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## Action Project

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**Title:** Graduate Student Learning Assessment: Closing the Loop

**Version:** 2

**Institution:** Lewis University

**Status:** Active

**Submitted:** 2015-10-27

**Category:** 1 - Helping Students Learn

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### Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2015-01-16

Target completion date: 2016-05-27

Actual completion date:

### Project Detail

PROJECT SUMMARY

Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

Focusing on graduate courses, this project is in concert with our efforts to continuously engage campus stakeholders in assessing student learning related to ethics across colleges and disciplines. The project will utilize a new assessment management system—Blackboard Learn™ for Outcomes Assessment—to conduct course level assessment that generates data within the teaching context for continuous quality improvement. The project will also develop a systematic approach for assessment across the graduate curriculum to help close the feedback loop to promote learning. Graduate programs from all four colleges will be involved and the organizational areas affected are described in question 4.

#### PROJECT RATIONALE

Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio.

The project is critical for the University to build a strong and sustainable data-driven assessment process. Although the current PAR (Plan-Assess-Respond) model provides a clear path for program-level student learning assessment, it has not generated a high-level of faculty involvement and failed to collect robust data that connects assessment with teaching and learning. Therefore, it is time for the University to build a comprehensive assessment system that documents student progress toward the graduate-level learning outcomes at the program and course levels. Integrating assessment at all levels requires a coordinated process, powered by a technology platform that is capable of supporting course-based outcomes assessment. To create 'buy-in' and ease the transition, the Blackboard Learn™ for Outcomes Assessment module was selected, as Lewis faculty are familiar with Blackboard and its features and already use Blackboard in course delivery. The ultimate goal of this project is to create a single process that integrates the outcomes and assessment within and across courses and programs. Adoption of this systematic approach will help the University make significant progress in closing the loop to improve student learning. This project directly responds to suggestions made in the previous systems portfolio concerning student learning assessment. The anticipated target date of completion is May of 2016.

#### PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed.

The original goals of the project, the measures used to track each goal, and the current status of each goal are summarized in the following table.

Goals/Milestones/Deliverables	Measures/Success	Current Status
1. Secure the Bb add-on required for collection, storage, and analysis of student learning assessment data	Contract is signed	The contract was signed on June 23, 2015.
2. Confirm the number of graduate programs, students, and courses that are participating.	Voluntary participation by 30% of our 24 masters-level graduate programs. Once institutionalized, we strive to achieve 100%	12 of the 24 master's programs participated in the pilot project.
3. Install the Bb assessment module and complete system configuration	Status 'Alive' is achieved	In process. System is being beta-tested on campus by select participants during Fall 2015 semester.
4. Create a faculty development program to prepare faculty in the volunteer programs in using/interpreting rubric (GSLO#3), the Bb module, setting targets, collecting data, entering data, and evaluating results.	Bb outcomes assessment handbook is created	The Blackboard tool was not available during Year 1 of the project. Sessions were held with volunteers who participated in the project for Spring & Summer 2015 to prepare them in using the rubric, setting targets, collecting/entering/reporting data, and evaluating results.
5. Conduct curriculum mapping to identify courses to be assessed	Courses and key assignments are identified and loaded into the system	Since the Blackboard system has not yet been implemented, the course mappings the programs

		reported are being kept on file and integrated into our existing WEAVE assessment platform.
6. Complete implementation of course-embedded assessment in Bb	Alignment of outcomes at different levels (course and program), rubrics, and course mapping is implemented in the Bb database; key assignments and the common rubric for GSLO#3 are loaded into the Bb database	The Blackboard system was not available during the first year of the pilot project, so performing the alignments in the tool could not be accomplished.
7. Conduct power users workshops	Workshop is held and evaluations are collected	We held two information sessions for participants in late January / early February 2015.
8. Perform course-level assessment	Course level data is collected, scored, and analyzed	Twelve graduate programs performed course-level assessment of GSLO#3 and submitted their data.
9. Perform data analysis	Data is aggregated, analyzed, and reported at the program and university levels	The data from the 12 programs were aggregated and analyzed by IR. Findings were presented to graduate program directors at the annual graduate retreat on 8/20/15 and to the

