UMD Liberal Education Program Assessment of Student Learning
Annual Report for 2020-21

Completed November 2020
by the Liberal Education Subcommittee

Three of the 10 Liberal Education Program (LEP) categories--Logic & Quantitative reasoning, Humanities, and Cultural Diversity in the US--reported assessment results in September of 2020. Faculty teaching courses in these categories submitted course assessment reports and course data was aggregated at the category level by the Liberal Education Program Data Coordinator.

Category Assessment Reports Summary:

- This is the second cycle of assessment data for all three of the categories; the data were last reported in September of 2017. Assessment of courses in all of these categories first took place in the Fall of 2017.
- All courses offered and for which the faculty were still at UMD in fall of 2020 are included in the dataset.
- Every course listed in each category must report assessment data for at least one semester in the three year cycle. Non-compliance may result in removal of the course from the Liberal Education Program except in the case of faculty who are no longer at UMD. Some courses were not offered in the three-year cycle due to open positions and hiring freezes.

In the assessment reporting, faculty identify their courses as either introductory or advanced, and conduct assessment using the related performance level from the rubric.

For this year of assessment reporting, only courses in these four categories offered in 2018-19 were expected to submit assessment results.

Rates of reporting per category:

- **Logic and Quantitative Reasoning:**
  - In the “Logic” sub-category, assessment data were received for 7 courses. These reports represented assessment data for 779 students at Level 1.
  - In the “Quantitative Reasoning” sub-category, assessment data were received for 14 courses representing 1504 students at level 1.
- **Humanities:** Assessment data were received for 85 courses. These reports represented 6247 students at Level 1 and 1312 students at the advanced level.
- **Cultural Diversity in the US:** Assessment data were received for 40 courses. These reports represented assessment data for 2913 students at Level 1 and data for 836 students at the advanced level. Some course sections did not assess SLO 3.

- Category-level data represents the percentage of total student work assessed that meets or exceeds each performance level:
  - **Logic and Quantitative Reasoning**
    - **Logic:**
      - At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 83.2% for SLO 1; and 81.9% for SLO 2; and 78.8% for SLO 3.
    - **Quantitative Reasoning:**
At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 78.3% for SLO 1; and 75.5% for SLO 2; and 71.3% for SLO 3.

Comparison with the 2017 report data shows significant improvement in student performance in the Logic courses; student performance in the Quantitative Reasoning courses remained consistent.

- **Logic:**
  - SLO 1: +17.8%; SLO 2: +20.9; SLO 3: +15.8

- **Quantitative Reasoning:**
  - SLO 1: +6.8%; SLO 2: +5.3; SLO 3: +1.5

- **Humanities:**
  - At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 89.9% for SLO 1; and 86.4% for SLO 2; and 87.3% for SLO 3.
  - At the Advanced/Level 3 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 90.4% for SLO 1; and 88.3% for SLO 2; and 89.3% for SLO 3.
  - Comparison with the 2017 report data shows some improvement at the introductory level while at the advanced level, there was a small decline.
    - Intro:
      - SLO 1: +2.6%; SLO 2: no change; SLO 3: +1.8
    - Advanced:
      - SLO 1: -2.4%; SLO 2: -3.0; SLO 3: -4.8

- **Cultural Diversity in the US:**
  - At the Intro/Level 1 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 91.9% for SLO 1; and 92.8% for SLO 2; and 87.1% for SLO 3.
  - At the Advanced/Level 3 level, the percentage of students who met or exceeded performance was 85.9% for SLO 1; and 83.7% for SLO 2; and 82.5% for SLO 3.
  - 182 students were not assessed on the outcome of SLO 3; this helps to explain why the difference between SLO 2 and SLO 3 is greater for level 1 compared with level 3.
  - Comparison with the 2017 report data shows little change in SLO 1 and 2; SLO 3 at both the introductory and advanced level shows a larger decline in percentage of students meeting achievement.
    - Intro:
      - SLO 1: -0.2%; SLO 2: +2.0; SLO 3: -6.9
    - Advanced:
      - SLO 1: -8.2%; SLO 2: -10.4; SLO 3: -11.6

Category reports indicate faculty primarily rely on direct measures of assessing student work, such as quizzes, exam questions, homework problems, book reviews, graded-small group discussions, presentations, speeches, demonstrations, written assignments/responses, and papers. Across all the category reports, faculty rely on discussion forums, case studies, creative projects, and group projects in smaller numbers.

