Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan

Academic Year 2016

This document describes the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences learning outcomes assessment plan for Academic Year 2016. An overview of the need for assessment is provided, along with descriptions of procedures and the annual calendar for assessment.

Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences

Assessment Plan
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
AY 2016

I. <u>Introduction</u>

Assessment of learning outcomes has become a priority among higher education institutions. Both university regional accrediting bodies and accrediting bodies for professions are requiring academic units to develop and maintain assessment programs and to utilize results of assessment processes to inform curriculum development. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, which is the accrediting body of Texas A&M University, underscores the importance of assessment in its 2008 publication, *Principles of Accreditation*:

http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2008PrinciplesofAccreditation.pdf

Two of twelve "fundamental characteristics of accreditation" (page 8 of 45) point directly to assessment. One of these stresses that "accreditation requires institutional commitment to the concept of quality enhancement through continuous assessment and improvement," and another stresses that "accreditation acknowledges an institution's prerogative to articulate its mission within the recognized context of higher education and its responsibility to show that it is accomplishing its mission." Operationally, the mandate for assessment exists within the Commission's requirement that accredited institutions develop and maintain a "Quality Enhancement Plan" (QEP) that, among other elements, "focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution" (p. 24 of 45).

As an institution accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Texas A&M University is responsive to the assessment mandate. On April 17 of 2008, the Council of Academic Deans approved the document, "Assessment Expectations for Colleges:"

http://assessment.tamu.edu/asmt/assessment_timeline.pdf

That document provided specific target dates through the period 2007-2012 when academic departments were to have put specific assessment components in place. By the end of "Cycle 1" (August 2009), departments were required to have developed plans for assessment of learning outcomes, collected data, and entered findings into an electronic data warehouse and administrative compliance evaluation tool, "WeaveOnline."

Bodies that accredit professional preparation programs are also emphasizing the need for assessment of learning outcomes. One of the most internationally prominent of these is the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA; http://www.chea.org/default.asp?link=5). CHEA is an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities that recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations. One of the programmatic accrediting organizations accredited by CHEA is the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation and Tourism (COAPRT), which, in turn, accredits higher education programs in recreation, parks, and tourism. In response to a CHEA mandate, and in order to better serve its constituents, the COAPRT accreditation standards mandate assessment of learning outcomes.

Thus, the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences has both an institutional and professional mandate to establish an assessment program and use data from that program for quality enhancement. The assessment program described in this document addresses the mandate of Texas A&M University, based on its accredited status with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and it also addresses the professional mandate for accreditation arising from our status as a program accredited by the COAPRT.

II. Ethical Use of Test Scores

The educational principle of consequential evidence of validity establishes that validity of inferences made from test scores is inextricably bound to the intended use of a test. ***As such, it is vital to establish that tests used in this assessment process are to be used for the sole purpose of assessment of student learning outcomes***. Although results of this process may imply that particular educational processes should be evaluated to sustain or improve learning, use of test scores for reporting in instructor performance evaluations or other unrelated or tangentially related purposes would comprise unethical use of the assessment process.

Further, although results may or may not be part of the grading structure for individual classes, test scores will be considered information protected by the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act. As such, scores of individual students will not be published in any way, and no data will be provided that would enable identification of scores of any individual student by a third party. Students are, of course, free to use scores from tests that they complete in any way that they choose.

Learning Outcomes: Texas A&M University Undergraduate Programs

Texas A&M University has established the following learning outcomes for all bachelor's degree program graduates:

1. Master the depth of knowledge required for a degree
2. Demonstrate critical thinking
3. Communicate effectively
4. Practice personal and social responsibility
5. Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence
6. Prepare to engage in lifelong learning
7. Work collaboratively

Learning Outcomes: Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Major

Learning outcomes of our Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences major are a follows:

- **RPTS Learning Outcome 0.0:** RPTS graduates will have reasoning, communication, diversity, and analytic skills appropriate to a strong general education.

