

College or Unit Level Annual Assessment Report Template and Guidelines

College or Unit Name:
College of Arts and Sciences

Report Year:
2014-15

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1. In addition to the primary goal of assessing student learning, list other 2014-15 unit goals that support assessment of student learning (these can be direct, indirect or operational).

Meeting twice a month during the academic year, the College of Arts and Sciences Assessment Committee (CASAC) continued its main objectives of coordinating and supporting CAS degree-program efforts to build and sustain assessment systems and practices for purposes of improving programs and opportunities for students to learn. CASAC continued to solicit program assessment reports for the previous year and plans for the current year (see Table 1 below for numbers and percentages of programs that have submitted assessment reports and plans). Now completing its third year, CASAC had four goals for 2014-15, and all four were accomplished:

- (1) Build an online reporting system to more efficiently interact with programs;
- (2) Design and implement a rubric for evaluating program plans and reports;
- (3) Streamline and reconfigure the planning and reporting system so that programs submit both in the fall semester; and
- (4) Build capacity among the committee.

Table 1: Assessment Plans and Reports Received from CAS Degree Programs

Date	Plans	Reports	Notes
Fall 2012	-	-	CASAC is formed
Winter 2013	102/130 = 78.5%	-	Plans for 2012-13
Fall 2013		79/127 = 62%	Reports for 2012-13
Winter 2014	104/130 = 80%		Plans for 2013-14
Fall 2014		93/133 = 70%	Reports for 2013-14
Winter 2015	104/134 = 78%		Plans for 2014-15
Fall 2015	(for 2015-16)	(for 2014-15)	Reconfigured process begins

Note: The number of CAS programs varies slightly each year, depending on which programs are considered in use or “shelved.”

2. Summarize the accomplishments your unit made during 2014-15 toward assessing student learning, as your primary goal.

- a. Explain the role that faculty, staff, and students play in this work.**
- b. Next, summarize the activities your unit engaged in during 2014-15 toward meeting the other goals listed above.**

Sustained Overall Submission and Review Process. As CASAC solicits assessment plans and reports from degree programs the committee directly interacts with program coordinators and department heads through a four-step process: (1) soliciting assessment plans and reports; (2) responding to plans and reports; (3) returning the plans and reports and responses; and (4) contacting program coordinators and department heads at the conclusion of submission processes

to inform them about the programs in their departments that have (not) submitted plans or reports. For 2014-15 (see Table 1), the percentage of programs that submitted assessment reports (for 2013-14) increased 8% from the previous year, while the percentage of submitted assessment plans remained constant (78%). As has been the practice, programs completed a template (see Appendix 2.1: “CAS Template for Planning and Reporting Assessments for Student Learning,” p. 8), submitted the plans or reports, two faculty members of CASAC responded to all assessment plans and reports each term, and CASAC returned the documents to program coordinators. Department heads were contacted at various times during the process, as CASAC continued to enhance communication between departments and CASAC and to solicit support for process.

Number of Participants Increased. Each degree program coordinator is typically the leader of his or her program’s assessment efforts, and that person organizes discussions among faculty—including a departmental assessment or curriculum committee, his or her department head, and CASAC. Each voting member of CASAC (four faculty and three department heads) acts as a liaison to selected programs, particularly for purposes of encouraging program coordinators, or department heads, to recognize the support offered by the committee, to negotiate aspects of the submission/review process (e.g., when to submit a report), and to consult on relevant matters. Over the past three years, the number of CAS faculty who have become directly involved with assessment has increased, evidenced by the changing lists of coordinators, by the number of CAS faculty who directly submitted plans (60+) and reports this year (50+)—see the list of plans (2014-15) and reports (2013-14) received (see Appendix 2.2: “CAS Programs that Submitted Reports for 2013-14,” p. 10 & 2.3: “CAS Programs that Submitted Plans for 2014-15,” p. 15).

