

Degree/Certificate: Bachelor of Arts
Major/Option: Communication Studies
Submitted by:
Date: October 23, 2015

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2015-16

Part I – for the 2015-16 academic year:

1. **Student Learning Outcome:** The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

“Students are expected to exhibit the cognitive ability to connect everyday activities with communication theory and/or concepts” (as proposed to and accepted by CPAC; Placed into effect Fall of 2014). This SLO is referred to as the STAR component of the Communication Studies program since all majors must Study, Act, and Reflect to successfully exhibit this cognitive ability.

Please note that we continued to look at this particular SLO again this year because we are in the refining stages of how we implement this SLO. Currently, we are in the midst of discussions regarding our two programs’ SLOs. A week ago we reached initial tentative agreement on our SLOs for the CMST general program and the CMST PR program. We are currently progressing through the much needed discussions and work prior to implementation of the new assessment plan.

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;

SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;

SLO is met without change required

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

Description of Assessment Method and How they were Implemented: The following is the exact paperwork students receive prior to participating in the STAR assessment:

Guidelines for the STAR (Study/Act/Reflect) Exercise

As part of your CMST major, you are required to complete a paper that reflects on the relationship between the knowledge and skills you acquire

in your major and their applicability to a particular activity. This activity may include one of the following:

- Internship;
- Employment situation;
- Volunteer activity with a particular community group or organization;
- Community engagement exercise that is part of a class;
- Holding office in an organization.

After completing the paper, you are required to meet with the Coordinator of the STAR program to provide an oral report on your paper. The following steps guide you through completion of both the paper and the oral report.

Step 1

Meet with the STAR Coordinator to discuss the activity you plan to engage in. Currently, Dr. Peter Shields (pshields@ewu.edu) is the Coordinator.

Step 2

Complete the reflection paper. This paper should include the following sections:

Description

Describe the nature of the activity you engaged in. When and for how long did you engage in the activity? What role(s) and task(s) did you perform while engaged in this activity? (200 words)

Relevancy of Communication Concepts and Skills

Discuss your take on the relevancy of the knowledge and skills you have acquired in the major. That is, what communication class(es), concepts and skills did you find relevant when engaging in the activity? In what ways were they relevant? (200 words)

Assessment

Looking back on your activity, what do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your communication-related knowledge and skills in relation to the role(s) and task(s) you carried out? That is, in what ways were these knowledge and skills helpful during the activity? In what ways do you feel they fell short? Do you think you were well equipped to deal with ethical issues that may have arisen during the duration of your activity? (Ethics has to do with knowing the difference between right and wrong and deciding to do the right thing – it includes upholding qualities of personal integrity such as honesty and fairness). (200 words)

Summary

Summarize what you learned about the organization and yourself during the activity. Include a discussion of your most important learning experiences (300 words)

Guidelines

- The paper should have a separate cover page.
- Avoid using typeface greater than 12-point font.
- The paper should be double-spaced, and pages should be numbered.
- The paper should be organized in sections with the appropriate sub-headings (i.e., Description, Relevancy of Communication Concepts and Skills, and so on).
- Make sure to thoroughly edit the paper for spelling and grammar before submitting.

Submission

On completion of the paper submit an electronic copy to the Coordinator.

Step 3

After reading the paper, the Coordinator will contact you to arrange a time to meet so you can provide a brief oral report. At the meeting you and the Coordinator will also discuss the implications of the paper and oral report for your future course of study.

On the successful completion of the paper and oral report, the Coordinator will ensure your academic transcript and SOAR audit reflects this fact.

Additional points to keep in mind

- A minimum of 10 credits of CMST coursework at EWU must be taken before beginning the STAR activity.
- The STAR paper and oral report needs to be completed during the regular academic year (i.e., during fall, winter, or spring quarters). The Coordinator is not on duty during summer quarter.
- Within the academic year, the latest you can submit your paper is two weeks before the last day of spring classes. This will ensure the Coordinator has adequate time to read the paper and schedule an oral report before end of the academic year.

Why these Assessment Methods were Used: Only students can inform us as to when they are making the cognitive connections between what they are learning in Communication Studies' courses to their everyday lives. Through many meetings of the curriculum committee of the department and the full faculty these directions evolved to guide our students.

