

DEVELOPING A FUNCTIONAL KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT FOR UNDERGRADUATE BUSINESS PROGRAMS: A CASE IN MARKETING

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Assuring students' learning outcomes has always been a critical aspect in the process of AACSB accreditation application and maintenance [1]. One of the most common learning outcomes pertaining to accredited business programs is the specific body of functional knowledge a competent business undergraduate student should possess upon graduating from a business program. Business schools have adopted multiple approaches in assessing the core functional knowledge. Two broad approaches seem to be popular: adoption of a peer endorsed standardized assessment instrument and development of a customized assessment instrument that best reflects the institution's curricula and instructional needs and characteristics. This paper describes the approach to functional knowledge assessment and the process currently underway at an AACSB accredited College of Business in a large public university in the area of marketing.

During Fall 2015, the College of Business pilot tested a standardized assessment instrument, the BAT (Business Assessment Test). The BAT is a capstone knowledge test for undergraduates that has been used since 2004 to assess business knowledge and quantitative skills. The test consists of 90 multiple choice questions, covering the following functional areas: Accountancy, Economics, Finance, Management, Information Systems, Marketing, Statistics, International Management, Ethics, Business Law, and Supply Chain Management [2]. The pilot test was administered in two sections of the capstone Strategic Management course. 57 students participated in the pilot test. While the pros and cons of using BAT were discussed at the College's Assurance of Learning and Curriculum Improvement Committee, four departments including International Business and Marketing took the initiative to explore a more customized instrument to assess the functional knowledge areas relevant to those departments.

The Department of International Business and Marketing underwent a systematic process of developing a set of standardized test questions, to be included in a college wide effort to assess business functional knowledge. The process included meetings with core marketing faculty, online discussions and survey collection of test item pool, reviews and discussions to finalize the set of test questions. The whole process took place during the 10 week academic term of Spring 2016.

It was agreed that the individual areas of functional knowledge, such as marketing, should be in close alignment with the college's undergraduate program learning goals (LGs). As of Spring 2016, the college has the following latest program learning goals (LGs) that guide all instructional activities in the undergraduate Bachelor of Science in Business Administration programs (BSBA) [3] (Table 1). Under the guidelines of BSBA Program Learning Goals, the marketing faculty also intend to emphasize the unique course level learning outcomes (COs) that are essential for students' competency in the area of marketing management. As the only introductory marketing course that is required for all BSBA students, the Principles of Marketing Management has established specific course level student learning outcomes (COs) in the revised Extended Course Outline (ECO). These course specific student learning outcomes include critical concepts and skill expectations integral to the development of marketing management competency (Table 2).

To ensure broad participation, and the generation of a wider pool of quality test items, an online survey was administered through QualtricsR in Spring 2016. Marketing faculty were invited to provide questions specifically addressing each of the course student learning outcomes (COs) in light of the general BSBA program learning goals (LGs). Test items generated for each CO were aggregated and reviewed by core faculty to ensure close relevance, seamless coverage, and avoid duplication of similar

concepts and knowledge points. Two leading marketing faculty reviewed the pool of 50 test items generated by marketing instructors, and finalized a set of 10 questions to be included in the college's common functional knowledge assessment efforts according to the following criteria: 1) *Conceptual questions that address why certain concepts exist (e.g. branding, segmentation); 2) Questions that avoid asking about definitions of terms that will vary from textbook to textbook; 3) Questions for which knowing the answer says something meaningful about the student having knowledge of marketing (e.g., the question can't be answered just by looking at the options); 4) Questions that let us have a spread across topic (rather than focusing a bunch of questions on, say market research).*

Through this systematically structured and outcome-driven process, the marketing faculty gained several insights: 1) *Ensure alignment of program level mission, learning goals, and course level student learning outcomes to capitalize on the uniqueness of the business programs; 2) Engaging core instructional faculty participation is the key to sustain AOL success and ensure alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment; 3) Collaboration of college curriculum committee and department functional areas; 4) Vision and support from administrators to sustain AOL integration in ongoing curriculum management activities; 5) Encouraging experimentation and critical review of existing assessment instruments.* These insights suggest a number of directions where further improvement can be made both in terms of the refinement of the assessment instrument and the calibration of the administering of the assessment in the future.

Table 1. BSBA Program Learning Goals (LGs)

Learning Goals	Description
LG 1. Communication Skills.	Students completing the BSBA program will communicate effectively in a business environment.
LG 2. Critical Thinking Skills.	Students completing the BSBA program will use critical thinking when making business decisions.
LG 3. Business Functional Knowledge.	Students completing the BSBA program will demonstrate knowledge of business functions and deal with business problems from a global and integrative perspective.
LG 4. Business Social Responsibility.	Students completing the BSBA program will demonstrate knowledge of diversity, ethical reasoning, and sustainability.
LG 5. Teamwork Skills.	Students completing the BSBA program will work effectively in teams.

Table 2. Principles of Marketing Management Course Learning Outcomes (COs)

Learning Outcomes	Description
CO 1.	Student will be able to recognize the nature, scope and role of marketing and apply the marketing concept in the context of modern day businesses.

CO 2.	Student will be able to recognize the nature and importance of marketing research, and apply basic marketing research skills in developing and evaluating marketing programs.
CO 3.	Student will be able to identify and examine marketing mix strategies within the context of controllable and uncontrollable (specifically, legal, competitive, and demographic) environments.
CO 4.	Student will be able to identify the major growth areas in marketing.
CO 5.	Student will be able to analyze and evaluate the ethical issues involved in developing and implementing marketing strategies.
CO 6.	Student will be able to research and write a critical marketing problem paper on some aspect of marketing.
CO 7.	Student will be able to analyze marketing problems and form marketing strategies to for effective solutions.

References

[1] AACSB International. (2016). *Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation*.

[2] Grosflam, J. (2016). Localized AOL solution. *CSU Fullerton Assessment Conference*.

[3] College of Business Administration, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. (2016). BSBA Program Learning Goals.