- **RPTS Learning Outcome 1.0 (Corresponds to COAPRT Standard 7.01):** RPTS graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the scope of the profession, professional practice, and the history, scientific, and philosophical foundations of recreation, park and tourism industries. Domains include the following:

  - *History of parks, recreation, and tourism*
  - *Social science foundations of parks, recreation and tourism (economics, psychology, sociology, geography)*
  - *Scope and nature of the park, recreation, and tourism industries*

- **RPTS Learning Outcome 2.0 (Corresponds to COAPRT Standard 7.02):** RPTS graduates will be able to design, plan, and implement recreation and tourism experiences among a diversity of clientele, settings, cultures, and contexts. Domains include the following:

  - *Program and Event Administration*
  - *Program and Event Design*
  - *Program and Event Marketing*
  - *Program and Event Operations*
  - *Program and Event Risk*

- **RPTS Learning Outcome 3.0 (Corresponds to COAPRT Standard 7.03):** RPTS graduates will be able to understand and apply profession-related principles and practices of management and administration, including,

  - *Management history*
  - *Management functions (planning, organizing, leading, directing, controlling)*
  - *Management of financial resources by park, recreation, and tourism managers (Budgeting, financial statements, basic financial analyses)*
  - *Services marketing*
  - *Strategic management*
  - *Business ethics*
  - *Sources and strategies of finance*

- **RPTS Learning Outcome 4.0 (Corresponds to COAPRT Standard 7.04)**. RPTS program graduates shall demonstrate, through a comprehensive internship of not less than 400 clock hours and no fewer than 10 weeks, the potential to succeed as professionals at supervisory of higher levels in park, recreation, tourism, or related organizations.

Learning Outcomes: Community Development Major

- **CD Learning Outcome 0.0:** CD graduates will have reasoning, communication, diversity, and analytic skills appropriate to a strong general education.
- **CD Learning Outcome 1.0:** CD graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the scope of the profession, professional practice, and the history, scientific, and philosophical foundations of CD.
- **CD Learning Outcome 2.0:** CD graduates will be able to design, plan, and implement CD efforts among a diversity of stakeholders in a community.
- **CD Learning Outcome 3.0:** CD graduates will be able to understand and apply profession-related principles and practices of management and administration of community related institutions and infrastructure.
- **CD Learning Outcome 4.0:** CD graduates will demonstrate knowledge of the principles of community organization and structure, and process of change, leadership, conflict management, decision making, and volunteerism
- **CD Learning Outcome 5.0**. CD program graduates shall demonstrate, through a comprehensive internship of not less than 400 clock hours and no fewer than 10 weeks, the potential to succeed as professionals at supervisory of higher levels in community development organizations.

Learning Outcomes: Professional Event Manager Certificate Program

Learning outcomes for the Professional Event Manager Certificate Program are derived from Silvers (2006) Event management Body of Knowledge program and from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Texas Event Leadership Program.

- **PEMC Learning outcome 1.0:** Individuals completing requirement for the Professional Event Management Certificate will be able to use facts, principles, and procedures associated with the *administration of events* domain defined by the Event Management Body of Knowledge Program
- **PEMC Learning outcome 2.0:** Individuals completing requirement for the Professional Event Management Certificate will be able to use facts, principles and procedures associated with the *experience design of events* domain defined by the Event Management Body of Knowledge Program
- **PEMC Learning outcome 3.0:** Individuals completing requirement for the Professional Event Management Certificate will be able to use facts, principles and procedures associated with the *marketing of events* domain defined by the Event Management Body of Knowledge Program
- **PEMC Learning outcome 4.0:** Individuals completing requirement for the Professional Event Management Certificate will be able to use facts, principles and procedures associated with the *operation of events* domain defined by the Event Management Body of Knowledge Program
- **PEMC Learning outcome 5.0:** Individuals completing requirement for the Professional Event Management Certificate will be able to use facts, principles and procedures about event sponsorships, partnerships, and sales to planning and hosting of events.

