

College of Letters and Science
Annual Survey and Report of Departmental Assessment Practices

Please return to: Associate Dean Herbert Wang by May 25, 2001
c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein
307 E. South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall, Madison WI 53706

Department Name: ASTRONOMY

I. Assessment Plan

- Q1. The department has an assessment plan for the undergraduate program. Y
Q2. The department has an assessment plan for the graduate program. Y
Q3. The assessment plan/s is/are linked to the departmental mission. Y

Please identify the types of tools in the assessment plan(s); if possible, indicate the academic years in which they have been or are intended to be employed:

Table with 3 columns: Tools used to directly assess student learning, Undergraduate Program, Graduate Program. Rows include National Exams, Local Exams, Capstone Courses, Embedded Testing, Student Portfolios, Theses, Dissertations, Performance Evaluations, Pre & Post Testing, and Tools used to indirectly assess student learning (Student Surveys, Exit Interviews, Alumni Surveys, Employer Surveys, External Reviews).

Q5. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information? The two methods used are complimentary.

Q6. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information? See Q5

Q7. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information? The two methods are complimentary.

Q8. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information? See Q7

Q9. Please elaborate on any of the responses given above (please attach additional pages as needed).

II. Assessment Processes

Q10. Responsibility for assessment has been assumed by _____ an individual
 a committee

If responsibility is delegated to an individual, this person is:

the chair / tenured faculty / untenured faculty / academic staff / short term staff / other: _____

If responsibility is delegated to a committee, this group is:

Specially constituted to address assessment of student learning	Y
Part of the Curriculum Committee	N
Part of the Executive Committee	N
Part of the Undergraduate/Graduate Education Committee	N
Other: _____	

Q11. The department has requested funds from the University Assessment Council (UAC) to help the department assess student learning. N

If "yes", did the UAC award the department funds? Y N

Were those funds useful? Y N

Q12. The department has sought professional assistance to conduct assessment. N

If "yes", from whom has the department sought professional assistance? (For example, the LEAD Center, the Office of Quality Improvement, the UW Survey Center, etc.)

III. Additional Information

Please attach any assessment reports you may have submitted to the University Assessment Council in compliance with the UAC's funding support requests.

In the interest of streamlining our requests for assessment information, please identify an assessment contact person: _____ Prof. Joseph Cassinelli _____

Do you have any suggestions for workshops or learning opportunities in the area of student outcomes assessment?

Thank you for taking time to complete this report.

Please return this form to the Associate Dean's Office by May 25, 2001.

University of Wisconsin Department of Astronomy
Undergraduate Exit Interview / Survey
Summary

We conducted a survey of our graduating majors. A questionnaire was sent to each of the students and got 5 responses.

The questions ranged from the general "what were your goals in choosing to major in Astronomy Physics" to the very specific "was this course work a valuable part of your college education.

One student, who will be leaving here to work in the Peace Corp, said she chose the major to "think about interesting things". A student who will be going to Graduate School at UC Irvine "Enjoy my education and be able to get a job that I would enjoy."

These are typical responses and we are apparently successful in presenting an interesting major, which provides opportunities for graduate education or technology based research jobs upon graduation.

Of the 5 responders, three will be going on to graduate school U of Maryland, U of Pennsylvania, and UC Irvine, another who did not respond will be going to UC Santa Cruz. The student going to the Peace Corp may go to graduate school later, as she has established a very good record here. One of the students will be taking a year off "to let my brain cool off."

The students liked the opportunity to do research outside of the classroom and one said that the practical experience was more valuable than what was learned in the classes. One worked on a Hilldale fellowship project, All seem to have been involved in research at some lever with the faculty.

There were no specific suggestions regarding our courses. One student suggests that we should get our undergraduates involved in research as soon as possible. Another regrets not having done research until senior year.

As for corrective actions:

No changes will be made with our courses.

We taught Astron 310 as a writing intensive course this past year. This is a course that is taken by nearly every one of our majors. We found that the writing exercises gave students a basic understanding of astrophysical research and some contacts with the faculty involved in various subfields. We will give serious consideration to offering this as a WI course each time in the future.

The research experiences were found to be especially useful to our students. We applied for and obtained 3 Hilldale student faculty research fellowships. We will continue providing observing experiences to students working on the polarization observing program at our Pine Bluff Observatory.

Other avenues for collaborative research will be explored.