		<b>Deans of the Colleges. It will be reported to UGAC on 9/23/15</b>
<b>10. Present findings to the Lewis community</b>	<b>Actions are developed based on the assessment results</b>	<b>To be completed.</b>

The following steps will be taken this year to achieve the goals of the project:

- Report findings to University Graduate Affairs Committee on September 23, 2015
- Survey participants about their experience in first phase to improve the process at the beginning of Fall 2015.
- Analyze and refine rubric and processes in Fall 2015 based on survey results.
- Collect a second set of data for GSLO#3 in Fall 2015
- A select group of participants will beta-test the Blackboard Assessment Module in Fall 2015; best practices will be established for using the Blackboard Assessment Module in assessing graduate student learning outcomes.
- During Fall 2015, plan for collecting data using the rubric for GSLO #1 and recruit participants for Spring 2016.
- Collect data using the rubric for GSLO #1 during Spring 2016.
- Analyze, report findings from aggregated Spring & Fall 2015 data for GSLO#3 and from Spring 2016 for GSLO#1.
- Develop process for reporting and documenting action steps taken by Institution and programs as result of assessment findings.

## INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

The project was previewed for Graduate Program Directors at their November 2014 meeting. We also informed the College Deans about the program and heard their suggestions and concerns, and we asked them to encourage their faculty to participate. We formally launched the program in January 2015. In the beginning weeks of the program, we held two information sessions to educate participants on the goals of the project, the rubric they would use, how to select or create an assessment, the project time line, how to collect the data, and how the data would be used. Since our graduate programs employ 8-week courses, some programs collected data during the first 8-week term, but most joined the project later in the semester and collected data during the second 8 weeks of the term.

Currently, twelve graduate programs from all four colleges (College of Arts & Sciences, College of Business, College of Education, and College of Nursing and Health Professions) and the School for Professional and Continuing Education are participating and reporting data on the graduate student learning outcome concerning ethics. Participating faculty will work with various campus assessment entities/workgroups such as Office of Graduate Studies (OGS), University Graduate Affairs Committee (UGAC), Committee on Assessment of Student Learning (CASL), Center for Academic Technology Solutions, and Office of Institutional Research and Planning to develop assessment practices that are embedded in academic courses and subsequently showcase the utility of the methods to support teaching and learning on campus.

Provost	Provide resources and support essential to the success for this project
Office of Graduate Studies	Provide direct oversight of the project, including planning, implementation, and evaluation phases of the project. The Graduate Dean will serve as Co-Chair of this project.
Institutional Research and Planning	Assist with planning the project and determining the appropriate measures and resources needed to ensure the success of the project. Provide ongoing guidance and assistance with data collection and analysis.
University Graduate Affairs Committee	The faculty governance body will provide ongoing feedback and support as needed as a resource to the project team.
Graduate Assessment AQIP Action Project Team	Provide input/feedback, lead the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases, and help disseminate success stories across campus
AQIP Coordinating Team	Provide guidance and support to Project Team in planning/implementation/evaluation of project and reporting requirements.

Committee on Assessment of Student Learning (CASL)	Provide input/feedback and assist with communication of the process and results with faculty members.
Center for Academic Technology Solutions	Manage system configuration and facilitate user training

#### PROJECT CONTROL

Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

The project will be monitored continuously and every effort will be made to adhere to the timeline described in question three and again represented below. Though this timeline estimates project conclusion in Fallof 2015, it is anticipated that improvements will be made at the course level and continuous monitoring of graduate student learning concerning ethics will occur during the next academic year. Further assessment of the other graduate student learning outcomes can then occur using the platform that is developed in this action project. Additionally, project monitoring will be under the purview of the action project committee.

