



USC School of Journalism Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Adopted 2019-2020 (revised 2023-2024)

Bachelor of Arts, Journalism

Bachelor of Arts, Public Relations and Advertising

Master of Arts, Public Relations and Advertising

Mission of the School of Journalism

Our mission is to lead the fields of journalism and public relations through groundbreaking scholarship, teaching and public service in a global multicultural environment. We consider this mission to be inseparable from our commitment to diversity. We cannot advance the fields of journalism and public relations without full representation and participation across all manners of difference.

Purpose of assessment

Assessment of our Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism provides indicators for determining the effectiveness of our programs and whether students are acquiring the competencies and values outlined by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications.

1. **Freedom of speech:** Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located.
2. **History:** Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
3. **Domestic and global diversity:** Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
4. **Visual information:** Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies. Student learn all aspects of visual journalism except broadcast. This includes photography, graphics, audio and photo slideshows and video for social media platforms.
5. **Writing:** Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
6. **Ethics:** Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
7. **Critical thinking and research:** Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
8. **Numeracy:** Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.

9. **Editing and evaluation:** Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
10. **Technology:** Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Professional master's programs

11. **Contribution to industry:** Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

These assessments are critical in helping the USC Annenberg School of Journalism ensure high quality programs through four areas:

Accountability: Ensure to prospective and current students and their parents that our journalism degree offered by the School of Journalism provide contemporary training for students seeking careers in journalism.

Improvement: Identify through direct and indirect measures enhancements the School should undertake in the curriculum to ensure effectiveness and coherence.

Innovation: Create a culture of innovation in our degree programs that examine different ways, either through instruction or technology, or both, that enlivens the student learning experience.

Accreditation: Satisfy the required standards for ACEJMC.

Assessment plan

In our course-based assessment plan, each required course is assessed for student achievement in learning outcomes mapped to one or more ACEJMC competency or value. Our plan assesses actual assignments and exams to give us a detailed view of what we are teaching and where we are teaching it.

Assessments of competencies and values that are learning outcomes in all of the required courses (writing, critical thinking and research, and editing and evaluation) focus on two points: basic levels of achievement in the introductory courses, and mastery in the capstone course.

Strategy for implementing plan

The school director and the advisor to the director for assessment regularly meet to review the school's overall assessment efforts. These meetings also include agenda items for the upcoming academic year, including incorporating new approaches, receiving fiscal approval for new initiatives and new curricular proposals.

Each of these initiatives is then shared with the appropriate academic program directors, typically at the beginning of the academic year. These items are added to the ongoing efforts, detailed below, to ensure regular and consistent programmatic evaluation.

Based on the engagement of program leadership and curriculum committees, new and ongoing assessment recommendations are incorporated into those programmatic efforts. These matters are included in curriculum committee meetings and then reported back to the full faculty, typically toward the end of the academic year.

Direct measures

▪ Faculty review of student work from required courses

The program director and a panel of full- and part-time faculty assess a sampling of ungraded student work with assessment rubrics that measure one or more ACEJMC competency or value. The ratings are on a four-point scale (excellent, meets expectations, needs improvement, does not meet expectations).

In most cases the midterm or final from each required course is used for the assessment of learning outcomes that are at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (i.e., analyzing; evaluating; creating). Individual assignments are used as much as possible.

In most cases the assessments are based on a sampling of 10% of the students enrolled in a course. Each panel member grades at least two different students. We don't have panel members grade the same students so the sample can be as large as possible. Intercoder reliability is not an issue as the panel members are all long-term USC instructors and sometimes alumni. Also, the ratings are completed in a meeting, so any questions about the rubrics are addressed in real-time. Panel members who rate students as "excellent" or "does not meet expectations" also usually explain their ratings to the group.

Where possible, panel members don't rate student work from their own classes. Student names remain on all assignments and exams, as we have found that it's sometimes useful to consider individual student circumstances when interpreting the assessment results. For example, when assessing capstone projects in both the journalism and public relations programs, the panels concluded that the course or exam structure did not result in a student's best work.

After grading the student work and seeing the aggregated results, the panel discusses the ratings, the assignment/exam prompt, the course structure, and the course's prerequisites and sequencing. The panel also discuss the assessment rubrics and suggest changes needed based on their collective knowledge of the course and the curriculum vs. the ACEJMC framework.

Essentially we conduct a focus group of faculty for each required course where the quantitative ratings serve as starting points for rich discussions about the course, teaching pedagogy and other curricular issues. In many ways, the process is the purpose.

- **Scores from required course multiple-choice quizzes, assignments and exams with a set answer key**

We use the scores from quizzes, assignments and/or exams that assess learning outcomes at the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (i.e., remembering, understanding, and applying). All scores are normalized to a 100% scale.

We review the scores from 100% of all students who complete the assignment. However, not all sections of a required course give the same assignment, so we usually do not have data for all students enrolled.

Use of direct measure assessments

Direct measure results are formally discussed by the program directors and the director of the School of Journalism in August as part of setting goals for the faculty curriculum committees for the following academic year.

Smaller changes and tweaks to the required courses are made on an ad hoc basis.

