Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications
Student Learning Assessment Plan

I. Overview

The overarching goal of the process is to assess student learning to improve curricula, instruction and learning. Student learning outcomes are assessed annually. The goals for learning are drawn from the professional values and competencies of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). They are:

Professional Values and Competencies

Individual professions in journalism and mass communication may require certain specialized values and competencies. Irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

1. understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and assemble and to petition for redress of grievances;

2. demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;

3. demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;

4. demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;

5. understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;

6. demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;

7. think critically, creatively and independently;

8. conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;

9. write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;

10. critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;

11. apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

12. apply basic tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

II. Objectives of Assessment

This assessment plan is designed to evaluate *student learning outcomes* related to the College's objectives (see above). Our goal is, simply, to assess whether our students are mastering the professional values and competencies outlined by ACEJMC and adopted by the College and, whether we can be confident that our graduates have mastered them. Specifically, this student learning assessment (SLA) is designed to examine student learning by major or option: Advertising, Film-Video, Journalism, Media Studies, Public Relations, Strategic Communications, and Telecommunications.

III. Measures

A. Overview of Direct and Indirect Measures

The most basic measure of student learning is course grades in the set of required courses that includes every one of the 12 professional values and competencies. The Student Learning Assessment Plan, however, calls for analysis of further direct and indirect measures to assess student learning. Moreover, the plan identifies an assessment role for working professionals in the communications institutions and industries for which we prepare students. Almost all of the working professionals are alumni of the College.

B. Direct Measures

- *Faculty/Alumni Team Evaluation of Student Portfolios*. Student work will be assessed by teams composed of a faculty team leader who also serves as the program representative on the dean's Assessment Advisory Committee, Alumni Society Board and Ad/PR Network Board working professionals, and academics, most of whom are alumni. The student work itself is a sample drawn from courses across the curriculum, preferably from senior-level or capstone courses. Material will be drawn from lower-level courses where appropriate. An assessment matrix, matching professional values and competencies with appropriate courses for each program in the College, is attached (Appendix A), as well as sample evaluation rubrics (Appendix B).
- *Internship Supervisors' Assessment* (Appendix C)

C. Indirect Measures

- *Retention rates*
- *Graduation rates*
- *Student performance in national competitions*
- *Results of student surveys of satisfaction and engagement* (when applicable)
- *Alumni Survey results* (when applicable)
- *Student focus group results* (when applicable)

IV. Process

A. Committees and individuals involved

- Office of Undergraduate Education
    1. Associate Dean for Undergraduate and Graduate Education
    2. Coordinator of Undergraduate Education
    3. Assistant Dean for Career Placement and Internships
- Assessment Advisory Committee, comprised of faculty members representing each program
- Department heads
- Alumni Society Board
- Ad/PR Network Board
- Director of Alumni Relations

B. Overview

The SLA is conducted annually and managed by the associate dean for undergraduate and graduate education. There are three phases in the process:
- Preparation. Useful recommendations from the previous year's SLA are incorporated into the SLA process.
- Data Collection, Analysis and Report Preparation. *The Faculty/Alumni Team Evaluation of Student Portfolios.* Secondary measures data are collected. The annual report is produced and distributed to the dean, department heads, Assessment Advisory Committee members and alumni society and Ad/PR boards.
- Application of Findings. Results are used to improve curricula, course development, teaching and learning.

C. Preparation

Appropriate improvements to the plan are made each year, based on feedback from individuals (faculty, reviewers, and administrators) involved in the process. Course selection is made by the Assessment Advisory Committee program representatives and faculty are contacted with instructions for sampling and submitting student work. In collaboration with the Alumni Society and Ad/PR Network boards, volunteer assessment team members are recruited. Arrangements are made to collect secondary measures data; activities include planning the internship supervisor survey, designing and planning focus groups if needed, and researching means to acquire other secondary measures.

D. Data Collection and Analysis

Staff support is used to collect, organize and store data. Faculty teaching selected courses supply samples of student work – all grading marks removed – along with relevant assignment directions and syllabus.

