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| **Assurance of Student Learning Report**  **2021-2022** | |
| *Ogden College of Science and Engineering* | *Department of Biology* |
| *Biology (056)* | |
| *Michael Smith, Program Coordinator; Kerrie McDaniel, Doug McElroy, Assessment Coordinators* | |

***Is this an online program***?  Yes  No

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| ***Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.*** | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome 1:** Graduates will demonstrate a level of biological content knowledge appropriate to their degree level. | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | Biology Assessment Exam | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Student Learning Outcome 2:**  Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research. | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | CITI Responsible Conduct of Research Course modules | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Student Learning Outcome 3:**  Graduates will demonstrate the ability to apply scientific methodology and field/laboratory/analytical skills to a biological question. | | | |
| **Instrument 1** | Representative biology process artifact selected by the student from their required Biology Process Course or Biology Independent Research Experience | | |
| **Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.** | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Program Summary (Briefly summarize the action and follow up items from your detailed responses on subsequent pages.)** | | | |
| During 2020-21 and consistent with it’s five-year assessment plan, the Department of Biology Program Review/Assessment Committee (the ‘Committee’) and faculty (1) assessed 2020-21 artifacts for all SLOs and analyzed results from those assessments; and (2) developed and approved recommendations for program improvements based on assessment findings. These follow-up actions will be undertaken during the 2022-23 academic year, and be fully implemented by Fall 2023. | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 1** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | **Graduates will demonstrate a level of biological content knowledge appropriate to their degree level.** | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **Biology Assessment Exam**  The Biology Assessment Exam is an instrument, newly developed in 2020-21, designed to assess content knowledge within the program discipline. The exam is constructed around 12 vignettes, 2 each representing the six major areas of emphasis in our core curriculum (Cells, Metabolism, Genetics, Ecology, Evolution, Diversity). These major areas are literally the elements introduced in our required introductory course sequence (BIOL 120/121 and BIOL 122-123), and reinforced in our restricted elective core choices at the 200-level (BIOL 222/223, 224/225, or 226/227) and 300-level (BIOL 319/322 or 327/337 and BIOL 315 or 316). Free elective courses at the 300- and 400-levels provide students the opportunity to further master these topics in more specific contexts aligned with their individual professional interests.  Within each area of emphasis, there are 2 vignettes that are associated with 9 multiple-choice questions. Three (3) questions each test student content knowledge at the introductory, developing, and mastery level. In each area, several questions require interpretation of tables and/or figures, and assess students’ ability to apply the scientific process. This exam design allows for redundant assessment of knowledge by area of emphasis as well as mastery level; in addition, it provides the ability to carry out a meta-analysis of higher-order knowledge and skills such as correct interpretation of data and application of the scientific process.  The exam is given either electronically or in-person as part of BIOL 500, our required program course that is taken by students during their first semester at WKU. This is an appropriate time to deliver this assessment, as (1) many of our program students are employed as GTAs within the department, and we must ensure they possess a satisfactory understanding of core biology content early in their program, and (2) performance on the assessment exam is used by the program and a student’s graduate committee as a basis for determining the extent and nature of any comprehensive examination and/or remedial coursework that will be required in order for a student to complete the program. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Students will score at least 60% or higher, with the score on Introductory and Developing level items at least 60%. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | At least 75% of students will attain the criterion level of success. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | 50.0% of students attained the criterion level of success, with 16.7% meeting the sub-criterion. The sample size was 6. | |
| **Methods** | Given that the assessment instrument is newly-developed and implemented, the program considers the first round of assessment data to constitute baseline data; we are reluctant to draw too many conclusions or implications from patterns in the scores within and among content areas. Nevertheless, we can summarize the patterns based on this initial assessment. Across all mastery levels, students as a group performed best on questions related to cells (68.5% correct responses), and metabolism (59.3%), and worst on genetics (46.3%) and diversity (48.1%); performance on topics related to ecology (55.6) and evolution (51.9%) were intermediate. Beyond the sample size is small, it is difficult to assess any patterns in these data, as the students entering the graduate program represent a group with mixed academic backgrounds and interests.  Across all content areas, student performance on introductory-level questions was 56.5%, 51.9% on intermediate-level items, and 56.5% on mastery-level items. These data are valuable in establishing students’ baseline level of competency upon entering the program. It became apparent from examination of assessment findings that coverage of content related to molecular biotechnology, immunology, microbiology, and clinical topics – which is important and relevant to our high proportion of pre-professional students within the program – was underrepresented. The assessment findings indicate that the program should expand the assessment instrument to include better coverage of such topics. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| 1. The Committee analyzed 2020-21 assessment results and develop recommendations for program improvement to bring to program faculty. (Fall 2021)  2. The Committee moved from an in-person to electronic delivery format for the assessment exam. This electronic delivery system was piloted during the 2021-22 AY, in preparation for the collection of mid-cycle assessment data during 2022-23, for inclusion in the 2023/24 report.  3. Program faculty reviewed and approved specific program improvement actions to be undertaken based on assessment findings. (Spring 2022). | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| 1. The Committee will develop and implement an additional 9-question module within the assessment exam to focus on topics related to molecular biotechnology, immunology and microbiology, and clinical applications; this module will address deficiencies in coverage identified during analysis of 2020-21 assessment data. (Fall 2022). | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| 2022-23 academic year | | | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 2** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | **Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of research ethics and the responsible conduct of research.** | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **CITI Responsible Conduct of Research Course Modules**  The Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) is a web-based ethics training course for responsible conduct in research that has been adopted by the WKU IRB, IACUC, and IBS Committees as a prerequisite certification to be attained by any investigator seeking approval for a research project through one or more of these committees. All PIs, Co-PIs, and Faculty Sponsors are required to complete CITI RCR training and receive certification (based on a minimum score of 80%) across all course training modules. These module educate and evaluate researchers on up-to-date issues and standards of research ethics, research integrity, and researcher conduct.  The Physical Science RCR Course used to assess this SLO consists of 7 individual modules: (1) Research Misconduct; (2) Data Management; (3) Authorship; (4) Peer Review; (5) Mentoring; (6) Conflicts of Interest; and (7) Collaborative Research. Within each module, participants review a multimedia presentation and several seminal articles related to the topic. At the end, participants demonstrate competency through a five-question multiple choice test, with test items randomly drawn from a larger question pool.  Completion of CITI RCR training is required of all students enrolled in BIOL 500, our required Introduction to Graduate Studies course that is taken by students during their first semester at WKU. This is an appropriate time to deliver this assessment, as students are preparing to initiate a thesis research or investigatory project as part of their Program of Study. Students are required to submit (1) a Completion Certificate indicating that they have attained a minimum score of 80% across all course modules, and (2) individual module scores (percentage of questions answered correctly) from their first attempt. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Students will attain the required minimum score for certification, with at least 60% correct answers on each module from their first attempt, including 80% or higher on at least 4 of the 7 modules. | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | At least 75% of students will attain the criterion level of success. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | N/A – data to be assessed in 2022-23 | |
| **Methods** | All students enrolled in the BIOL 500 course are intended to be assessed. This will generate a sample size of 5-10 each assessment year. However, BIOL 500 was undergoing curricular revision during 2020-21, and so these data were not collected as anticipated in the department’s five-year assessment plan. Full implementation of this requirement will occur in Fall 2022. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| 1. The program faculty undertook revisions to BIOL 500 course in which the SLO will be assessed. As such, assessment of the SLO did not occur during this cycle. This implementation will occur in Fall 2022.  2. Program faculty for other departmental programs reviewed and approved specific program improvement actions to be undertaken based on assessment findings. (Spring 2022). | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| 1. The program will integrate and require all students in BIOL 500 to complete the (1) Investigators, Staff, and Students Basic Course, and (2) Physical Sciences Responsible Conduct of Research Course, (3) Basic Biosafety Course, and (4) one other CITI course appropriate to their program of study. (Fall 2022) | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| 2022-23 academic year | | | | | |