Improved Assessment System. As mentioned above and in Table 1, during 2014-15, 70% of the CAS degree programs submitted assessment reports (for 2013-14) and 78% submitted assessment plans (for 2014-15).* During the academic year, three CASAC members contributed to responses to plans and reports (each document is responded to by two people). CASAC implemented a *rubric* for evaluating the program plans and reports, which provided the committee a method for contrasting how well programs planned or reported their efforts (see Appendix 2.4: “CASAC Rubric for Evaluating Program Assessment Plans,” p. 21). The rubric also helped CASAC to better recognize programs that exceeded expectations (e.g., Chemistry, Biology, Children’s Literature—Graduate, Public Relations, History—Graduate, and TESOL), those that met them, and others that are working toward meeting the goals. In other words, CASAC is improving its system for responding to and evaluating program submissions, especially to support program efforts in improving their approaches and practices of assessing students on representative programmatic learning outcomes.

Initiated an Online Submission System. With the technical support of James Turner and the leadership of committee member Jenny Kindred, CASAC designed and coordinated an online reporting system, which provided a more expedient way for programs to submit reports and plans (https://www.emich.edu/cas_assessment/admin/login.php). Also, CASAC now has an email address (emu_casac@emich.edu) and a link to resources for program instructors (http://www.emich.edu/cas_assessment/resources.php), and these online links have expanded the process beyond personal email accounts of committee members. Further, the online presence encourages programs to recognize CASAC as a particular body devoted to supporting their assessment efforts. Additionally, the committee believes that the online system will better assist in accumulating relevant data for future reporting, and archived documents will be more conveniently available to programs—especially important with the brewing changes in program or department leadership.

Reconfigured Planning and Reporting System for 2015-16. Based on discussions among CASAC members and representative programs, and approval from the College Advisory Council, the committee has elected to reconfigure the reporting system for 2015-16. Instead of submitting documents twice a year, programs will now submit an assessment report and plans in the fall term.

This revised approach encourages programs to examine their report and generate plans based on analysis of student work and findings from the previous year. In other words, instead of a two-part process spread over the academic year, the dual components will be potentially more closely linked. (See Appendix 2.5: "CASAC Template for Reporting and Planning Assessment for 2015-16," p. 22.)

Built Capacity Among Members of CASAC. Finally, nearly all members of CASAC have completed three years of service. Therefore, the committee, with the support of CAS Associate Dean Kate Mehuron, suggested to Dean Venner that he select three new department heads in order to continue to build leadership (of assessment) across the college. The programs of the current department heads have improved assessment systems, and the direct participation of these DHs is one main reason; therefore, inviting three more DHs will presumably strengthen three more departments' approach to assessment of student learning. The three new ones who will begin contributing to CASAC in Fall 2015 include Arnold Fleischmann, Political Science; Jacqueline Goodman, Women's & Gender Studies; and Richard Sambrook, Geography & Geology.

*Note: The CAS Dean's office has a list of 134 programs; however, some programs are unused (or "shelved") by particular programs or departments, and some of the programs are packaged together for specific purposes. For example, Chemistry, which initiated a departmental standing committee on assessment, and Biology, have elected to construct assessments as representative of all undergraduate programs and other assessments for all graduate programs. Since CASAC was constituted through an initiative of the CAS Dean's office and through approval of the College Advisory Council in Fall 2012, the first assessment plans solicited from degree programs occurred in Winter 2013 and reports for 2012-13 were submitted in Fall 2013. Therefore, the first three years have followed this sequence. In 2014-15, the sequence will change, as described below.

