

Meta-assessment Analysis Report for the
College of Criminal Justice
June 2014

Holly A. Miller, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of Academic Programs
College of Criminal Justice

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, identifies areas for improvement, and develops 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

Detail the College's plan for sharing the completed meta-assessment rubrics with its departments and programs.

The meta-assessment rubric results and comments were sent to each individual who was (or will be) responsible for that academic area for our college. After the authors had a chance to review the rubric results of their area/s and read the comments, they were asked to prepare the following information for a meeting:

- 1) Strengths and weaknesses assessed for each program
- 2) A plan for addressing weaknesses
- 3) How your goals and objectives match your strategic plan for your academic area

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.

All authors of the academic assessment process read over their results and prepared to discuss the expressed strengths and weaknesses in a meeting, as well as how they plan to address the weaknesses reported. In a College of Criminal Justice assessment meeting, authors reported their rubric results and talked about how to address consistently found weaknesses reported in the meta-assessment. We discussed how we can share more of this process with faculty and obtain their input in how we assess, measure, and improve student learning outcomes.

What seemed to create the most difficulty for the assessment team in our college was the inconsistent results provided by the two reviewers for each program. In some cases there was a big difference in the assessment of how units were doing things. It was difficult to determine which reviewer should be paid more attention. In the future, if there is such a discrepancy, it would be helpful to know which reviewer is closer to the mark. Thus, for academic areas that are provided opposing results, it would be beneficial to hear from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment on which reviewer is most accurate in their scores/comments.

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?

We found our general strengths to be the development of goals, objectives, and indicators. The meta-assessment raters scored these areas higher. Most of our academic programs have developed robust assessment systems. Within our college, the program that received the highest scores was the Forensic Science MS academic program.

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?

We found that our general or overall weaknesses to be in the areas of reporting our findings with appropriate detail and actions to take from our findings. The raters expressed that we lacked specifics in reporting our findings and in a few places did not attach a scoring rubric. The raters scored our newer programs lower and as “developing.” In several cases these programs are still developing and academic learning assessment data is not actually available yet. The Security Studies MS and Victim Studies BA/BS academic programs have both recently undergone significant curriculum changes and updates. Thus, students have not completed the new curriculum cycles. Additionally, the MS in Victim Services Management just began in the fall of 2013.

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.

Each academic program will continue to review and make appropriate changes to their assessments. The programs where more detailed information on findings and actions are warranted, assessors will meet with their committees to further develop their assessment plans and provide more detailed appraisals of student learning outcomes.

The academic programs that are still being developed will work to add some short term goals to assess intermediate student learning rather than waiting until students have completed the program.

One of our overall goals it to get additional faculty input and investment in student learning outcomes. This, we hope, will provide more ideas of how best to assess what we are doing within our academic programs and to develop more specific ways to evaluate these programs.

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 if the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment provided training at varied times during each academic year on the development of goals, objectives, and assessment procedures, as well as training on the database navigation. As new faculty members and administrators begin working with our college's academic assessment plans, it would be helpful for all to have a standardized training on the assessment of student learning outcomes and navigation of the database that we utilize (for now, the OATDB).

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.

The College of Criminal Justice Academic Assessment Team will continue to meet prior to each assessment deadline to discuss and share student learning assessment plans. The College of Criminal Justice Assessment Team includes:

Holly A. Miller, Ph.D.; Associate Dean of Academic Programs
 Gaylene Armstrong, Ph.D.; Chair, Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology
 Phillip Lyons, Ph.D.; Chair, Department of Security Studies
 Sarah Kerrigan, Ph.D.; Chair, Department of Forensic Science
 Danielle Boisvert, Ph.D.; Director of Graduate Studies
 Cortney Franklin, Ph.D.; Chair, Committee of Victims Services Management Program

Each academic unit will meet with their faculty and/or committee to discuss their goals, objectives for the upcoming academic year. The assessment team will meet to provide plans and feedback. Each unit will also submit their plans to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs by November each year. The Associate Dean for Academic Programs will go over each academic area assessment plan and provide feedback if needed.

The College of Criminal Justice will continue to tie their goals and objectives to the strategic plan of each academic unit, department, college, and university. The College of Criminal Justice will use the results of the meta-assessment to fine-tune goals, findings, and actions.