

Assessment Plan Example: Economics (Undergraduate Major)

The mission of the undergraduate economics program is to train students to analyze and investigate real-world economic problems.

1. Discipline specific knowledge and skills

- a. Program Goal 1: Graduates will be able to properly utilize: commonly used economic terminology and indicators, microeconomic and macroeconomic theories (including applications of those theories and the behavioral assumptions underlying those theories), and modeling techniques used for economic analyses.
 - i. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) 1 for Goal 1: Students will be able to align common economic theories with their tenets and assumptions.
 1. Assessment Method 1 for PLO 1 for Goal 1: Economics majors must take either ECON WWWW, ECON HHHH, or ECON ZZZZ and all three of these upper-division courses involve learning about economic theories and applying the theories in various contexts. While the theories and contexts in the three courses are different because the courses address different applications of economics, the practice of identifying each theory's assumptions is an important disciplinary technique that is used in each course. The faculty members who teach these three courses have agreed to include a question on the final exam from each course that will require students to match two of the theories discussed in that course by name with five of their unique tenets and assumptions in the adjacent column, which will have additional incorrect options to choose from. Scoring will be completed by counting the number of correctly selected items for each student. Overall, 80% of the students in all three courses are expected to make at least 8 correct matches out of 10 possible correct matches.

2. Communication skills

- a. Program Goal 2: Graduates will be able to explain economic jargon and concepts to people who are not economists and properly employ economic terminology and theories to effectively communicate with other economists orally and in writing.
 - i. PLO 1 for Goal 2: Students will coherently argue, using proper economic terminology and supporting evidence, for or against a proposed solution to a policy problem.
 1. Assessment Method 1 for PLO 1 for Goal 2: Students in all sections of ECON YYYY will produce a term paper that argues for or against using government debt to stimulate the economy given a set of economic conditions that will be specified in the assignment. Since ECON YYYY is a high enrollment upper-division course that is required for majors, and half of all students take the course online, a random sample of 25 term papers from in-person course sections and a random sample of 25 term papers from online course sections will be selected for assessment. Student responses on these 50 papers will be rated by two Economics faculty members who teach ECON YYYY using a rubric that evaluates (1) the logical organization of the writing (e.g., paragraph structure), (2) the appropriate use of economic terminology, (3) the way evidence is employed to support the argument, and (4) the formatting of references and citations. Each of these criteria will be evaluated using a four-point scale: Excellent, Meets Expectations, Approaches Expectations, and Poor. In all cases where the faculty members' ratings differ by two or more scale points, a third faculty member with experience teaching ECON YYYY will rate the students' work and the three faculty members will triangulate their ratings

to achieve an overall rating for each student. Overall, 70% of the sample of students in ECON YYYY is expected to meet or exceed expectations in each of the four criteria in both the online and in-person course sections. This 70% threshold is lower than the 85% threshold set for disciplinary expertise because some career pathways for graduates of this program do not require the written communication skills that are assessed by this assessment method.

3. Critical thinking skills

- a. Program Goal 3: Graduates will be able to evaluate the potential benefits, risks, and trade-offs associated with various solutions to business or public policy problems.
 - i. PLO 1 for Goal 3: Students will use data analysis and economic reasoning to support the optimal solution to a business or public policy problem and explain why other potential solutions are sub-optimal based on the risks, trade-offs, and benefits of the solutions.
 - a. Assessment Method 1 for PLO 1 for Goal 3: The final exam in all sections of ECON XXXX, which is a required upper-division course for students majoring in economics, will include an open-ended question instructing students to detail their analysis and interpretation of economic data to identify the optimal solution to a specified problem and justify their decision against other sub-optimal solutions. All student responses to this single question will be rated by one ECON XXXX instructor and one ECON XXXX teaching assistant using a rubric that evaluates (1) the steps used in the analysis, (2) the soundness of the theoretical rationale, (3) the accuracy of the students' identification of risks, trade-offs, and benefits about optimal and sub-optimal solutions, and (4) the completeness of the students' responses (e.g., are multiple sub-optimal solutions identified). Each of these criteria will be evaluated using a four-point scale: Excellent, Meets Expectations, Approaches Expectations, and Poor. In all cases where the teaching assistant and faculty member's ratings differ by more than two points on the scale, the instructor of record in ECON XXXX will rate the students' work and assign an overall rating for each student. Overall, 85% of the students in ECON XXXX are expected to meet or exceed expectations set for each of the four criteria, since this disciplinary expertise is required of all majors.

NOTE: More PLOs per goal would be appropriate to adequately cover the breadth of each goal.

A sample curriculum map based on the examples above is available at: <https://confluence.usf.edu/x/-Q2CHO>