Within each category, nearly all faculty review course assessment data to determine ways to improve teaching and learning. Based on the faculty response, it is evident that the practice of discussing Liberal Education course assessment at the department level remains uneven across campus; some departments meet formally at least annually; some review the assessment at the program level; others talk about it at the same time as program-level assessment discussions; others
share reports virtually; still others have no practices in place. For some faculty submission of the assessment report for their course is all that is done.

- The assessment reports for these categories from 2017 noted the following:
  - Determine what to do for courses taught during the cycle that did not submit a report
  - Identify & implement ways to increase faculty participation in category discussion sections
  - Identify ways in which the subcommittee will be involved in student learning assessment processes

Reporting is now mandatory which addresses the issue raised in the 2017 report. This fall, due to COVID-19, faculty discussion sections were not held. The subcommittee has plans to host info sessions in the spring of each year to better prepare faculty to measure and submit assessment reports.

**Liberal Education Subcommittee Interpretations and Recommendations for LEP Assessment:**

- **Course assessment practices:** Overall, the Liberal Education Subcommittee is content with the assessment practices currently in place. We agree with the 2016-17 report recommendation that the subcommittee should review the LEP assessment practices during or after Spring 2022, once all categories have completed the full 3-year program assessment cycles.

- **Category results and interpretations:** The Liberal Education Subcommittee reviewed the category results compiled from the scores reported by faculty teaching the courses. The subcommittee finds the results reported in the Logic & Quantitative Reasoning, Humanities, and Cultural Diversity in the US to indicate satisfactory student performance overall.

  In addition to reviewing the data, the committee discussed the changes in the percentage of student performance and noted that differences in the quantitative data may be a result of a number of factors. This was the first year that assessment reporting was required in these categories rather than being strongly encouraged; this may impact the process of data collection and reporting. In addition, there may be different faculty reporting for the same classes in different cycles; practices and approach to assessment may vary.

  Student performance may also have been affected by COVID-19; assessment of student performance at the end of spring 2020 may not fully capture student achievement given the nature of the pivot to online delivery modes and other stressors.

  The committee did raise concerns that not all of the faculty assessed all of the SLOs in some categories; this may have impacted the results in the Cultural Diversity in the US category. The need to assess all the SLOs will be clarified in communications from the committee.

  We also noted that staffing reductions and open positions had an impact on the reporting in several categories; some classes in the Liberal Education program have not been offered in the three-year cycle.

Based on these discussions:

The subcommittee will offer training opportunities every spring semester in order to better prepare people for the submission of assessment reports.
The subcommittee also hopes to offer ways to share best practices around assessment in order to support faculty professional development, foster pedagogical discussions, as well as introduce faculty new to teaching in the liberal education program to the reporting expectations. This may include sharing examples as to how SLOs are measured or what assignments align best with the rubrics.

We recognize a particular need to bring together faculty teaching in the categories that are more distributed—coming from across a variety of departments and disciplines—rather than categories that tend to come from within a single department to share approaches and talk about successes and areas for improvement. We believe that these discussions and training opportunities will continue to improve the assessment practices in the LEP.

- **Liberal Education Subcommittee involvement in LEP assessment processes:** In the 2018 report, the subcommittee acknowledged that the group should take a more active role in facilitating program assessment work and that the subcommittee members should more directly liaison with the colleges and schools they represent to assure that faculty understand both the assessment practice and the reporting system. Over the past year, more communication about changes to the Liberal Education program have come from the Subcommittee chair and committee representatives. The Liberal Education chair and subcommittee members have sent out the emails outlining the assessment report submissions process. In addition, the Chair followed up with Department Heads and faculty directly in order to make sure data were submitted.

The subcommittee is satisfied with the information on the Liberal Education Data Coordinator’s category assessment reports. Using the category reports, the Liberal Education Subcommittee will continue to complete this annual assessment report and share it with Faculty Senate, Faculty Assembly, the Assessment Subcommittee, the Teaching and Learning Committee, and Curriculum subcommittee. This report will be made available to campus members in the subcommittee’s shared governance folder and on the Liberal Education Assessment website.