Undergraduate Program Measures and Procedures

For learning outcomes in the undergraduate program, assessment tools include a) Department exams for select classes, b) senior exit survey, and c) student employability ratings by professionals. A brief description of each of these metrics follows. Tables 1 and 2 show how these metrics relate to learning outcomes of the BS in Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences and the BS in Community Development, respectively. The correspondence between metrics and learning outcomes is not, of course, as discrete as Tables 1 and 2 suggest. The learning outcome associated with diversity (RPTS 2.0), for example, is relevant to foundational knowledge (RPTS 1.0), recreation event and experience planning (RPTS 2.0), management of experience industry organizations (RPTS 3.0), and internship experiences (RPTS 4.0). Table 3 shows how the measures are used in assessment of learning outcomes of our professional event manager certificate program.

Department Exams. Exams are administered during the last two weeks of RPTS core courses that are designated as primary sources of select learning outcomes (see Table 4). Exams originally written in 2007 were substantially revised during the summer of 2013 for use during Calendar Year 2014. The tests were revised to improve content-related evidence of validity. Item maps were constructed and balanced numbers of items were written to represent the bodies of content in each domain. The previous versions of the test lacked balance in terms of representativeness of content.

Instructors are free to apply the test scores as part of the students' grades for the course if they wish to do so. Each exam includes approximately 20 multiple-choice questions. A criterion-referenced approach to testing is used. Cut scores were determined through the Nedelsky method. The Nedelsky method takes into account item difficulty, based on expert judgements of the attractiveness of each distractor in multiple choice tests. Experts who made these judgements for the 2014 exams were the teachers of the classes in which each testlet is to be used.

In the initial years of learning outcomes assessment, the testlets were administered on a pre-post basis. As stable estimates of mean scores resulted from repeat administration of the exams, those estimates were used for comparison and pre-tests were eliminated in order to reduce claims on instructional time.

For the purpose of making judgments about program efficacy in facilitating learning outcomes, the unit of analysis is the class as a whole; not the individual student. A report is prepared by the Associate Department Head or Department Head each year. That report is delivered to the Undergraduate Committee and Graduate Committees for review and action. All data analyses, including item analyses, means, and performance of individual students are made available to the instructors of the respective classes upon request. The data are retained over time so that trends can be evaluated.

Senior Exit Survey . Students in capstone courses respond to a questionnaire that examines their perceptions of various facets of their experience as a student at TAMU and in the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Sciences. Question set 16 includes a series of items (a through p) that are directly related to learning outcomes of general education, foundational knowledge, recreation experience design, and operations and strategic management. The performance standard is a mean of 5 or higher on the 7-point scale.

Intern Evaluations by Park, Recreation, and Tourism and Community Development Industry Managers. Based on observation of the intern's performance over the course of the internship, park, recreation, and tourism managers submit an "employability rating" at the conclusion of students' mandatory internship experience. These professionals indicate whether they would hire each intern, using a rating scale that includes "Yes," "Maybe," and "No" as options. They explain any rating other than "Yes." This employability measure serves as a direct, composite measure of learning outcomes related to our professional preparation. The employability metric addresses the question, "is our program preparing graduates who are adequately prepared for entry level positions in the park, recreation, and tourism industries?"

Effective Fall semester of AY 2015, a new item will be used:
Does this intern have sufficient professional preparation to succeed at an entry-level position in your organization?

___ Yes ___ Maybe ___ No

This item reduces ambiguity associated with its predecessor. In responding to the question, "would you hire" our intern, some managers focus more on the fit of the intern's interests, the needs of the organization, or related matters. Our intent, of course, is to ask professionals to evaluate the quality of professional preparation of our students, in terms of suitability for employment in the experience industries.

