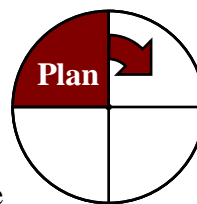


**Learning Assurance Plan for the
Master of Business Administration**

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

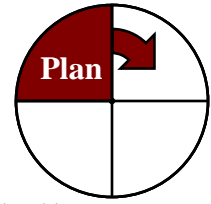


In order to comply with accreditation standards and to further the mission of the College of Business at Loyola University New Orleans, the five Learning Goals of the MBA degree are rooted in the mission of the MBA program and the vision of the university, which are, in turn, rooted in Ignatian values. These five Learning Goals encapsulate the knowledge, skills, and abilities that graduate-level 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	Program Mission	University Vision	Ignatian Values
4. Value-Chain Model: Graduates will be able to analyze the value proposition of a firm / understand its marketplace fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The mission of the MBA program is to inspire leaders who employ the value-chain model...” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a foundation of learning experience which enable students to develop values and life goals. • Provide leaders of tomorrow with values that strengthen society • A just and ordered society needs men & women trained in business. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human excellence and academic rigor that challenges leaders to develop their talents to the fullest. • Prepares leaders for participation in Church, commerce, community. • True freedom requires a realistic knowledge of the various forces present in the surrounding world.
1. Systems Thinking: Graduates will be able to engage a problem head-on, analyze a situation from multiple perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[model] through systems thinking, critical analyses...” • 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 selves, their world, and their potential. • Foster in students a critical sense based upon values and principles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes a holistic education, and human / academic excellence. • Community is bound together by a common search for knowledge, dedicated to discovery of truth. • Teaches leaders to be critical of every decision made, examine attitudes, challenge assumptions, and analyze motives for acting
3. Managerial Action: Graduates will be able to adopt a managerial perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[through] effective business practice...” • Enhance written and oral communication. 	<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 encouraged. • Emphasizes active participation in the educational process.
2. Ethical Decisions: Graduates will be able to apply a values-laden method for responding to ethical issues in business settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “... [through] responsible actions.” • Prepare students to become socially responsible leaders. • 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, pursue virtue, work for a just world. • Educate students to meet change with equanimity & 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 action. • 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, “love shown in deeds”.

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 2-4 operational Learning Objectives that can easily be directly measured through assessment rubrics. 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 MBA Learning Goals and Objectives



1. Critical Analysis & Systems Thinking

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to engage a business problem head-on and make an informed and implementable decision based on a thorough analysis of the situation from multiple perspectives.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Identify the problem to be solved or the issue to be confronted, and interpret data and surrounding context of the problem and any sub-problems.
- b. Explore multiple perspectives or approaches to solving the problem by integrating diverse business perspectives and implicit assumptions.
- c. Communicate and defend a recommended solution to the problem and a plan of action.
- d. Proceed in a manner that demonstrates strategic foresight, including continuous improvement of processes in order to avoid future problems.

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

3. Managerial Action & Communication

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to adopt a managerial perspective by synthesizing information from many varied sources, communicating business information persuasively, and influencing others to achieve organizational goals.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Synthesize diverse or ambiguous information to take meaningful organizational/managerial action.
- b. Communicate business information and organizational goals persuasively.

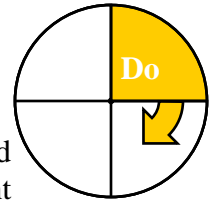
4. Value-Chain Analysis & Value Proposition

Learning Goal: Graduates will be able to analyze the value proposition of a firm's marketplace offerings, understand the strategic fit of the firm, and create a comprehensive plan to deliver customer value.

Learning Objectives: Graduates will be able to:

- a. Analyze the external industry or market environment facing a firm from all perspectives.
- b. Understand the internal structure, culture, and identity of a firm and how it affects strategic fit.
- c. Create a comprehensive strategic plan based on value-chain processes that takes account of the requirements of all stakeholders of the firm.

