

Assessment in the Majors 2004-06

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INTRODUCTION

Every two years, the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education ask departments to submit assessment reports that include learning goals for undergraduate majors and assessment activities. These reports allow the University to track assessment practices and resulting changes across the curriculum.

This document summarizes those reports. The [Assessment in the Majors Chart for 2004-06](#) includes the reports for nearly all UW departments that offer undergraduate majors. In addition, an [Assessment Methods Chart](#), which is updated biennially, lists the approaches each department uses to assess both teaching and student learning.

As the Assessment in the Majors Chart for 2004-06 shows, assessment reports included information from 97 percent of all UW undergraduate majors. Of the responding departments, 91 percent of them have identified learning goals for their majors, and several others noted that they were in the process of developing such goals. A glance at the learning goals for Architecture, Chemistry, Dance, Industrial Engineering, and Social Welfare shows interesting similarities and critical differences across departmental goals.

As the report summaries also show, all the reporting departments assessed the learning of students in their majors with methods that extended beyond classroom assessment techniques and standard course evaluations. The most common methods departments used to assess student learning included capstone courses or capstone-like experiences (81 percent), exit surveys (66 percent), and internships or practicum (45 percent). Departments also frequently used focus groups, interviews, or other forms of conversations with students to identify what students had learned and what they believed was working in the major, as well as those areas that needed improvement or attention. Other methods used to evaluate student learning in the majors included employer surveys, student self-assessment, and focused study of student performance. In addition, the Office of Educational Assessment provides information to all departments on graduates, as well as reports on evaluations for departmental courses.

Curricular review is an essential and time-consuming part of departmental assessment work at the UW. The departmental summaries that follow include curricular changes departments instituted in 2004-06. All but two UW departments reported significant curricular changes for 2004-06. One major change was in the College of Forest Resources, which reduced areas of concentration in the major from seven to two tracks. Another major curriculum change occurred

in the School of Business, which added concentrations in Entrepreneurship and Human Resources Management to its curriculum. In addition to curricular changes of this scope, departments, such as Social Welfare and Computer Science and Engineering, have performed comprehensive review and revisions of their entire undergraduate programs, have added courses to focus on specific skills, and have eliminated courses that seemed to no longer be useful to curricular goals.

In addition to the information provided by the Assessment in the Majors Chart, the Assessment Methods Chart shows the range of methods used by individual departments to assess teaching and learning. The chart is somewhat incomplete, as many departments have several tracks for majors and those tracks may use differing assessment methods. Thus, the learning of two students in separate tracks in the School of Business, for example, may be assessed in different ways. Several departments are using a wide variety of methods for assessing teaching and learning and may serve as models for departments that are working to develop new ways to assess their programs. Examples include Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, Anthropology, Community and Environmental Planning, Forest Resources, Geography, Political Science, and Social Welfare.