3. **Provide 2-3 descriptive examples from your unit activities that highlight how you assessed student learning.**
 - a. **Although the examples might be ones that indirectly influence student learning (e.g., reorganizing assessment councils, revising templates, etc.),**
 - b. **At least one of the examples should describe a direct measure or approach to assessing student learning (e.g., an individual program's example).**

Highlights of How CAS Degree Programs Assessed Student Learning: Indirect Influences

Unsolicited Testimonies Demonstrated Improvement. As mentioned above, CASAC accomplished four goals toward improving its system for coordinating programmatic assessment of student learning. More faculty have become engaged in programmatic assessment efforts, and this increase is one indicator of how CAS is shifting the culture of assessment from an individual course perspective to a collective, programmatic one. CASAC has also received unsolicited testimonies about the efficacy of its approach. For example, CASAC member Victor Okafor (Department Head of Africology & African American Studies) stated that, although he initially had reservations about CASAC's expectations for programs to submit plans and reports every year, his program has benefited from the annual planning and reporting (Minutes, November 6, 2014 CASAC meeting). An example comment from a person outside of CAS (and EMU) came from Jennifer Fager (University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire), the keynote speaker at the EMU Assessment Forum (October 2014), who stated that the example assessment reports that she perused were done well.

Continuing to Reshape the Culture of Assessment. CAS faculty are making processes and practices of programmatic assessment more visible and contributing to the shift in the culture of

assessment at EMU. For example, CAS faculty and administrators contributed to the Assessment Forum in October 2014 (e.g., Doug Baker was the opening speaker; Steve Pernecky, as a representative of the Chemistry assessment committee—led by Heather Holmes, among others, presented as a panelist); ten faculty members representing seven programs (Art Education, Chemistry, Children’s Literature, English Education, First-Year Writing, Music Therapy, and Physics) participated in the 2015 Assessment Institute. Furthermore, there is systemic growth in capacity across the college. For example, Heather Shouldice, an assistant professor in the Department of Music & Dance, led all programs in that department to submit assessment plans.

Enhancing Communication Efforts Across the College & University. As mentioned in Section 2, thanks to Jenny Kindred, James Turner, among others, CASAC initiated an online submission system, created an email account and posted assessment resources to its webpage (e.g., sample curriculum maps). Members of the committee also continued to meet with program coordinators, department heads, the College Advisory Council; and CASAC liaisons (Suzanne Gray—Library, Beth Kubitskey—COE, and Chris Foreman—General Education) continued to build links among CAS and other programs or colleges intricately connected with guiding students to learn. The department heads on CASAC (Alex Oakes, Victor Okafor, and Steve Pernecky) have also continued to build support among other DHs, as has Associate Dean Kate Mehuron, who worked closely with Dean Tom Venner, Interim Associate Dean Marianne LaPorte, among others, to ensure support for CASAC and CAS departments. Mehuron and Baker have also continued to serve on the University Assessment Committee, and Baker currently chairs the General Education Subcommittee on Assessment. These links are critical to building capacity among CAS faculty and staff and to the effectiveness of CASAC.

Direct Influences

As mentioned, CASAC solicits assessment plans and reports from each CAS degree program, and CASAC supplies a template. This past year the committee used a rubric to evaluate how well programs planned and reported their assessment efforts. Below are brief descriptions of three programs (Biology—undergraduate, Geographic Information Systems—graduate, and the Interdisciplinary Children’s Literature and Theatre—undergraduate) that each exceeded CASAC expectations and was rated as *exemplary*, and the three reflect a range of disciplines and demonstrate different approaches to assess student learning. For example, the example programs, respectively, used a standardized test, student performance and course grades, and student surveys to gather data for analysis. Most importantly, these programs demonstrated how each *closed the loop*, describing how findings led to program changes or improvements.

