



VCU

**Richard T. Robertson School
of Media and Culture**

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Undergraduate Programs Assessment Plan

Revised Spring 2017

June 2010, August and March 2009; original August 2008

Assurance of Learning for the VCU Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture

One of the Robertson School's top goals is delivering curricula that provide students with a solid foundation in both the theory and practice of media and communications, especially in the fields of advertising, journalism and public relations. The School grants one undergraduate degree in Mass Communications through five academic programs: creative advertising, strategic advertising, broadcast journalism, print-online journalism and public relations.

Achieving that goal requires that the School's faculty continuously reviews curricula through assessment efforts to ensure that in our rapidly changing fields curricula keep pace with and emphasize best practices, technological advances and philosophical shifts. Another goal is to ensure that the School's curricula foster collaborative learning, with students learning from each other, from experts in the professions and from faculty.

School Mission Statement and Core Values

The Robertson School inspires and empowers students to be transformative media innovators while continuing to be a thought leader in a changing communication environment.

The School accomplishes its mission through immersive teaching, quality research and professional scholarship. The School explores and engages local and global communities in advertising, journalism, public relations and other emerging communication fields.

The School values truth, ethics, creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, collaboration and diversity. The School practices shared governance in decision making.

(Approved by the faculty of the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture, September 9, 2016.)

Standards of Accreditation and Student Learning Outcomes

The School is nationally accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). Standard 9 Assessment of Learning Outcomes says, "The unit regularly assesses student learning and applies results to improve curriculum and instruction."

Assessment and curriculum are intertwined. Standard 2. Curriculum and Instruction says, "The unit provides a curriculum and instruction, whether on-site or online, that

enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.”

Regarding the professional values and competencies, the Council says, “The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- ✓ 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 to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- ✓ demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- ✓ demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
- ✓ demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- ✓ understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- ✓ demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- ✓ think critically, creatively and independently;
- ✓ conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- ✓ write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- ✓ critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- ✓ apply basic numerical and statistical concepts; and
- ✓ apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world.”

Curriculum Map

The School has adopted the ACEJMC 12 Values and Competencies as desired undergraduate student learning outcomes for each of its five undergraduate academic programs. A curriculum map (see Appendix 1) visualizes these intended learning outcomes to each undergraduate course required of majors in the School's programs. The map also notes for each of the intended outcomes the courses in which it is introduced, in which students gain proficiency or in which students master the knowledge or skill.

Assessment Measures

Indirect Measures.

1. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis by race and gender of information about student retention and graduation rates. These "Public Accountability Data" will be publicly available on our website, per ACEJMC requirements. The School will seek to improve these rates over time.
2. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis of information about the number and proportion of students who seek, find and complete internships.
3. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis over time of student entry and performance in local, regional and national contests and competitions within their discipline.
4. Annual analysis and comparison of responses to an online exit survey of the School's graduating seniors in the semester prior to their graduation.
5. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis of employment data for graduating seniors and available alumni.
6. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis of evaluations submitted by internship supervisors to determine areas in which curriculum and instruction can be improved.
7. Analysis of the responses of the School's majors in the National Survey of Student Engagement, which is conducted every three years at VCU. (The current schedule includes VCU deployment in 2014, 2017 and 2020.) The School will request all available data from VCU to compare and contrast its students to other students at VCU and from across the country.

Direct Measures.

1. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis of portfolio reviews from randomly selected students from the capstone course(s) of each of the School's five undergraduate academic sequences. The specific classes are (with semester(s) taught):

Creative advertising: MASC 451 Invention (fall and spring)

Strategic advertising: MASC 459 Judgment (fall and spring)

Broadcast journalism: MASC 461 The Documentary (fall and spring)
MASC 465 Newscasting (fall and spring)

Print-online journalism: MASC 403 Advanced Reporting (spring)
MASC 404 Specialized Project Reporting (fall)
MASC 475 Capital News Service (spring)
MASC 496 Mobile and Social Media
Journalism (fall)

Public relations: MASC 439 Agency (fall and spring)

Portfolios will be reviewed by professionals working in the respective fields, with data collection in person for live critiques or with an online survey. (See Appendix 2 for sample rubric.)

