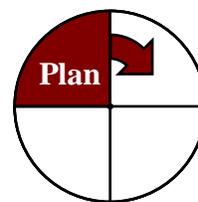


Learning Assurance Plan for the
Bachelor of Accountancy

1. Plan – What abilities do we want to assess?

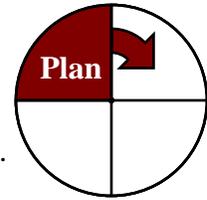


In order to comply with accreditation standards and to further the mission of the College of Business at Loyola University New Orleans, the five Learning Goals of the BAcc degree are rooted in the mission of the college and the vision of the university, which are, in turn, rooted in Ignatian values. These five Learning Goals encapsulate the knowledge, skills, and abilities that accounting students should possess as graduates of the College of Business and that we must continually assess student learning of.

Derivation of Learning Goals from our Mission, Vision, and Values			
Learning Goals	College Mission	University Vision	Ignatian Values
1. Accounting Ability: Graduates will demonstrate ability and competency as professionals in the field of accounting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a well-rounded education... of the art and science of management and administration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A just and ordered society needs men and women trained in business. Provide a foundation of learning experiences which enable students to develop values and life goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasizes a holistic education, and human and academic excellence. True freedom requires a realistic knowledge of the various forces present in the surrounding world.
2. Critical Thinking: Graduates will be able to apply critical thinking skills to issues in accounting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance critical thinking skills. Graduate students who possess critical thinking skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop students into leaders who possess a love for truth and the critical intelligence to pursue it. Equip students to know themselves, their world, and their potential. Foster in students a critical sense based upon values and principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community is bound together by a common search for knowledge, and dedicated to the discovery of truth. Teaches leaders to be critical of every decision made, to examine attitudes, to challenge assumptions, and to analyze motives for acting.
3. Communication: Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in the field of accounting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance written and oral communication. Enable students to become effective business leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop students with the intelligence to pursue and the eloquence to articulate truth. Develop high degree of ability to express ideas orally and in writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue and debate concerning controversial issues are not only tolerated, but actively encouraged. Emphasizes active participation by students in the educational process.
4. Ethical Decisions: Graduates will be able to apply a values-laden method for responding to ethical issues in the field of accounting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare students to become socially responsible leaders, to enhance ethical decision-making. Graduate students who possess the courage to act justly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare students to lead meaningful lives with and for others, to pursue virtue, and to work for a just world. Educate students to meet change with equanimity and good judgment. Assist students in becoming more aware of the problems of society, and their ability to correct them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks men and women for others who are free to give of themselves and responsible for their actions. Discerns what is good and true in the movements of history. Insists on individual care and concern for each person, and that principles must lead to decisive action, with “love shown in deeds”.
5. Decision Support: Graduates will be able to be leaders and decision-makers in private, public, and non-profit sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable students to become effective leaders in a global environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare students to lead meaningful lives with and for others in order to benefit their larger communities. Provide the leaders of tomorrow with values that strengthen society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human excellence and academic rigor that challenges leaders to develop their talents to the fullest. Looks to the fullest development of each person’s individual capacities. Prepares leaders for participation in Church, commerce, and community.

Each of the five Learning Goals is defined in terms of the concept or ability that we want our graduates to master, and broken down into operational Learning Objectives that can easily be directly measured through assessment tools. The definitions and associated objectives for each Learning Goal are given in the Summary of Learning Goals and Objectives on the following page.

Summary of BAcc Learning Goals and Objectives



1. **Accounting Ability** is the body of accounting knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students will need to succeed as competent accounting professionals.

Learning Goal: Graduates will demonstrate ability as accounting professionals, including competency in taxation

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Explain the need for and uses of fin. acct. info.
- b. Understand and explain the basic concepts, tools, elements, and terminology of financial accounting.
- c. Understand the basics of accounting for cash, accounts receivable, inventories, and investments.
- d. Understand the techniques used to assist managers in safeguarding / assuring accountability for assets.

- e. Analyze, account for, and explain asset transactions, including plant assets and intangible assets.
- f. Analyze, account for, and explain curr. and l-t liability transactions, including debt, def. taxes, leases, pensions.
- g. Account for revenue recognition alternatives.
- h. Account for stockholder contributed capital.
- i. Account for dilutive securities and calculate e.p.s.
- j. Account for accounting changes and errors.
- k. Demonstrate competency in tax accounting techniques and tax law (9-item examination)

2. **Critical Thinking** is the careful, deliberate, and rational determination of what to believe or do, using cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome.

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to apply critical thinking skills to solve issues in accounting.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Analyze the structure and content of an argument relating to a business issue.
- b. Make informed and technically appropriate decisions concerning problems in accounting.
- c. Analyze the internal and external business environment of a firm from all perspectives.