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| **Student Learning Outcome 3** | | | | | |
| **Student Learning Outcome** | **Graduates will demonstrate the ability to apply scientific methodology and field/laboratory/analytical skills to a biological question.** | | | | |
| **Measurement Instrument 1** | **Representative Biology Process Artifact**  All students in the program are required to complete a process-based project, culminating in either a master’s thesis (BIOL 599) or a product of independant investigation (BIOL l516), in which application of part or all of the scientific process to address a relevant question in biology. Both of these experiences yield artifacts – such as evidence and argument papers, research presentations or posters, honors CE/T projects, or manuscripts – that allow for assessment of this SLO. Students are required to submit the artifact as part of their BIOL 599 (thesis) or BIOL 516 (non-thesis) course.  Artifacts are assessed by the student’s major advisor and/or graduate committee using the AAC&U LEAP Inquiry and Analysis rubric. Faculty independently assess each artifacts they are assigned; when faculty ratings differ by more than 25% across all rubric elements, artifacts ratings are reconciled either by a third reviewer or by discussion between team members. The Inquiry and Analysis rubric is attached to this report. | | | | |
| **Criteria for Student Success** | Students will receive an rating of 3.0 or higher across all rubric elements, with no rubric element below 3 (out of 4). | | | | |
| **Program Success Target for this Measurement** | | At least 75% of students will attain the criterion level of success. | **Percent of Program Achieving Target** | 50.0% of students attained the criterion level of success, with 0.0% attained the sub-criterion. The sample size was 2. | |
| **Methods** | The mean overall rating was 3.2 out of 4.0, indicating a milestone level of performance across all rubric elements. The six rubric elements are divided into three sub-scores (2 elements each) reflecting different aspects of the SLO: (1) Evidence-gathering; (2) Analysis; and (3) Argumentation. Subscores were highest for evidence gathering (mean subscore 3.5 out of 4.0), followed by argumentation (3.3) and analysis (3.1). Student performance was lowest on the rubric element associated with orghanizing evidence to reveal patterns, with a mean element score of 2.5. These score trends are not surprising, and are consistent with the Bloom’s taxonomic level of the different rubric elements; however, the absolute scores are below targeted levels. While the sample size was small, performance of 056 students was better than that of students in the the department’s undergraduate programs; this indicates that the graduate program operates at a higher degree of academic rigor.  The assessment process for 056 students showed less variability in artifacts than was seen among artifacts generated by undergraduate students through their science process courses. This is to be expected, as the artifacts comprising this sample were MS theses; there were no non-thesis project artifacts generated for assessment during this cycle, for which there is less standardization.The assessment findings for the department’s programs as a whole indicate that program faculty need to develop a common understanding of what process courses should expect of students in terms of both process learning as well as valid artifacts for ssessment of the SLO. | | | | |
| **Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.** | | | | **Met** | **Not Met** |
| **Actions** (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.) | | | | | |
| 1. Program faculty teams assessed artifacts using the AAC&U LEAP-based rubric and report results to the Committee. (Fall 2021)  2. The Committee analyzed 2020-21 assessment artifacts and develop recommendations for program improvement to bring to program faculty. (Spring 2022)  3. Program faculty reviewed and approved specific program improvement actions to be undertaken based on assessment findings. (Spring 2022). | | | | | |
| **Follow-Up** (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.) | | | | | |
| 1. The department will establish a framework and process within the department to review and standardize expectations for process course artifacts. (Spring 2023) | | | | | |
| **Next Assessment Cycle Plan** (Please describe your assessment plan timetable for this outcome) | | | | | |
| 2022-23 academic year | | | | | |