A member of the School's Accreditation and Assessment Committee will help guide the process, including communicating and working with the faculty member whose capstone class' work will be assessed, and analyzing and reporting the results.

This one- to two-page report will include:

- ✓ Class rubric and number
- ✓ Semester and date
- ✓ Number of students enrolled
- ✓ Project/client name
- ✓ Number and general description of external evaluators
- ✓ Reporting out the evaluation by percentage (e.g., "50% of the teams ranked average in conducting and applying appropriate research techniques.") and with a summary statement (e.g., "OVERALL: 80% of teams ranked above average on...")

2. Annual compilation, comparison and analysis of final internship reports submitted by students.

Use of Assessment and Data and Oversight by the School's Accreditation and Assessment Committee

At the beginning of every academic year the School Director will appoint faculty members to the School's standing Accreditation and Assessment Committee. These members include mostly Teaching and Research faculty, but may also include relevant Administrative and Professional faculty. The Director is an ex-officio member of all School committees.

According to the School's Faculty Handbook, this committee addresses assessment issues when it "oversees development, updating and implementation of assessment plans and measures; and assists and tracks assessment plan implementation for both undergraduate and graduate programs."

The School's Undergraduate Studies Committee will monitor course syllabi to ensure they clearly identify the values and competencies mapped to required courses, incorporate assignments and teaching methods that enable students to meet those learning objectives, and detail how students will be provided grades and other measures to convey whether and how students are meeting those objectives.

The Committee Chair or a selected member of the faculty will annually report assessment results to the university using the appropriate online system.

Timeline

All data and reports will be submitted to the Chair of the Accreditation and Assessment Committee and to the respective academic program sequence coordinator.

- ✓ Early fall semester: Committee will review and analyze results of the previous academic year's assessment efforts.
- ✓ By October faculty meeting: Committee will report summary findings and recommendations to the full faculty.
- ✓ By January faculty meeting: Sequence faculty will discuss sequence-specific data and findings, and make recommendations to the full faculty for curriculum changes.
- ✓ By April faculty meeting: Any curriculum changes requiring university approval (e.g., a new or substantially changed course) will follow the School's typical curriculum approval process (e.g., sequence proposes and votes, sends to Undergraduate Studies Committee for discussion and vote, sent to full faculty for discussion and vote).

Sequence listings
Multiple sequences
Advertising sequence course
Journalism sequence course
Public Relations sequence course
Sequence/concentration listing
Adv/Cr = Advertising/Creative
Adv/St = Advertising/Strategic
Jou/B = Journalism/Broadcast
Jou/Dig = Journalism/Digital
PR = Public Relations
R = Required for sequence
C = Capstone (# needed if more than one capstone available)
E = Elective
ACEJMC Values and Competency listing
(Note: Only for required courses)
I = Introduced
R = Reinforced
A = Assessed
Learn about the Principles of Accreditation, including the 12 Professional Values and Competencies, of the Accrediting Council on Journalism and Mass Communication
http://www.acejmc.org/policies-process/principles/

Appendix 2. Sample portfolio review rubric

This rubric is to evaluate a creative advertising capstone portfolio project. Each will be evaluated using scaled responses “Poor - Needs work - Average – Good – Outstanding” which will be transformed into data for analysis, with “Poor”= 1 and “Outstanding”= 5.

Presentation

How well did the students present the information (verbally and in the slides)?

Professionalism

How well did the students demonstrate an understanding of the profession and professional expectations?

Research

How well did the students use research and secondary information to set up their solution?

Strategy

How well does the campaign solve the business problem for the identified target audience?

Target Audience

How well did the students demonstrate an understanding of a diverse target audience?

Creativity

How creative were the recommendations?

Communication

How well did the students demonstrate writing skills that communicated appropriately?

Technology

How well did the students incorporate tools and technologies appropriate to the profession or to the problem?