3. **Communication** in business is a process in which two or more people interact using communication skills in order to achieve a desired outcome in a business context.

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in the accounting field.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Articulate ideas effectively in a professional business setting through one-on-one interviews, informative presentations, or group discussions.
- b. Compose clear and concise business writing.

4. **Ethical Decision-making** in business is an application of critical thinking skills to address a business problem that has more than one legal solution, but in which the decision-maker seeks to find the most responsible action for all of the stakeholders of the decision.

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to apply a values-laden method for responding to ethical issues.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Describe the context of an ethical problem.
- b. Execute a procedure of ethical decision-making that leads to actionable solutions for a problem.
- c. Communicate the results of an ethical decision-making process to all stakeholders of a decision.
- d. Reflect on an ethical decision-making process and demonstrate the capacity for self-evaluation.

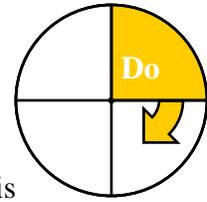
5. **Decision Support** in accounting is the ability to use accounting information to lead and make decisions in a diverse community of business, government, and not-for-profit organizations.

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to be leaders and decision-makers in private, public, and non-profit sectors.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Prepare, use, and analyze financial statements.
- b. Prepare cash flow statements & related worksheets.
- c. Use accounting information for decision-making.

2. Do – How have we assessed student learning?



To ascertain the percentage of graduates who possess the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities of the three generalized Learning Goals (Critical Thinking, Communication, and Ethical Decisions), we used the same assessment metric as is used to assess the corresponding goals of the BBA degree. Each student is given an individual assessment score using the metric below. This metric, and the use of the individual student as the unit of analysis, is consistent with the accreditation standards and provides a basis for comparisons.

- 2:** Exceeds learning standards
- 1:** Meets learning standards
- 0:** Fails learning standards

In addition, because accounting is a practice-oriented discipline, we developed two assessment examinations, one for general accounting knowledge, skills, and abilities and one for taxation-specific knowledge, skills, and abilities. These two exams are given to graduating accounting seniors to measure their level of competency in these two areas of accounting. The results are used to assess student achievement of the two accounting-specific Learning Goals. Each goal and each objective is measured by multiple test questions on the examinations for reliability.

Although each student is evaluated individually using the assessment metric or examinations, the level of student achievement of each Learning Goal must be calculated and reported aggregately. Aggregate achievement of each Learning Goal is calculated as the percentage of the total number of students assessed that met or exceeded learning standards, using the common metric, or as the percentage of the total number of students tested who answered correctly each question relating to a given Learning Goal or Learning Objective. Aggregate achievement is assessed as follows:

Learning Goals measured with the metric:

- > 90%:** Superior achievement
- 80-90%:** Satisfactory achievement
- < 80%:** Unsatisfactory achievement

[75-80%: Marginal achievement]

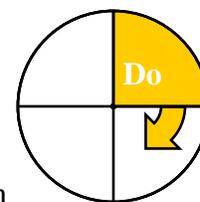
Learning Goals measured with the exams:

- >75%:** Superior achievement
- 50-75%:** Satisfactory achievement
- <50%:** Unsatisfactory achievement

[45-50%: Marginal achievement]

For each Learning Goal or Learning Objective, the aggregate level of student achievement will be calculated and compared to the performance scale above. The scale will be used to identify areas for improvement, as well as to prioritize improvements according to the size of the gap.

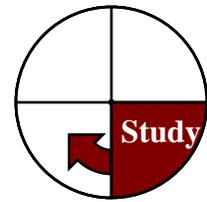
Course Coverage and Assessment Schedule



The assessment of Learning Goal achievement is spread out through the curriculum. Our Learning Goals consider the “graduate” as the relevant unit of analysis, and the majority of embedded assessment tools are found accordingly in upper-level courses, where it is easier to effectively assess the achievement of our graduates.

Learning Goal Course Coverage and Assessment Schedule					
Acct Core Course	Learning Goals Covered in Accounting Core Courses				
	1. Accounting Ability	2. Critical Thinking	3. Communication Skills	4. Ethical Decisions	5. Decision Support
ACCT 202 Fin Accounting					
ACCT 205 Corp Accounting I					
ACCT 206 Corp Accounting II					
ACCT 300 Tax Accounting I					
ACCT 307 Acc for Public Sector					
ACCT 340 Acc Info Systems					
ACCT 400 Adv Accounting					
ACCT 403 Audit & Assurance					
ACCT 410 Strategic Cost Mgt					
ACCT 460 Intl Accounting					
Bus Core Course	Learning Goals Covered in Accounting Core Courses				
	1. Accounting Ability	2. Critical Thinking	3. Communication Skills	4. Ethical Decisions	5. Decision Support
BA 100 Intro to Business					
BA 101 Business Cmmn					
MGT 245 Mgt & Org Behavior					
BA 445 Business Policy					
Assessment Phase	Learning Goals Measured in each Assessment Phase				
	1. Accounting Ability	2. Critical Thinking	3. Communication Skills	4. Ethical Decisions	5. Decision Support
Phase I (2008-09)					
Phase II (2010-11)					

