

University Summary Report: Sustainability Assessment of Student Learning for Graduate Programs

November 2, 2021, version 1

INTRODUCTION

Special Note about COVID-19: It is important to note that a significant amount of the work referenced in this report was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic that began in the Spring of 2020 and continued in the Fall of 2021 when this report was written. This includes the collection, assessment, and analysis of student work in college discussions, and implementing college and University changes - all of which were impacted to some degree.

The Educational Effectiveness Committee, along with other academic committees such as CAPR and the ILO Subcommittee, supported ongoing reflection about student learning for mindful, flexible, and nimble decision making during this dynamic period. Additionally, teaching, learning, and assessment discussions and decision-making related to diversity, inclusion, and social justice issues were a critical part of academic assessment during this time.

Purpose

[Institutional Learning Outcomes \(ILOs\)](#) are those learning outcomes that are expected of every graduate of the institution, both undergraduate and graduate, and are closely aligned with [General Education](#) requirements. ILO Assessment follows the [ILO Long Term Assessment Plan](#) which aligns the assessment schedule for undergraduate, graduate, and the [GE Long-term Assessment Plan](#).

Following the schedule for the [ILO Long Term Assessment Plan](#), Cal State East Bay has gathered recent student learning data to support the assessment of the University's Sustainability Institutional Learning Outcome. These data are intended to provide additional context for existing academic review discussions, analysis, and decision making to improve student learning.

Overview of Graduate Sustainability

Graduate students would be expected to have mastered general sustainability skills as part of their undergraduate degree. Sustainability goals in graduate programs would then be aimed at developing and mastering discipline-specific skills such as demonstration of theory, discussion of assumptions, recognition of perspective, analysis of inter-relationships, and application of practical approaches. Development of these discipline-specific sustainability skills is completed within major courses in a student's degree major. Students who have not mastered general

sustainability skills prior to admission may address that deficiency by completing courses which fulfill the undergraduate GE overlay requirement for Sustainability, or by completing major-specific courses incorporating Sustainability in programs where those courses are available.

METHODS

CSUEB Academic Senate policy requires that each graduate program align to at least two university ILOs, as specified in the ILO Long-Term Assessment Plan. All graduate programs have submitted ILO-PLO mappings to indicate the ILOs to which they would align, and these alignments are available on the College assessment web pages.

It is expected that there may be wide variation in the goals of the various graduate programs with respect to the Sustainability ILO (e.g., designing experiments to produce scientific results vs. developing arguments to effect change.) In addition, some programs are subject to outside accreditation organizations which specify their own criteria and rubrics for assessing Sustainability skills. As a result, each aligned graduate program was asked to specify a rubric to be used to assess the Sustainability ILO. Programs could choose to use the university rubric developed to assess undergraduate work, modify the university rubric, develop their own discipline-specific rubric, or use a rubric specified by an outside accrediting agency. This process is in contrast to the assessment of ILOs in the undergraduate programs where a common university rubric is used to assess all undergraduate work across all programs for each ILO.

Each aligned graduate program identified one or more graduate courses in which the ILO was to be assessed, and the instructor of the course was asked to identify or develop an assignment that could be effectively used for assessment purposes. Individual programs decided how many samples they would gather in each assessed course and also identified faculty members responsible for applying the specified rubrics to generate the assessment data. The results of the assessment efforts were provided in each program's annual report to the Academic Senate [Committee on Academic Planning and Review \(CAPR\)](#) and to the [Office of Graduate Studies](#).

Assessment of Graduate Level ILO Sustainability Student Work 2020- 2021

One of the thirty-five graduate programs at CSUEB chose to align one or more of their Program Learning Outcomes with the Sustainability ILO and participated in assessment of that ILO in 2020-2021. In addition, one more program performed assessment and provided results although they were not formally aligned. These programs did however align to different sub-parts of the Sustainability ILO as both Social Responsibility and Sustainability were sub-part options. Programs from two of the four CSUEB colleges were represented.

Table 1. Numbers of programs aligned by college for Sustainability ILO 2020-21.

College	Programs Represented	# Programs Aligned to Sustainability ILO

CBE	Business Administration	1 (Social Responsibility)
CEAS	None	0
CLASS	Public Administration	1 (Sustainability)
CSCI	None	0

No common process was specified for collecting or assessing data. One program was subject to assessment requirements from its accrediting organization. The other intended to gather data from students in its graduate capstone course. As a result, each program was asked to specify their own assessment process and describe the process when reporting their results. Both programs assessed assignments from all students. Both programs used a single assessor to assess each assignment.

RESULTS

Assessment of Graduate Level ILO Sustainability Student Work 2020-2021

Student Performance

The results of the assessment from each graduate program were specified based upon the rubric that they used. One program used the rubric specified by the accrediting organization while the other one developed its own discipline-specific rubric. The variations in rubric criteria and the number of criteria may exemplify variation in the outcomes specified by the graduate programs at CSUEB in terms of sustainability skills or may be the result of discipline-specific terminology and proposed assessment methods in specifying those outcomes.

Table 2. Characterization of Rubrics for Sustainability ILO Assessment

College	Program	Rubric	# Criteria	Scale
CBE				
	Business Administration	Accrediting Organization	5	0-8
CEAS				
	None			
CLASS				
	Public Administration	Discipline-specific	3	1-4
CSCI				
	None			

Only one graduate program aligned with the Social Responsibility sub-part of the Sustainability ILO, and only one other program provided results for the Sustainability sub-part. For

confidentiality reasons, the assessment results are not reported here. In addition, an “n” of one is too small to provide meaningful results. The Graduate Advisory Committee will be asked to address this issue in the future.

DISCUSSIONS

SUGGESTIONS FOR COLLEGE AND GRADUATE ADVISORY COUNCIL DISCUSSIONS

Role of ILO Subcommittee

The ILO Subcommittee will review calibration results and faculty feedback in order to recommend potential changes to the Sustainability ILO Rubric and the ILO Assessment process for undergraduate work. Graduate programs currently using the university rubrics may then decide whether to adopt any proposed changes or move to a discipline-specific rubric.

Graduate Advisory Council meetings

Discussion of ILO assessment results will be placed on the agenda for the Spring 2022 Graduate Advisory Council meetings. Graduate coordinators will be asked to review results and discuss changes made to improve students learning, as well as evaluating the assessment process in order to add meaning to the results and help to improve processes for future assessment cycles.

College/Unit Discussions

Led by associate deans, each college/unit will decide their own approach to reviewing results and conducting discussions generally following the schedules outlined in ILO Long Term Assessment Plan and EEC Communication Plan. This includes reviewing those results that add meaning to their discussions about improving student performance in Sustainability skills.

Support for College and Graduate Advisory Council Discussions

Please see University Summary Report for contacts and potential meeting format. Possible additional graduate-specific discussion questions include:

1. How do results of graduate assessment compare to undergraduate assessment in departments with both undergraduate and graduate programs? Were results as expected?
2. Were there commonalities between programs in areas of student proficiency or gaps? Can common solutions for addressing gaps be suggested?
3. What is the importance of each criterion within a rubric? Should weights be assigned?
4. Are expectations for proficiency for similar criteria different between programs or colleges? Should they be?
5. Which sustainability interventions are working well, and which are not, for graduate students in particular?
6. What else can be done to improve sustainability skills?