Biology Undergraduate Report and Plans. Biology, which has a committee on assessment, described in its report (for 2013-14) how the use of a standardized test enabled the Assessment Committee to analyze results from a range of sections and to demonstrate growth in student learning over time. As they stated: “We observe a trend of increasing median EDAT score as students progress through the curriculum” (see Appendix 3.1: “Biology Report: BIO BIO BIOT UG R 2013-14,” p. 26). The committee strived for reliable and valid results and sought to uncover statistical significance among scores and class sections, and they found: “In nearly every scoring category, student success in addressing the category increases in higher-level biology classes compared to the introductory classes.” However, the analytic process led the committee to raise questions about the efficacy of the test, especially about the prompt used, and faculty plan to examine other potential tools. Therefore, the program demonstrated how it used the results to plan next steps of assessing student learning, which is evident in the program’s assessment plans (see Appendix 3.2: “Biology Plans: BIO BIO EOBI BIOT UG P 2014-15,” Section III, p. 31).

Graduate Program of Geographic Information Systems. The GIS program analyzed students' final research papers, course grades and time spent on a course online shell. The program presented a key finding: "Analysis of scores for final class presentations showed greater overall variability than other assignments indicating that students' research skills were still at varying levels after course completion. Students did well on subject knowledge, data collection and graphic presentation. However, data analytical techniques were often not exploited to their depth" (see Appendix 3.3: "GIS Report: G&G GIS G R 2013-14," Section V, p. 34). This representative finding led the program to re-examine the "final research course to help students better understand the research process, how to better analyze data from a GIS standpoint, and how to better present their research results" (Section VII).

Interdisciplinary Major in Children's Literature and Drama/Theatre for the Young. This interdisciplinary, undergraduate program described how it used student survey results to better understand how well students felt they were prepared to address the concept of *diversity* and to respond to class written assignments. Impressively, the program described the results in detail and how the findings led to their suggested next steps—e.g., "emphasize the connections between writing and reading," particularly in CHL 207, the introductory course, and use more direct measures of student performances (see Appendix 3.4: "CDTY Report: ENGL CDTY UG R 2013-14," Section VII, p. 38).

4. Discuss what your unit learned from the 2014-15 efforts of assessing student learning and how it will use the findings to improvement the program(s), unit, and opportunities for students to learn.

Online Submission System Provided a More Efficient Process. The new online reporting system provided a platform for collecting programmatic assessment plans and reports, including submission date, coordinator's name and contact information, and date the documents were submitted. However, CASAC recognizes that the system needs to be more flexible and dynamic, particularly in order for the committee to upload responses to the same site so that programs can see all relevant documents. The committee will continue to work with James Turner to strengthen the online system.

The Rubric Used for Evaluating Plans and Reports Proved Useful. CASAC employed a rubric used internally to evaluate program assessment reports and plans, which led the committee to begin to contrastively analyze submissions. For each criterion, programs earned a score between 1-5 (5 = *exceptionally well*). The process led the committee to recognize exemplary plans or reports, etc. The committee plans to work toward sharing the evaluation with programs.

Recognized the Value of Archiving Data. Now that CASAC has collected program documents and archived them as data for the past three years, the committee recognizes a need to *secure* the data, particularly for purposes of analyzing it. Kate Mehuron has led the efforts to archive all documents, including agendas and minutes of CASAC meetings, CASAC responses to program plans and reports, etc., in one location. By congregating documents in one location, CASAC will have access to analyzing program documents, especially how selected programs have developed over time.

Enhanced Visibility and Number of Online Resources. CASAC recognizes the continued need to supply programs with templates, examples, and other resources. The committee plans to continue building a useful website for instructors and administrators.

Training of Instructors and Increased Communication Efforts. Although these represent two aspects, training and communicating with instructors and administrators are intricately linked. CASAC will continue to bolster its efforts in both areas.

5. As you turn toward next year (2015-16), what goals have emerged that your unit plans to focus on in the upcoming year?

Based on findings and discussions from the year, CASAC plans to address the following:

- Strengthen online submission system
- Create a more transparent system of evaluating program assessment plans and reports
- Archive all plans and reports and meeting agenda and minutes
- Coordinate the reconfiguration of the submission process
- Build more online resources
- Continue to build capacity in terms of assessing student learning among the committee and CAS administrators and instructors

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