Table 1: Metric Selection Matrix for RPTS Major (BS) Metric	Direct (D) or Indirect (I) Measure?	Performance (P) or Capacity (C)?	0.0 Strong General Education Outcomes	1.0 Scope of the Profession, professional practice, science, philosophy (corresponds to COAPRT 7.01)	2.0 Ability to design, plan and implement experiences among diverse populations (Corresponds to COAPRT 7.02)	3.0 Apply management and administration principles (Corresponds to COAPRT 7.03)	4.0 Ability to succeed as an entry-level professional	Performance Standard
Senior Exit Survey	I	P	16a.-16g	16k	16n	16 d, e, f, g, h, I, j, l, m, o, p		The average item (mean) score will be higher than 5 on the 7-point scale
Exams	D	C		RPTS 201 RPTS 340	RPTS 311	RPTS 304 RPTS 336 RPTS 401 RPTS 403 RPTS 423		The exam score of at least 90% of the students will meet or exceed the "cut score" that has been calculated for each exam
Intern site-supervisor ratings: Employability ratings	D	P					RPTS 484	90% or higher will report that they "would" or "might" hire the intern if resources were available

Metric	Direct (D) or Indirect (I) Measure?	Performance (P) or Capacity (C)?	0.0 Reasoning, communication, diversity, analytic skills	1.0 Knowledge of the scope of the profession and foundations in history, science, and philosophy	2.0 Ability to design, plan, and implement CD programs and initiatives among diverse stakeholders	3.0 Apply profession-related principles and practices of management and administration of community related institutions and infrastructure	4.0 Knowledge of the principles of community organization and structure, and process of change, leadership, conflict management,, decision making, and volunteerism.	5.0 Internship: demonstrate ability to succeed as an entry-level professional	
Senior Exit Survey	I	P	16a-16g						The average item (mean) score will be higher than 5 on the 7-point scale
Exam	D	C	RPTS 308 RPTS 408	RPTS 308 RPTS 408	RPTS 308 RPTS 408	RPTS 408	RPTS 308 RPTS 408		The exam score of at least 90% of the students will meet or exceed the "cut score" that has been calculated for each exam
Intern site-supervisor ratings: Employability ratings								RPTS 484	90% or higher will report that they "would" or "might" hire the intern if resources were available

Table 2: Metric Selection Matrix for Community Development Major (BS)

Metric	Direct (D) or Indirect (I) Measure?	Performance (P) or Capacity (C)?	1.0 Management/Administration	2.0 Design of Events	3.0 Marketing of Events	4.0 Operation of Events	Performance Standard
Table 3: Metric Selection Matrix for Professional Event Manager Certificate Program							
Exams	D	C	RPTS 304	RPTS 311 RPTS 320 RPTS 321	RPTS 311, RPTS 320 RPTS 321	RPTS 320 RPTS 321	The exam score of at least 90% of the students will meet or exceed the "cut score" that has been calculated for each exam

Table 4

Classes in which Exams are administered, by Academic Program Assessed

===

Class	Brief Title	Academic Program Assessed		
		RPTS Major	CD Major	Professional Event Manager Certificate
201	Intro to RPTS	x		
304	RPTS Management	x[a]	x[a]	x[a]
311	Programs and Events	x		x
308	Community Development I		x	
320	Event Management I			x
321	Event Management II			x
336	Research and Evaluation	x		
340	Leisure and Human Diversity	x		
401	Recreation Business Planning	X[b]		
403	Financing and Marketing	X[b]		
408	Community Development II		x	
423	Resort Management	x[a]	x[a]	x[a]

[a]Students may complete either RPTS 304 or 423
[b]Students may complete either RPTS 401 or 403

Learning Outcomes: Community Development Certificate

The two learning outcomes of our community development certificate are as follows:

- **Community Development Certificate Learning Outcome 1:** Students who complete the certificate program will have a basic understanding of community development processes (e.g. leadership and management, resource mobilization, and conflict resolution) and the skills (e.g., decision-making, communication, critical thinking and analysis) necessary for community leaders, professionals, and others to participate effectively in these processes
- **Community Development Certificate Learning Outcome 2:** Students who complete the certificate program will successfully link community development processes and skills to coursework related to substantive social, economic, natural resource, health, and other issues.