Direct measure assessment collection and storage

Student work, assignment prompts, and scores are manually gathered from instructors or from Blackboard, our learning management system, at the end of the academic year. Some assignments require students to post on YouTube, their own website or other platforms that the student controls, so it may not be available for assessment.


The student work, prompts and assessment rubrics are then uploaded into Google Docs, Sheets and Forms on the School of Journalism director's Google Drive.

Indirect measures

- **Learning Experience Evaluations**

End-of-semester course evaluations by students are tracked in aggregate by course (required and elective) and by program. For curricular decision-making, we use the questions concerning student perceptions of course design but not the questions on instructional and assessment practices. Data from these two areas are used by the program directors and faculty merit review committees to assess individual teaching effectiveness.

The evaluation results are compiled by the academic program manager, and the results are shared with the director, the program directors and the director of finance and operations. Evaluation results are stored on the School of Journalism SharePoint drive.



Learning Experience Evaluations for Subject

Course Design: Refers to the objectives and expectations of the course as demonstrated through the syllabus, materials, readings, presented applications, cases, and scenarios.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements by marking the response that most closely matches your learning experience:
This evaluation is for instructor [an instructor's name is inserted here]

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The course objectives were well explained.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course assignments were related to the course objectives.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The course materials included diverse perspectives OR applications to diverse populations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I understood what was expected of me in this course.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The full [Learning Experience Evaluation survey](#) posted on the [USC Learning Experience Evaluations website](#).

- **Student awards in local, regional or national competitions**

The academic program manager surveys the faculty every semester to gather reports of awards won by students. The survey results are kept on School of Journalism SharePoint drive.

- **Internships and jobs data**

Each year, USC Annenberg Career Development surveys all USC Annenberg graduates one year after graduation. The survey data is supplemented by data from LinkedIn and reports from faculty and staff. The reports include placement statistics in addition to a list of companies and job titles by major. The annual job placement report is posted on the USC Annenberg [Public Accountability](#) page along with retention and graduation rates.

Career Development surveys current students each fall to find out where students would like to intern, and again in the spring semester to get feedback on the students' experiences. If needed, the team will intervene with companies on the student's behalf. Career Development uses the survey data to inform its programming and its outreach efforts with current and

potential employers.

- **Student portfolios**

We should add portfolio reviews to our assessment plan. Some of our students' best work is done outside of the classroom in internships, extra- and co-curricular programs, and at the Daily Trojan (which operates independently from the School of Journalism), and other campus media organizations.

Assessment timetable

The competencies or values and the corresponding courses are assessed over a two-year cycle. Both journalism and public relations are rapidly changing, so most competencies or values are assessed every year.

ACEJMC Competency or Value	Assessment frequency		
	BA/Journalism	BA/Public Relations and Advertising	MA/Public Relations and Advertising
1. Freedom of speech	Every other year	Every other year	Every other year
2. History	Every other year	Every other year	Every other year
3. Domestic & global diversity	Every year	Every year	Every year
4. Visual information	Every year	Every year	Every year
5. Writing	Every year	Every year	Every year
6. Ethics	Every year	Every year	Every year
7. Critical thinking and research	Every year	Every year	Every year
8. Numeracy	Every year	Every year	Every year
9. Editing and evaluation	Every year	Every year	Every year
10. Technology	Every year	Every year	Every year
11. Contribution to industry	Every year	Every year	Every year

Assessment calendar

Data collection

1. **Direct measures - Faculty review of student work from required courses**

Student work and assignment/exam prompts will be collected in January for the previous fall semester and in the summer for the previous spring semester.

a. **Summer assessment workshop**

We will have an assessment workshop every summer with the program directors and adjunct faculty. Workshops with adjuncts need to be in the summer so we can engage adjunct faculty who teach two courses - the maximum allowed as a part-time faculty member - during the academic year.

b. **Fall assessment workshop**

We will have an assessment workshop every fall semester with the faculty curriculum committees, which consist of full-time faculty and adjunct faculty who are compensated for this committee work.

c. **Special topics workshops**

We will schedule additional workshops as needed. For example, in Fall 2022, we had a two-day workshop to assess the domestic and global diversity competency or value in our required courses and to develop course-specific learning outcomes and assignments.

2. **Direct measures - Scores from required course multiple-choice quizzes, assignments and exams with a set answer key**

Scores and assignment/exam prompts will be collected in January for the previous fall semester and in the summer for the previous spring semester.

3. **Indirect measures** will be collected in January for the previous fall semester and in the summer for the previous spring semester.

- a. Learning Experience Evaluations
- b. Student awards in local, regional or national competitions
- c. Internships and jobs data
- d. Student portfolios – To be determined

Faculty discussion of assessment findings

- 1. The findings from the summer and fall assessment workshops will inform the agendas for the monthly curriculum meetings throughout the academic year. Conversely, the issues and decisions from the monthly curriculum meetings will inform the assessment workshop agendas in the following year.
- 2. Every two years we will produce and discuss a full assessment report that includes all required courses and ACEJMC competencies and values. Full assessment reports will be discussed in the fall semester.

Our first full report was in 2023-2024, so our next full report will be in 2025-2026.