2. Do – How have we assessed student learning?



To ascertain the percentage of graduates who possess the desired knowledge, skills, and abilities, we implemented a basic assessment metric that can be applied to each of the five Learning Goals. Each student is given an individual assessment score using the metric below. The use of a single metric and 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

By using this single metric to measure student achievement of each of the five Learning Goals, individual rubrics and evaluation tools can easily be revised or replaced over time to incorporate recommendations for continual improvement. Although these rubrics and evaluation tools will change over time, each rubric or evaluation tool used will follow the basic framework below.

Title of Learning Goal						
Learning Objective	Definition of Learning Standards			Achievement		
a. First Objective	0: Fails	1: Meets	2: Exceeds	Score		
i. First dimension				0	1	2

Although each student is evaluated individually using the assessment metric, the level of student achievement of each Learning Goal must be calculated 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 on their individual assessment score. The performance scale below will be used to interpret the aggregate level of student achievement of each Learning Goal.

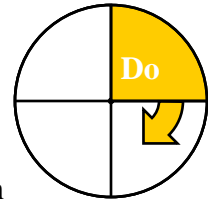
- > 90%:** Excellent achievement
- 80-90%:** Satisfactory achievement
- < 80%:** Unsatisfactory achievement

[75-80%: Marginal achievement]

For each Learning Goal, Learning Objective, and operational dimension, 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 achievement gap. Reports will be generated using the basic framework below.

Title of Learning Goal								
Learning Objective	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
a. First Objective	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
i. First dimension	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%

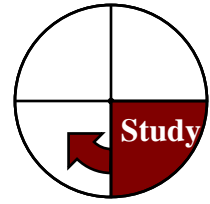
Course Coverage and Assessment Schedule



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

Learning Goal Course Coverage and Assessment Schedule					
MBA Course	Learning Goals Covered in MBA Courses				
	1. Leadership skills	2. Business Systems	3. Critical Thinking	4. Communication Skills	5. Ethical Decisions
ACCT 601 Fin Accounting					
DECS 601 Statistics					
ECON 603 Economics					
FIN 601 Financial Mgmt					
MGT 600 Management					
MGT 605 Managerial Comm					
ACCT 715 Mgt Control (Acct)					
BA 700 Ethical & Legal Resp					
BA 710 Entrepreneurship					
FIN 700 Adv Financial Mgmt					
MGT 711 Mgmt Sci & Ops					
MGT 715 Global Supply Chain					
MGT 725 Leadership Dynamic					
MKT 700 Marketing Mgmt					
BA 850 Global Strategy					
Assessment Phase	Learning Goals Measured in each Assessment Phase				
	1. Leadership skills	2. Business Systems	3. Critical Thinking	4. Communication Skills	5. Ethical Decisions
Phase I (2008-09)					
Phase II (2010-11)					

3. Study – What do our students currently learn?



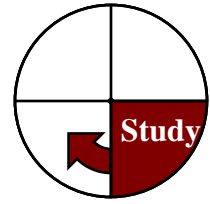
As of Fall 2008, and according to the most recent measures taken of each Learning Goal and Learning Objective, the current level of student achievement is as shown in the table below. Achievement is calculated as the percentage of students that met or exceeded the learning standards of a given Learning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

Current Level of Student Achievement of Learning Goals								
Learning Goal	Individual Student Achievement						Performance	
1. Leadership Skills	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. *								
b. *								
2. Business Systems	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Overall ability*								
b. Synthesize skills*								
c. Recog. systems*								
3. Critical Thinking	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Analyze scenario	3	33%	6	67%	0	0%	6	67%
b. Formulate strategy	0	0%	8	89%	1	11%	9	100%
4. Communication	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Articulate ideas*								
b. Business writing*								
5. Ethical Decisions	Fails		Meets		Exceeds		Achieves	
a. Make decisions	2	17%	6	50%	4	33%	10	83%
b. Describe solution	4	33%	2	17%	6	50%	8	67%
c. Reflect on process	0	0%	2	17%	10	83%	12	100%

* As of Fall 2008, these Learning Objectives had not yet been measured. Rubrics are under development for each objective, and will be implemented in the 2008-2009 academic year.

