formulation, I would suppose that “Exemplary” would then mean that alignment not only exists but that goals are being attained and measured, and that there are sufficient feedback and other mechanisms in place to ensure that meeting the goals does in fact produce quality students.
- No! It would indicate success only if the goals are designed to accurately and appropriately so as to measure the learning objective of interest (Kerr, 1975).

Organizational processes are rarely designed well enough to be confident that success can be assured without years of validation and triangulation from multiple sources.

- It should be – if not the goals need to be revised.
- Successful attainment of the goals may not be meaningful, or accurate, if the criterion are too easy to achieve and/or the indicators are not valid. Assuming they are valid then meeting the criterion would be acceptable. Exemplary is reserved for performance well above the criterion if it is a score. However, to take this approach means the criterion cannot be too easy to achieve and the indicators have to be accurate reflections of performance.

Perhaps, instead of having support documentation as the path to “Exemplary” status, having a more complete description of the motivation for the goal is sufficient (preferred?). In general, can “support documentation” be replaced with “support documentation or more detail”?

- I’m not sure that support documentation is necessary or sufficient for “exemplary” status. I agree that we need support documentation but think it could be one of several different indicators of an exemplary program.
- A more complete description should be considered.
- It is not clear how documentation and motivation for a goal are interchangeable. As I understand it, documentation provides evidence that the indicators are valid tools for assessment. Motivation for a goal could be indicated by the professional guidelines set by an organization (American Marketing Association) and included as an attachment to help explain the reason for the goals

Comments not related to prompts

- My main issue with the Rubric is that it was not provided as we were developing the assessment plan; if this is what is expected, we can meet the expectations. This becomes especially important when comparing year to year results as we do not want to make major changes to the process each year.
- I personally appreciate the feedback on our assessment plan; it was informative and will be helpful in making small adjustments going forward
- The rubric will provide me with a “checklist” when entering final assessment data this semester, which I believe will be valuable.
- In short, I have no major issues with the rubric, and I can work with these expectations.
- I value the meta-assessment feedback. The rubric was helpful for us to pinpoint areas for improvement. What we would still like to see is more detail in the comments.
 - For example, one rater stated:
 - “With some attention to minor issues of alignment between sections, this could move into the Exemplary category.” We are not clear on what the minor issues of alignment are, so we cannot address them.
 - A second example:
 - “Indicators should provide enough detail so that Findings results will point to specific areas that need improvement.
 - Actions should address the Findings results that need improvement.”

- We were able to see one course where actions were missing for addressing the findings. However, if the rater gave us the specific course they were referring to, we would know for certain we were addressing the correct issue.

Section 4: Observed Strengths within College Assessment Plans

Detail the general strengths identified by the College after reviewing its units' assessment plans. What general aspects of the annual assessment processes are units mastering? Are there any units that you would recommend serve as exemplary models?

In general, the MAT leaders had a positive view of the assessment efforts produced within their respective discipline/major. The MAT leaders tended to have a more positive self-evaluation as compared to that from the Meta-assessment. The MAT leaders had the greatest number of positive (exemplary) self-evaluations in the areas of goals, objectives, and/or indicators. They were more critical of their actions. The college has made major strides over the past several years, but at this point no one program should be highlighted as having a best-practice.

Section 5: Observed Weaknesses within College Assessment Plans

Detail the general weaknesses identified by the College after reviewing its units' assessment plans. What general aspects of the annual assessment process are units specifically struggling with?

As noted in Section 4, most of the MAT leaders provide positive self-evaluations. The one area that was noted as needing improvement was "Actions". The meta-assessment also indicated that the "Actions" area needs improvement.

Section 6: Strategies Needed to Address Identified Weaknesses

Detail the College's strategies for addressing the general weaknesses identified after reviewing its units' assessment plans.

This current year the College initiated a one day Assessment Retreat. The College will use this platform to communicate areas of strengths and weaknesses to the faculty as well as sharing best practices. Additionally, the Colleges assessment structure of MATs and GATs provides opportunities to stream information to the faculty most involved in the assessment process.

Section 7: Training and Resources Needed to Implement the College's Improvement Strategy

Detail the types of training and resources that would assist the College with implementing its improvement strategies.

It would be helpful to have examples of best-practices of "Actions". Additionally, sharing potential avenues for actions (e.g., changes in course content, changes in pedagogy, examples of mapping courses to learning objectives (mapping the curriculum)) would help the faculty identify viable alternatives. Examples of how to provide sufficient detail, without overburdening the assessment team, would be very beneficial.

Section 8: Proposed Plan for Implementing Meta-assessment Within the College

Outline the College's proposed plan for implementing Meta-assessment with the College during the Fall 2014 semester. Include a basic description of who will be involved (e.g., a committee of senior faculty or college administrators), your proposed methodology for evaluating unit assessment plans, steps for ensuring reliability, and a basic timeline. Additionally, describe how the College will utilize meta-assessment results to continue to improve assessment efforts of its units.

A specific plan, above and beyond what the College is already doing has not yet been developed. The College has in place MAT and GAT teams that are charged with developing and conducting assessment efforts. An associate dean, along with the department chairs, coordinate the efforts.