3. Study – What do our students currently learn?

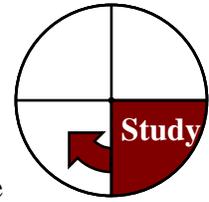


As of Fall 2008, and according to the most recent measures taken of each Learning Goal and Learning Objective, the current level of student achievement is as shown in the table below. Achievement is calculated as the percentage of students that met or exceeded the learning standards of a given Learning Objective.

Current Level of Student Achievement of Learning Goals								
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
1. Acct Ability	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Need for fin acct	7	47%	9	53%			9	53%
b.-d. Basic concepts	6	41%	10	59%			10	59%
e.-f. Transactions	8	50%	8	50%			8	50%
g.-j. Special topics	11	65%	5	35%			5	35%
h. Tax accounting	10	61%	6	39%			6	39%
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
2. Critical Thinking	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Analyze argument	4	24%	9	53%	4	24%	13	77%
b. Solve acct. prob.*	7	29%	13	54%	4	17%	17	71%
c. Analyze environ.	0	0%	2	66%	1	33%	3	100%
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
3. Communication	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Speaking skills*	10	18%	29	53%	16	29%	45	82%
b. Writing skills*	14	26%	32	58%	9	16%	41	74%
c. Presenting skills*	15	27%	37	67%	3	6%	40	73%
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
4. Ethical Decisions	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Describe problem*	7	19%	20	54%	10	27%	37	81%
b. Make decision*	13	35%	14	38%	10	27%	24	65%
c. Describe solution*	8	22%	16	43%	13	35%	29	78%
d. Reflect on dec.*	13	35%	9	24%	15	41%	24	65%
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
5. Decision Support	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Use fin statements	3	19%	13	81%			13	81%
b. Prepare cash-flow	9	56%	7	44%			7	44%
c. Use for decisions	7	42%	9	58%			9	58%

* As of Fall 2008, these Learning Objectives had only been measured as college aggregates, not by major. Because BAcc students take many of the same core business courses as BBA students, we feel confident that the measures of these general skills are accurate for both degree programs.

Analysis of Current Student Achievement



Currently, the only Learning Objectives on which our students perform at a superior level are Critical Thinking 2.c. (Analyze the business environment of a firm from all internal and external perspectives) and Decision Support 5.a. (Use and prepare financial statements). These are skills that are taught in detail in a large number of courses from many disciplines, so it is expected that students would perform well on these skills.

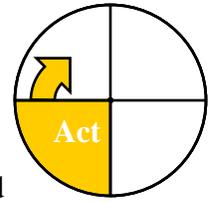
Additionally, students performed at a satisfactory level on Communication 3.a. (Speaking skills) and Ethical Decision-Making 4.a. (Describe an ethical problem), as well as on the accounting-specific objectives Accounting Ability 1.a.-f. (Various basic accounting knowledge and skills) and Decision Support 5.c. (Use financial statements to support decision-making). The former factors are points of pride in our curriculum, and performance on these should be “excellent.”

Finally, students performed at a marginal level on Business Disciplines 1.a. (Overall ability) and Ethical Decision-Making 4.c. (Communicate a solution) but at an unsatisfactory level on all of the remaining five general business Learning Objectives and remaining three accounting-specific objects measured as of the Fall 2008 semester. These latter objectives represent the areas in need of the most improvement, while the former are areas where improvement could be made easily.

The learning difficulties encountered by students in each Learning Objective are outlined below.

- 1. Accounting Ability:** Specifically, seniors taking the two accounting proficiency exams struggled with the sub-topics of accounting for stockholder contributed capital (1.h.) and accounting for revenue recognition alternative (1.g.). Additionally, students struggled with the tax accounting sub-topics of tax personal / dependency exemptions, property transactions, gross income inclusions and exclusions, and deductions from business expenses and losses or from depreciation, cost recovery, amortization, or depletion of long-term assets.
- 2. Critical Thinking:** Freshmen in BA 100 were not sufficiently prepared to perform the level of analysis required by Critical Thinking 2.a. (Analyze an argument); upper-level students should be assessed instead. Students completing the proposal project for Critical Thinking 2.b. (Formulate an argument) were unable to identify alternative assumptions to their own or to change their recommended strategy in light of the knowledge of the other assumptions.
- 3. Communication:** Although freshmen are taught advanced topics in writing and presentation skills in BA 101, they do not have enough experience using these skills to show satisfactory achievement for Communication 3.b. or 3.c. Upper-level students would be more prepared.
- 4. Ethical Decisions:** Students in MKT 330 struggled with the procedural, philosophic framework-based decision-making method required by the EthicsGame assignment and the Ethical Decision-Making 4.b. (Execute a procedure) and 4.d. (Reflect on decision-making process) objectives. In particular, students found it difficult to identify tensions between different stakeholders or ethical viewpoints, or to correct for their own personal biases.
- 5. Decision Support:** Specifically, seniors taking the basic accounting skills proficiency exam struggled with preparing and using the cash flow statement and related cash flow worksheets.