Up to this point, this section is identical to last year's submission. We only had four submissions by the time assessment was due last year. Now we have in the forties so we have more information by which to understand the implementation of the STAR assessment device.

4. **Observations gathered from data:** *Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.*
 - a. Findings: According to our Coordinator of STAR, "My interviews tend to delve more deeply into the discussion of the relevancy or communication concepts and skills and their assessment of the program. These reveal that while a good number of students struggle to link theory to practice, many others can do this quite effectively."
 - b. Analysis of findings: At this stage, too early in the Fall quarter to have done an in depth analysis, we are pondering why many students can so effectively connect theory to real life and others can't. This may be fact or it may be another issue: no "teeth" in the STAR requirement. Students waited to the last minute to do STAR, meaning they may not have put forth the needed effort for excellence. Currently, the Chair and graduation evaluators are flagging students early for this requirement; we are also doing more with advertising this requirement earlier in the program (the STAR Coordinator is visiting our required theory course to discuss the essay requirements). This lack of teeth will also be discussed by the Curriculum Committee and the results of this discussion will then be presented at a departmental faculty meeting.

5. **What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?**
 - a) *Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising). As I discuss this area, please realize that while STAR was created for a specific SLO, the interviews have been more broadly based so you will see that we are learning more than anticipated (a broader scope), thus I will discuss potential departmental changes that do not fall specifically within the scope of the narrower STAR SLO.*
 - b) The first of our plans for using assessment results has already been implemented: in the oral conversations association with STAR, Dr. Shields, our STAR coordinator, discovered students feel inadequate with managing conflict in a variety of interpersonal situations. A new experimental course is currently being offered (Fall 2016) on Conflict Management with the hopes that students

may take this course as an elective. But before we send this course to CPAC we want to have student feedback and make appropriate course changes.

- c) Issues that need discussion amongst the faculty: (1) Students report a great understanding of the practical application of PR, but not the theories; (2) Do students need more opportunities to work in groups?; (3) Students report taking a particular faculty member repeatedly, feeling comfortable and asking questions in class, but then not being comfortable with asking questions in other situations because the environment is not as conducive; (4) Students report being uncomfortable with their nonverbal communication skills; (5) Student writing skills for the essay was poor (could be the “lack of teeth” issue?).
- d) *Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.* I’m not sure. We are redoing our entire assessment process, so many of these issues will naturally be discussed. But as you can see above, the STAR interviews address many broad-based issues such as pedagogy. While normally, I would think we would have these discussions, the university is also requesting our department complete program review in one quarter rather than the typical year that a department receives to do this task. When too much is asked of people at any one given time, it becomes impossible. Thus, I have no timeline to report.

- 6. *Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.* As stated above, we are redoing our entire assessment process, so for the other newly created SLOs, we are in the midst of following the new university assessment process: creating the SLOs for each program; mapping each course SLO to the program SLOs; having discussions as to whether the new SLOs adequately reflect our class SLOs and vice versa & what changes might be needed at the course and program level with SLOs; how to measure the new SLOs, etc. And for our one continuing SLO, STAR, we will most likely have many discussions on the above reported items. Currently, these items, have only been discussed between the STAR coordinator and the Assessment Coordinator, and have yet to be discussed with the Chair, Curriculum Committee, or department (our typical process order in the department).

NEW: PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP

FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2014-15 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2014-15

The learning outcome assessed in 2014-2015 is the same one reported above (2013-2014) though it has now been more thoroughly developed.

- 2. Strategies implemented** during 2015-16 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2014-15 assessment activities.
- Earlier contact with students about the STAR requirement.
 - A new Conflict Management course (CMST 396).
- 3. Summary of results** (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment. We are seeing success on the SLO with many of our students and seeking the “Why?” with our other students. We have offered the new course on Conflict Management.
- 4. What further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.** are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis? This has already been mentioned above but for a brief recap: we need a number of faculty discussions on the issues mentioned above and we need to give “teeth” to the STAR requirement allowing us to better understand whether some students truly cannot connect theory with everyday life or if they are simply not putting forth enough effort for this ungraded essay. Additionally, the Chair is currently negotiating for released time for the STAR Coordinator which if supported will allow the Coordinator to develop a rubric and more systematic data collection.