1. **Direct measures**

   a. *Faculty/Professional Team Evaluation of Student Work.* Assessment teams comprised of Alumni Society Board or Ad/PR Network Board members are assembled for each program under review:
      - Advertising
      - Film/Video
      - Journalism
      - Media Studies
      - Public Relations
      - Strategic Communications
      - Telecommunications

      Each team comprises the College Assessment Advisory Committee faculty representative and three to five working professionals, most of whom are alumni of the College. The faculty representative will be available for consultation as reviewers conduct their assessment and will also lead the face-to-face discussion at the annual spring Alumni Society Board meeting. The chair of the Curriculum Assessment Committee of the Alumni Society Board, the Ad/PR Board, the associate dean, and the College's coordinator for undergraduate education collaborate to recruit 15 to 20 professionals. These professionals are trained and placed on teams led by a faculty member.

      Each team member receives a portfolio of student work for the program. Portfolios are substantial, containing samples ranging in format from term papers, films, radio and television productions, photography, web and graphics designs, Power Point presentations, media campaigns and research reports.

      The teams review the assessment materials for each program and collaborate to submit a report to the Associate Dean.

   b. *Internship supervisors participate in a survey* about student performance and competence (See Appendix C).

2. **Indirect measures**

   a. *Retention rates.* Supplied by the Penn State Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment and Registrar's Office.

b. *Graduation rates*. Supplied by the Penn State Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment and Registrar's Office.5

c. *Student performance in national competitions* (source: department heads and faculty advisors), *including:*
- Advertising: American Advertising Foundation
- Film/Video: Student Emmy Awards; Broadcast Education Association Festival of Media Arts; film festivals
- Journalism: Hearst Journalism Awards Program; National College Television Emmy Awards; Society of Professional Journalists; Dow Jones News Fund; Pennsylvania Associated Press Broadcaster's Association; Keystone Press Awards
- Public Relations: Public Relations Student Society of America; Golden Quill; International Association of Business Communicators
- Telecommunications: Student Emmy Awards; Broadcast Education Association; National Association of Broadcasters

d. *Results of student surveys, such as the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) and student satisfaction surveys at Penn State*. The Bellisario College of Communications participates in periodic administration of the NSSE, and it also uses applicable data from internal surveys of Penn State students. Also, we instituted an exit survey requirement of all graduating seniors to evaluate their extent of learning and other experiences while in the College. Results will be included in annual assessment reports.

e. *Alumni survey results*. Occasionally, the College or University survey alumni, and applicable results are considered for assessment.

f. *Student focus group results.* The College will conduct focus groups of eight to fifteen juniors and seniors from each program. Facilitators will ask students questions related to the 12 values and competencies. Transcripts will be summarized as an additional indirect measure.

E. Using Analysis to Improve Curriculum and Instruction (see Appendix D for process timeline)

1. **Associate Dean's office creates an annual document** reporting results of all direct and indirect measures. This report is circulated to the dean, department heads, Assessment Advisory Committee and Alumni Society and Ad/PR boards.

2. **Department Heads present results to faculty.** Changes to improve curriculum and instruction are planned and implemented. Results are reported back to the associate dean.

3. **Associate Dean prepares annual report** of changes made to improve curriculum and instruction. This document is circulated to the dean, department heads, Assessment Advisory Committee and Alumni Society and Ad/PR boards.

Appendix A
Course Matrix

Value or Competency	AD	Film	Journ	Media Studies	PR	Telcm	Strat Comm
Freedom of Expression	320	437,438, 439, 448, 449	403, 409	205, 405	370	381, 404, 486, 492	428B
History, Professions	320	346, 440, 445, 446	401, 403	250, 333, 433	370	385, 404, 486	428A
Domestic Diversity	422, 426	346, 440, 445, 446	409, 465	205, 411, 419	471, 473	385, 404, 486, 487	428C
Global Diversity	422, 426	346, 440, 445, 446	269, 402	205, 410, 452	471, 473	385, 489	428C
Ethics	420, 427	437, 438, 449, 448, 449	168, 409	205, 411	373, 471, 473	486, 487, 489	428B, 428D
Images & Information	320, 424, 427	437, 438, 440, 445, 449, 448, 449	168, 480	205, 250, 333, 410, 411, 413, 433, 451, 452, 454, 455	370, 473	383	428D, 428E
Critical/ Creative Thinking	422, 424	346, 437, 438, 439, 440,443, 444, 445, 446, 448, 449	360, 403	205, 250, 304, 310, 333, 410, 411, 413, 451, 452, 454, 455	473	404, 486, 487, 489	428C, 428D, 428E
Research/ Evaluate	420, 422 424,	437, 438, 439, 448, 449	462, 464, 480	304, 310, 413, 418	420, 473	310, 487, 489, 493	428D
Writing	421, 425, 468	346, 446	460, 464, 465	205, 250, 405, 410, 411, 413	471	486, 487, 489	428B, 428C, 428D, 428E
Critical Evaluation	420, 424, 425 427	437, 438, 439, 440, 445, 448, 449	467, 480, 481	205, 250, 304, 310, 405, 410, 411, 413, 418, 419	420, 471, 473	486, 487, 489	428C, 428D, 428E
Numerical & Statistical	420, 422	437, 438, 439, 448, 449	260, 467	304, 310, 418	420, 473	310, 487, 493	428D, 428E
Tech/Tools App	421, 422, 424	437, 438, 439, 448, 449	269, 469, 481	242, 304, 310, 413, 418	471	280, 310, 383, 484	428D, 428E