Detailed reports for each Learning Goal can be found in the appendix. All reports use the same underlying Learning Objective structure and performance scale, but will vary in the operational dimensions used to measure achievement of each Learning Objective according to the course assignments or activities in which the relevant rubrics were embedded during the report period.

Analysis of Current Student Achievement



The learning difficulties encountered by students are outlined below.

1. Leadership Skills: *

2. Business Systems: *

3. Critical Thinking:

An assignment from New Product Development, Spring 2008, was used as the context for data gathering and assessment. Students were required to originate a new product idea for a new or existing firm, perform a market opportunity analysis, develop business goals and marketing objectives, develop “4 P’s” strategies and describe the steps for successful implementation thereof, and develop a control and evaluation plan to measure the product’s success.

There was a normal distribution in quality of work: there were a few exceptional marketing plans, a few poor plans, and some students had interesting things to say but communicated them poorly. Generally, students were pretty good at discussing a new product idea. Students were strong in knowing and applying the 4 P’s. They were also good at describing controls and tools for measuring the success of product sales and of a promotional tool.

Our students were adept at listing facts and reporting environmental trends. However, students had a harder time analyzing the information in order to formulate an argument. The students did not develop a convincing argument that, based on evidence, their marketing plan would succeed. Instead, they stated a claim (e.g., “Everyone is going to love our product”), threw out some data that may or may not have related to the claim, and left it at that.

For instance, some students may have described the competitors’ offerings, but then failed to enter into an analysis of the implications of the competitors’ strategic positioning in relation to the students’ firm (or product). Or, they failed to demonstrate clearly that there is a target market that desires (or will desire) the product offering, that it has the means to purchase the offering, and that is willing to forgo the purchase of other offerings from competitors.

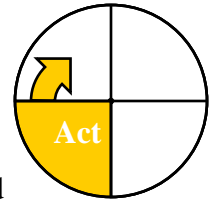
4. Communication: *

5. Ethical Decisions:

Similar to the results from the first time we assessed undergraduate students’ ethical decision-making, we found that defining ethical problem and defining the self as the ethical actor are challenging tasks for graduate students. Also, although the students worked well enough with Kant and Mill frameworks, they had enormous difficulty with Rawls and McIntyre frameworks.

* As of Fall 2008, these Learning Objectives had not yet been measured. Rubrics are under development for each objective, and will be implemented in the 2008-2009 academic year.

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. Leadership Skills: *

2. Business Systems: *

3. Critical Thinking:

The fact that students struggled with Critical Thinking in New Product Development does not mean that our students cannot think. Rather, it reflects an overarching problem with our graduate students, and possibly also some of our undergraduates. Perhaps students do not understand what “to analyze” means as a rigorous, systematic process of examination of an argument or problem.

Critical thinking is inherently hard to teach. Perhaps we need to spend time as a faculty – the group – to discuss ways of teaching critical thinking. Researching how to teach critical thinking might be useful. In sum, to improve critical thinking we are going to have to go beyond simply expecting it, to teaching a specific process to use to think about problems and arrive at solutions.

4. Communication: *

5. Ethical Decisions:

Students struggled with describing the results of their decision-making process in a business memo. It may be that the expectations for the memo were not fully explained. Also, the ethics simulation used to assess the ethical decision-making process focused heavily on multiple choice questions. We are piloting an essay-driven simulation in the Spring 2009 semester in Leadership Dynamics in order to give students an opportunity to practice describing ethical situations and the results of ethical decision-making processes in concise writing and in business language.

* As of Fall 2008, these Learning Objectives had not yet been measured. Rubrics are under development for each objective, and will be implemented in the 2008-2009 academic year.

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.