**A picture containing text

Description automatically generatedINQUIRY AND ANALYSIS VALUE RUBRIC**

*for more information, please contact value@aacu.org*

**Definition**

Inquiry is a systematic process of exploring issues/' objects/works through the collection and analysis of evidence that result in informed conclusions/ judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them.

*Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or selection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level of performance.*

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|  | **Capstone**  **4** | **Milestones**  **3 2** | | **Benchmark**  **1** |
| **Topic selection** | Identifies a creative, focused, and manageable topic that addresses potentially significant yet previously less explored aspects of the topic. | Identifies a focused and manageable/doable topic that appropriately addresses relevant aspects of the topic. | Identifies a topic that while manageable/doable, is too narrowly focused and leaves out relevant aspects of the topic. | Identifies a topic that is far too general and wide-ranging as to be manageable and doable. |
| **Existing Knowledge, Research, and/or Views** | Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches. | Presents in-depth information from relevant sources representing various points of view/approaches. | Presents information from relevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches. | Presents information from irrelevant sources representing limited points of view/approaches. |
| **Design Process** | All elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are skillfully developed. Appropriate methodology or theoretical frameworks may be synthesized from across disciplines or from relevant subdisciplines. | Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are appropriately developed; however, more subtle elements are ignored or unaccounted for. | Critical elements of the methodology or theoretical framework are missing, incorrectly developed, or unfocused. | Inquiry design demonstrates a misunderstanding of the methodology or theoretical framework. |
| **Analysis** | Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. | Organizes evidence to important patterns, differences, or similarities related to focus. | Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities. | Lists evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to focus. |
| **Conclusions** | States a conclusion that is a logical extrapolation from the inquiry findings. | States a conclusion focused solely on the inquiry findings. The conclusion arises specifically from and responds specifically to the inquiry findings. | States a general conclusion that, because it is so general, also applies beyond the scope of the inquiry findings. | States an illogical, or unsupportable conclusion from inquiry |
| **Limitations and Implications** | Insightfully discusses in detail relevant and supported limitations and implications. | Discusses relevant and supported limitations and implications. | Presents relevant and supported limitations and implications. | Presents limitations and implications, but they are possibly irrelevant and unsupported. |

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| **CURRICULUM MAP TEMPLATE** | | |  |  |  |
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| **Program name:** | 056 Master of Science-Biology | | |  |  |
| **Department:** | Biology | | |  |  |
| **College:** | Ogden | | |  |  |
| **Contact person:** | Carl Dick | | |  |  |
| **Email:** | [carl.dick@wku.edu](mailto:carl.dick@wku.edu) | | |  |  |
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| **KEY:** | |  |  |  |  |
| **I = Introduced** | |  |  |  |  |
| **R = Reinforced/Developed** | |  |  |  |  |
| **M = Mastered** | |  |  |  |  |
| **A = Assessed** | |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **Learning Outcomes** |  |  |
|  |  |  | **LO1:** | **LO2:** | **LO3:** |
|  |  |  | Graduates will demonstrate a degree of biological content knowledge appropriate to their degree level. | Graduates will demonstrate the ability to apply scientific methodology and field/ laboratory/ analytical skills to a biological question. | Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of research ethics and responsible conduct of research. |
| **Course Subject** | **Number** | **Course Title** |  |  |  |
| BIOL | 500 | Introduction to Graduate Studies and Research in Biology (First Semester) | R,A | R | R,A |
| BIOL | 4xxG | Elective Courses in Biology (TBD by student's committee) | M |  |  |
| BIOL | 5xx | Elective Courses in Biology (TBD by student's graduate committee) | M |  |  |
| BIOL | 599 | Thesis Research/Writing | M | M,A | M |
| BIOL | 516 | Investigations/Biology | M | M,A | M |