Appendix B
Sample Evaluation Rubrics

Advertising & Public Relations Evaluation for Images and Information Outcome Criteria

Directions: Please highlight the appropriate box for the outcome evaluation criteria.

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Comments
Application	Image(s)/information follow instructions and present a good solution to the project challenge.	Image(s)/information follow instructions but present a moderate solution to the project challenge.	Image(s)/information do not follow instructions and present a weak solution to the project challenge.	
Message	Message is strong and clearly communicated.	Message is moderate and communicated well.	Message is weak or poorly communicated.	

Overall Comments:

Film-Video Evaluation for Global Diversity Competency

Directions: Please highlight the appropriate box for each of the three Global Diversity criteria and provide supporting comments.

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Comments
Understanding of Diverse Cultures	Demonstrates a sophisticated level of perception of differences in varied cultures.	Demonstrates a suitable level of perception of issues involving varied cultures.	Demonstrates inadequate perception of issues involving varied cultures.	
Interprets Analytically, intuitively or Narratively	Discerns similarities and differences of diverse cultures with complexity and maturity that is exceptional.	Discerns similarities and differences of diverse cultures adequately for this level.	Discerns similarities and differences of diverse cultures inadequately for this level.	
Identifying possible actions or outcomes	Identifies exemplary solutions to issues raised involving diverse cultures.	Identifies practical solutions to issues raised.	Fails to identify practical solutions to issues raised.	

Overall Comments:

Journalism Evaluation for Freedom of Speech Learning Outcome

Directions: Please highlight the appropriate box for each of the four evaluation criteria and enter comments in support of your assessment.

	Excellent	**Satisfactory**	**Unsatisfactory**	**Comments**
Freedom of Speech	• Student understands First Amendment and related mass media law concepts • Student is able to apply concepts • Student understand construction and history of legal concepts • Student is able to write about legal concepts in clear and precise language • Student is able to recount impact of historical concepts and individuals relevant to the law	• Student understands First Amendment and related mass media law concepts • Student understand construction and history of legal concepts • Student is able to recount impact of historical concepts and individuals relevant to the law .	• Student may recognize but not show understanding of First Amendment and related mass media law concepts • Student is unable to show understanding of construction and history of legal concepts or history of individual relevant to the law .	

Media Studies Evaluation for Research Competency

Directions: Please highlight the appropriate box and provide supporting comments.

Excellent	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Comments
Demonstrates working ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work	Is able to demonstrate working ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work	Is unable to demonstrate working ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work	

Current Events Evaluation – Telecom and Law   Department of Telecommunications Student Learning Assessment

Sample # _____ **Course:** _____ **Reviewer:** _____ **Date:** _____

Assignment: **Understand current events and evaluate news reports critically/objectively**
Learning Objective: **Telecommunications Ethics**

Argument Structure _____**Very Good:** Additional research of multiple sources on the story in question, to find contradictory or adversarial points of view that are the compared to the assigned story. _____**Satisfactory:** In-depth consideration of the basic issues in the story and some opposing viewpoints; with effort to understand the nature of the dispute or conflict being reported upon. _____**Unsatisfactory:** A mere summary of the story as already written by others.	**COMMENTS:**
Framing and composition _____**Very Good:** Strong construction of one's argument, with a fully integrated beginning, middle, and end to help the reader's understanding. Strong word choice and extra attention to the flow of the argument. _____**Satisfactory:** Basic mechanical proficiency and proofreading with a minimum of typos and writing errors. _____**Unsatisfactory:** Poor writing with excessive typos and grammar errors, little interest in proofreading or in the experience of your reader.	**COMMENTS:**
Free Speech Analysis _____**Very Good:** Assess the viability of alternative viewpoints, while supporting your own reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with them. Acknowledging that oppositional opinions fall under free speech with the exception of clearly adjudicated issues (obscenity, etc.)	**COMMENTS:**