4. Act – How have we improved student learning?



Based on current and previous measurements of student achievement, the faculty and staff of the College of Business have adopted a number of changes to assessment and teaching processes in order to close the gap between actual and desired levels of achievement. The changes made over the previous five years are outlined below.

1. Accounting Ability:

The instructor will cover the topics of revenue recognition and stockholder contributed capital more thoroughly in class. In particular, they will explain what stockholders do and their position in relation to the value-adding concepts, and have more in-class exercises to implement what students have learned and to see if they really understand the concept.

Also, to improve students' ability to use different revenue recognition alternatives, the instructor will have group exercises that help motivate the students to come up with various alternatives, and will help improve thinking skills by giving case scenarios and asking for the best alternative or solution. This may require extra tutorial provided by seniors or tutors.

2. Critical Thinking:

Freshmen in BA 100 were not sufficiently prepared to perform the level of analysis required by the Critical Thinking goal. In response to this shortcoming, we have considered assessing Critical Thinking 2.a. and 2.b. in the BA 445 capstone course with Critical Thinking 2.c. and the Business Disciplines goal. This change is still under review and has not been developed.

3. Communication:

In 2004, the rubric used to assess Communication 2.c. (Presentation Skills) was based on an inconsistent 4-point scale. This was changed in 2007 to a 3-point scale that uses the single metric identified in this plan. The new rubric is based on the dimensions measured by the instructor's grading worksheet, and is consistent with the writing and speaking rubrics.

4. Ethical Decisions:

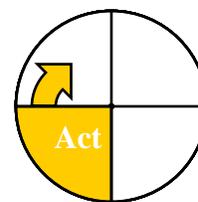
To devote more time to teaching values, ethical tensions, and competing ethical frameworks in class, the full Ethics Game simulation in MKT 330 was dropped in favor of the shorter Hot Topic option. This change will allow the teacher to develop students' understanding of the issues raised by the project, through in-class discussions to supplement students' reflections.

In addition, the shorter Hot Topic format will allow students to more readily compare the different outcomes of the four philosophical ethical frameworks used in the simulation, and to understand the importance of developing their own ethical perspective in order to respond appropriately to business situations where multiple values are placed in tension to each other.

5. Decision Support:

The instructor will assign more homework problems regarding cash flow, in particular asking students to pick a real-life example company of choice for which to do cash flow analyses.

Recommendations for Continued Improvement



This revised Learning Assurance Plan is the first step in an action plan for the continued improvement of assessment and academic processes in the College of Business. The recommendations below represent current needs in each category of processes, categorized by the relevant persons responsible for implementing the improvements.

1. Accounting Ability:

	Assessment Coordinator / Team	Individual Faculty Members
Assessment		Continue to refine accounting proficiency exams regularly
Academic		Cover contributed capital and revenue recognition alternatives

2. Critical Thinking:

	Assessment Coordinator / Team	Individual Faculty Members
Assessment	Review current assessment rubrics for effectiveness in BA 100 course	Collect data in BA 100 / BA 445 again to compare with 2004 data
Academic	Analyze content of BA 445 for potential inclusion of new rubric	Highlight the importance of giving alternative scenarios / assumptions

3. Communication:

	Assessment Coordinator / Team	Individual Faculty Members
Assessment	Revise current assessment rubrics to align with grades less perfectly	Develop consistent standards for communication across curriculum
Academic	Explore opportunities to use peer-evaluation feedback from BA 100	Create cooperative culture, using high-performers to assist low ones (explore bus. communication lab?)

4. Ethical Decisions:

	Assessment Coordinator / Team	Individual Faculty Members
Assessment	Review success of the Hot Topic simulation as new assessment tool	Pilot Hot Topic for assessment in other areas of business curriculum
Academic	Compare Hot Topic learning achievement with Ethics Game	Review conflicting values, justice theory, and virtue ethics in class

5. Decision Support:

	Assessment Coordinator / Team	Individual Faculty Members
Assessment		Possibly refine accounting exams to include real-world cash flows
Academic		Give real-world assignments on cash flow statement preparation

Appendix of Individual Rubrics and Reports

In the following pages are the individual rubrics that were used and assessment results that were reported for each Learning Goal during the previous 5-year period. Each section contains a record of the assessment rubric and the individual dimensions measured, as well as a copy of the assessment results and subsequent analysis.