Learning Outcomes: Master of Science Degree and Doctoral Degree Programs
The learning outcomes for our academic (Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy) degree programs follow. These learning outcomes are constant across the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences:

Students graduating this (MS or PhD) program will…

1)…exhibit a coherent understanding of discipline-specific knowledge
2)…apply discipline-specific knowledge in a range of contexts to solve problems, make and justify decisions
3)…use a varied of sources and evaluate multiple points of view to analyze and integrate information
4)…communicate effectively
5)…teach or explain the subject matter in the discipline to a broad range of audiences
6)…exhibit proficiency in technology appropriate to solve problems in her or his discipline
7)…choose ethical courses of action in research and practice
8)…develop clear, hypothesis driven research plans
9)…construct valid, data-supported and theoretically consistent research
10)…effectively disseminate research results in appropriate contexts

Each supervisory committee member rates each student on a three point scale: a) exceeds expectations, b) meets expectations, and c) below expectations. These are scored 3, 2, and 1, respectively. Our performance standard is a mean of 2.25 or higher for each of the 10 learning outcomes.

<u>Learning Outcomes: Master of Recreation Resources Development Program</u>

- **MRRD Program Learning Outcome 1:** Students graduating the program will be prepared to succeed in both strategic and operations management of organizations that serve as stewards of parks.
- **MRRD Program Learning Outcome 2:** Students graduating from the program will be prepared to manage and make informed and defensible decisions about management of heritage and natural resources of parks and natural areas.
- **MRRD Program Learning Outcome 3:** Students graduating from this program will be prepared to use research to make data-based decisions about management of operations, strategy, and heritage and natural resources
- **MRRD Program Learning Outcome 4:** Students graduating from this program will be prepared to provide leadership to interpretation, law enforcement, and visitor service functions that directly impact visitor experience

<u>Learning Outcomes Assessment Process: Graduate Programs</u>
Learning outcomes of our academic degree programs (Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees) are assessed via a standard College of Agriculture and Life Sciences rating scale. Ratings are completed by members of supervisory committees at the conclusion of defenses of theses, dissertations, and capstone projects.

Learning outcomes of our MRRD program will not be assessed during AY 2016. We are not admitting students into that program.

<u>V. Reporting</u>

Assessment results will be reported in four formats, each addressing a different purpose:

1) A succinct summary will be printed on paper, suitable for review and action by our undergraduate and graduate committees, to ensure continuous quality improvement of our programs

2) Results relevant to the basic Texas A&M University learning outcomes for undergraduate programs will be entered into the WEAVEonline data warehouse to facilitate the University's monitoring of compliance. The University's WEAVEonline system uses an August 1 deadline, and most of our students complete internships during summer terms. This calendar does not afford us sufficient opportunity to analyze, interpret, and enter summer term data. As a result, we use internship site supervisor ratings from the Fall and Spring terms of the academic year only.

3) Results relevant to College of Agriculture and Life Sciences graduate program learning outcomes will be entered into the WEAVEonline data warehouse to facilitate the University's monitoring of compliance.

4) A summary of results related to professional preparation of RPTS majors will be posted in the Department's website. The purposes of that posting are to inform the public and to maintain compliance with Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions Standard 2.04.05, which reads as follows:

The program annually posts 7.0 series aggregated data and additional evidence reflecting program academic quality and student achievement on their program and/or departmental website. Such information shall be consistent with FERPA requirements.

VI. Assessment Calendar, Calendar Year 2016

Target Date	Tasks	Target Date	Tasks
January 15	Provide orientation to any faculty member who will teach a class in which a Department Exam is administered	Nov 15	Distribute Department Exams to teachers Distribute Exit Survey to teachers of RPTS 401 and 403
April 1	Distribute Department Exams to teachers Distribute Exit Survey to teachers of RPTS 401 and 403	Dec 15	All data collection for Fall semester complete: Department exams, exit survey, intern evaluations
April 30	Data collection from intern supervisors complete		
May 1	Department Exam and Exit Survey Data collection complete		
June 1	Provide orientation to any faculty member who will teach a class in which a Department Exam is administered Data from CY 2015 analyzed, report written, and results entered into WEAVEonline		
August 30	Provide orientation to any faculty member who will teach a class in which a Department Exam is Administered Discuss results of CY 2014 data analysis at full faculty meeting; distribute written report to UG and Grad Committees, charge each committee to conduct in-depth discussion and determine action, as appropriate		