_____**Satisfactory:** Approach a controversy with skepticism and decide whether you or agree or disagree with it after thinking clearly about the arguments being made by all sides. _____**Unsatisfactory:** No consideration of opposing viewpoints. Asserting that a party is wrong or should be ignored because of a difference of opinion.	

Appendix C
Intern Assessment Survey

Student Name: _____   Supervisor Name:_____

Intern Assessment Survey

Please complete and return this survey along with the Final Supervisor Evaluation that follows.

The College of Communications and its accrediting agency, the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications, have established a broad set of learning objectives for our students and we would like your help in assessing the extent to which the Penn State intern under your supervision exhibited qualities associated with those goals. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your agreement with the statement, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. You may also note when the statement is not applicable (NA) to your situation.

*Please circle the number that best reflects your response to the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
* The intern used tools and technologies appropriate for the job.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern wrote correctly and clearly.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern acted judiciously, creatively and independently.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern demonstrated the ability to conduct research and evaluate information.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern could use basic numeric and statistical concepts.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern critically evaluated his or her own work for accuracy and fairness, clarity, style and grammatical correctness.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern critically evaluated the work of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, style and grammatical correctness.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern demonstrated an understanding of professional ethical principles.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern appeared to understand principles and laws of freedom of speech and press.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

* The intern demonstrated sensitivity to the diversity of groups in a global society.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
* The intern demonstrated an understanding of the role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.	1	2	3	4	5	N/A

The following questions are being used across all campuses for common evaluation of all interns:

1. Please rate the effectiveness of the student's oral communication skills (speaking and listening).

Unsatisfactory   Exceptional
       1   2   3   4   5

2. Please rate the effectiveness of the student's written communication skills.

Unsatisfactory   Exceptional
       1   2   3   4   5

3. Please rate the effectiveness of the student's visual communication skills (the effective presentation of images and information in formats such as video, photography and graphic displays).

Unsatisfactory   Exceptional
       1   2   3   4   5

4. How well prepared was the student for this internship?

Unsatisfactory   Exceptional
       1   2   3   4   5

5. Please explain how your intern was or was not prepared.

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Appendix D
SLA Process Timeline

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September: Assessment Advisory Committee meets with associate dean and undergraduate education coordinator to discuss process improvements and values and competencies to be assessed during the spring semester.

September/October: Assessment Advisory Committee faculty representatives determine what course sections will be used for each learning objective to be evaluated and make a request to faculty for fall student materials to be included in the year's assessment.

October: Associate dean and the coordinator for undergraduate education have a conversation with the Alumni Society Board assessment chair and the College director of alumni relations to discuss reviewer recruitment needs. A separate conversation is held with the assessment chair of the Ad/PR Board regarding Strat Comm reviewers.

December/January: Assessment Advisory Committee program representatives collect fall semester student work. These materials, as well as evaluation rubrics, syllabi, and a letter of instruction to the reviewers, are submitted to the coordinator for undergraduate education.

February/March: The coordinator for undergraduate education sends electronically materials and instructions to reviewers three to four weeks prior to the annual spring Board meeting.

March/April: The associate dean, the coordinator for undergraduate education, and the Assessment Advisory Committee faculty representatives meet with the Alumni Board Assessment Committee members at the annual spring meeting for a face-to-face discussion of their evaluations.

April/May: The faculty team leader writes a report based on the face-to-face discussion and shares it with the alumni reviewers for approval before submitting to the associate dean and undergraduate education coordinator.

August/September: Associate dean and the coordinator for undergraduate education write annual assessment report to the dean and department heads. Department heads are asked to consult with faculty as appropriate and to submit a response addressing areas for improvement as indicated in the report.

October/November: Associate dean writes the response to the SLA report summarizing the input from each program. Individual program responses are included in full.