

Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives NEWSLETTER

Blackboard Update

It has never been easier for Marshall's faculty to align a course assignment to one of Marshall's Baccalaureate Degree Profile (BDP) outcomes. Once these alignments are made, all students need to do is upload their completed work (aka "artifacts") to make this work available for university-wide assessment.

Chris Sochor, Instructional Designer in Online Learning said, "With so many instructors being required to move course materials online due to COVID-19, we have the unique opportunity to provide more artifacts for university assessment. Since most assignments are set up in Blackboard now, it is easy to align a course assignment to a university goal within Blackboard."

Each summer, an interdisciplinary group of Marshall faculty assess random samples of student artifacts aligned to the university's BDP outcomes. A large number of artifacts from a wide variety of disciplines ensures a more representative random sample for our faculty reviewers, resulting in a more accurate assessment of student achievement at Marshall.

"We know that Marshall's faculty are creative and design a wide variety of assignments that give students the opportunity to show us what they've learned," Sochor said. "Since university assessment is a requirement of our institution's accreditation standards, it's important that we have access to this variety of student artifacts, completed in response to faculty assignments, to show off our students' work."

When reviewing student artifacts, the interdisciplinary assessment team uses a combination of rubrics created for each of the BDP outcomes and nationally normed rubrics created by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The latter are known as the AAC&U Value rubrics. For example, when reviewing artifacts from students' senior capstone courses, the team uses the AAC&U's Critical Thinking and Written Communication Value rubrics.

"The AAC&U rubrics are evidence-based, faculty-developed, normed assessment rubrics that align with outcomes that are applicable to a wide range of degree programs," Sochor said.

Sochor is willing to help faculty align their assignments to the appropriate BDP outcomes. He can be reached at **304-696-3192** or at **chris.sochor@marshall.edu**.

OUR MISSION

The Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives operates within the Division of Academic Affairs. The mission of the Office of Assessment & Quality Initiatives at Marshall University is to support best practices in assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional levels, resulting in continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

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Department SPOTLIGHT

In this newsletter, we present the Marshall University Department of Criminal Justice, which has become a university leader in good assessment practices. Since focusing on outcomes and alignments, the department has been able to create a collaborative and successful assessment process.

Creating a successful assessment process started during the University's Open Pathways Initiative, where faculty of the Criminal Justice department began by identifying pre-culminating courses and creating learning outcomes from that set of courses. Today, the program's student learning outcomes emphasize student achievement in the areas of professional terminology, career building, research methods, theoretical knowledge, and legal knowledge.

"With a set of pre-culminating courses that essentially make up the core, it seemed logical to create the outcomes with those courses in mind," Dr. Kim DeTardo-Bora, Professor of Criminal Justice, said.

As freshmen, students in Criminal Justice are required to explore the Criminal Justice profession and think about career building opportunities during their university experience. They are also taught to consider the impact of their personal choices on future career opportunities. Like most disciplines, understanding terminology is one of the foundational skills that students acquire. For example, it is important for them to understand legal-based terms, and they are given a basic terminology assessment early during their curriculum.

Once students reach CJ 302, a research methods class, the department assesses whether students can identify the components of a research study and interpret research findings to derive logical policy and program implications. The overall goal is for students to become both users and consumers of research. To complete the assessment process, the senior seminar course contains several assessments which incorporate all of the previous outcomes, along with a capstone paper.

Dr. DeTardo-Bora suggests that for departments trying to start or improve their culture of assessment, it is very important to get faculty buy-in and to make a plan and stick to it. Once faculty have gotten into the process and once it becomes routine, then faculty are able to see not only how students are performing but the ways in which we can improve student learning in the classroom.

"You need to have faculty who are willing to come to the table and have conversations about whether or not the students met the benchmarks that year," DeTardo-Bora said.

One strength of the department's assessment efforts is the ability to collaborate, to reassess the process, and to create meaningful assessments. The faculty hold meetings once or

twice a semester and continually update each other about the progress on certain assessments. In the end, it is important to create assessment measures that are the best measures of each program learning outcome.

"If the measure is not right, then you are forfeiting validity. And, the faculty in the department know that I am never satisfied. I keep wanting to tweak and modify until we get the measure right," DeTardo-Bora said. "Fortunately, we have an amazing group of faculty in our department who care about the quality of the assessment process and the opportunity it affords not only our program but our students."

QUALTRICS

Qualtrics is a survey-building software that makes creating surveys and forms very simple. With a robust series of tools, surveys created with Qualtrics are extremely customizable. Everything from a simple customer satisfaction survey to a huge research project can be created using the software.

Once completed, Qualtrics organizes the data and creates visualizations which can be exported to a number of different programs. These visualizations are also customizable, so that you can tailor them to your specific needs.

Above all else, Qualtrics is extremely easy to learn and navigate. In addition to being intuitive, there is a large tutorial library within the website.

All Marshall University faculty, staff, and students are eligible for a Qualtrics account. To request an account, simply visit www.marshall.edu/qualtrics and submit the appropriate form.

For any questions about Qualtrics, contact Adam Russell at russell58@marshall.edu or 304-696-5097.

ASSESSMENT DAY 2021

Online surveys will be available for students from March 16 through April 13. Your participation is important because survey responses help us evaluate the effectiveness of various services provided to Marshall's students and to make improvements where necessary. Participants will be eligible for prizes, which will be announced later. The Assessment Day prize drawing will be held on Wednesday, April 14. Check for updates under "key links" on the university's assessment webpage www.marshall.edu/assessment.

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