Co-Chairs:

Dr. Nan Yancey, Graduate Dean

Dr. Ray Klump, Professor & Chair (Computer & Mathematical Sciences); Chair of University Graduate Affairs Committee (UGAC)

Committee: Dr. Maureen Culleeney (COB), Dr. Barbara Mackey (COE), Dr. Stacie Elder (CONHP); Dr. Jan Mines (Ex-Officio, Office of the Provost); Dr. Bill Chura (Ex-Officio, AQIP representative); Dr. Jion Liou Yen (Ex-Officio, Consultant from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning)

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- Report findings to University Graduate Affairs Committee on September 23, 2015
- Survey participants about their experience in first phase to improve the process at the beginning of Fall 2015.
- Analyze and refine rubric and processes in Fall 2015 based on survey results.
- Collect a second set of data for GSLO#3 in Fall 2015
- A select group of participants will beta-test the Blackboard Assessment Module in Fall 2015; best practices will be established for using the Blackboard

Assessment Module in assessing graduate student learning outcomes.

- During Fall 2015, plan for collecting data using the rubric for GSLO #1 and recruit participants for Spring 2016.
- Collect data using the rubric for GSLO #1 during Spring 2016.
- Analyze, report findings from aggregated Spring & Fall 2015 data for GSLO#3 and from Spring 2016 for GSLO#1.
- Develop process for reporting and documenting action steps taken by Institution and programs as result of assessment findings.

The success of the project is measured in terms of (1) number of programs participating, (2) number of action plans for improvement written in light of the results, and (3) amount of support from the institution for implementing the action plans. Once the pilot phase concludes and this effort becomes the official graduate assessment process, all graduate programs will be expected to collect and report data through it. Universal participation in the process is the first measure of success of the fully implemented program. Of course, collecting data proves useful only if it influences change that brings about improvement. So, another measure of success will be documented evidence that directors are analyzing and reflecting on the data and formulating strategies for improving their offerings in response to the data. All graduate programs will be expected to implement this process in a three-year cycle, alternately exploring GSLO#1, GSLO#2, and GSLO#3 in sequential years, reflecting on the data and formulating strategies for improving their offerings in response to the data. As well, aggregated data across the institution will be analyzed by the University Graduate Affairs Committee and the Graduate Directors as a whole under the auspices of the Office of Graduate Studies to identify institutional trends and recommendations for institutional policy changes. Another measure of success will be the adequacy of the support provided by the institution for this work including resources required for implementing this process each year. Therefore, a successful program will have universal participation and a regular schedule of program and institutional visioning and accompanying improvements.

#### ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

We must convey clearly to the participants how to incorporate the assessment process into their normal grading procedures so that it doesn't become a burden for them. Due to delays in purchasing the Blackboard assessment module, we did not incorporate the tool into the project during Year 1, nor will we be able to fully integrate the tool into the project in Fall 2015 as it is being Beta-tested with select participants. The original goals prioritized incorporating the Blackboard module into this work, but that could not happen this year. Access to the tool would have made the instructors' task much more convenient, but we were able to collect meaningful data nevertheless. As with any new technology, the tool might actually prove a hindrance to some, and so we will need to make sure that participants are properly trained in how to use it.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



Provide any additional information that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project.

The assessment of graduate student learning outcomes will continue beyond the initial year-long pilot phase. The purpose of the pilot phase was to streamline the data collection process and to refine the rubrics. Once the processes and rubrics have been revised and finalized in light of feedback from the participants, the plan is to assess one of the three student learning outcomes each academic year on a published schedule. Annually, every graduate program will be responsible for collecting and reporting data using the rubric to assess that semester's targeted learning outcome. The data will be centrally collected and analyzed, and the analysis for each department will be reported back to the program directors so that they can formulate a response to it. The responses from the program directors will identify what they see as the important conclusions to draw from the results, and what directions they plan to take to help spur enhanced student learning. These responses will also be centrally collected from across the institution. Part of each response will be a reflection by the Program Director on what they wrote in their previous response and how the steps they have taken with their program during the past year impacted student learning. In this way, we create a mechanism for continuous improvement that is driven by the data collected through this effort.

## Annual Update