

Capstone I AY16 Academic Program Outcomes (PLOs) and Capstone Alignment Assessment

PLOs & Capstone Alignment, 2016 Composite Report

Assessment Type: Academic Program Student Learning Outcomes and Capstone Alignment

Year/Term: 2015-2016

Level: Program Capstone or Senior Project

Learning Outcome: Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Assessment Method/Tool: PLOs & Program Capstone Alignment

Measurement Scale: A = Alignment, R = Revision Needed

Sample Size: 20 Academic Programs

	A = Aligned
	R = Revision Needed
Anthropology/Sociology	A
Art	A
Biology	R
Business Administration	A
Chemistry/Biochemistry	A
Communication Studies	A
Computer Science	A
Economics	R
Education	A
Emergency Services Medical Administration	Program Under Revision
Fire Services Administration	Program Under Revision
English/Writing	A
History	A
Integrative Studies	R
Mathematics	A
Music	R

Physical Activity and Health	A	
Political Science and Economics	R	
Psychology	R	
Theatre	A	
Median %	A	100%

Benchmark: **100%** Institutional median threshold percent of PLO's aligned with Capstone/Senior Project Assignment

Median Percentage Achieving Benchmark: **100%** of PLO's aligned with Capstone/Senior Project

Closing the Loop

The institutional effectiveness threshold for Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) assessment is a 100% median of samples scoring at the Proficient or Adequate Levels. The AY16 Capstone Assessment, to determine alignment of PLOs with Capstone assignments, meets the 100% threshold. The question was—Do capstones require students to demonstrate proficiency (or adequacy) of Program Learning Outcomes? In this case, since the assessment was qualitative rather than proficiency scoring.

Based on the sampling of 20 different academic programs across the curriculum, academic programs are ensuring to a remarkable degree that their students demonstrate all program outcomes at the capstone level. This is essential for reverse design—for ensuring that the complete curriculum in a discipline is scaffolded, from the 100- through the 400-levels, so that students are able to demonstrate program outcomes in their cumulative, senior-level capstones. The assessment demonstrates that academic programs carefully plan their curricula to ensure effective teaching and learning and carefully design their capstone assignments to assess those outcomes.

While the median for this assessment is 100% for 20 programs, 8 programs should revise their PLOs to more fully align with their capstones or ensure a given outcome is required in the capstone assignment or is scaffolded elsewhere in the curriculum to ensure their majors have opportunities to gain proficiency.

Economics is a good example of a program that needs to revise its outcomes. Its Closing the Loop Statement emphasizes the need for the program to revise its PLOs to include econometrics: “It should be said that this review has highlighted the need to refine both the program outcomes and the capstone assignment itself to focus more explicitly on econometrics, whose principles have become central to the program since the outcomes were originally composed.”

Three programs—[Music](#), [Emergency Services Medical Administration](#), and Fire Services Administration (still needs articulated PLOs)—are under revision and the Vice Provost for Academic Quality (VPAQ) will work with them to articulate PLOs and align them capstone assignments. (In fact, Music has already done so, as demonstrated in their [AY17 Capstone II Assessment](#), focused on student proficiency.) Two

programs ([Integrative Studies](#) and [Psychology](#)) employ generic outcomes for their respective fields of study. Three programs ([Biology/Botany](#), [Integrative Studies](#), [Politics and Economics](#)) include Civic Engagement (CE) as a PLO but their capstones do not require it. In these cases, the programs just need to express how their respective curricula require CE opportunities for their majors.

These variances from the 100% threshold highlight the rationale for using the median to assess EOU's overall academic PLO assessment, as it allows for factors beyond a program's control or revisions highlighted by the study itself. The median remains at 100% alignment in order to demonstrate institutional effectiveness, while a mean would be 60% alignment. If the two programs under complete revision are discounted, as they should be, the mean rises to 70%, and then 75% counting Music, which has already addressed the issue.

Using this rationale, EOU sets the 100% median threshold, holding programs to the highest standard while recognizing that a mean does not allow for even minor variances or revisions focused, in this assessment, on curricular alignment. In the end, EOU can acclaim the excellence of its academic programs and those programs can take pride in the quality of teaching and learning for their majors, where the median demonstrates that graduates have ample opportunities attain and manifest each program's outcomes to an impressive degree in terms of curriculum design.

Action Plan

- 1) VPAQ works with programs to revise overly general PLOs toward discipline-based outcomes, without losing alignment with EOU GLOs—IS and PSY.
- 2) VPAQ works with programs under revision to define discipline-based PLOs, aligned with EOU's GLOs—EMSA and FSA, and aligned with their capstone assignments.