

Auburn University Journalism Program Assessment Plan

Adopted: 2009

Last Revised: April 2024

Assessment is a cornerstone of any academic program and the journalism program at Auburn University employs a detailed plan to ensure that students are learning the concepts and skills necessary to succeed in today's ever-changing media industry.

The goal of the journalism program at Auburn University is to equip our students with the technical and critical thinking skills to be successful media professionals, and instill an appreciation for the important role that journalism and a free press play in a democratic society.

Our assessment plan is built around our 10 program learning outcomes (PLOs) which have been adopted from the Accrediting Council of Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's (ACEJMC) 10 professional values and competencies. The PLOs were adopted in 2009 and updated in 2023 to match updated to ACEJMC's professional values and competencies.

Auburn Journalism Program Learning Outcomes

All graduates of the Auburn University journalism program should be able to:

1. apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the United States
2. demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
3. demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
4. present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
5. write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
6. demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
7. apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
8. effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
9. critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
10. apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Curriculum Map

The curriculum map below illustrates how each core and required course introduces, reinforces or develops mastery of the 10 PLOs.

Level of Coverage	Program Learning Outcomes (abbreviated description)									
Does not apply										
Introduction										
Reinforcement										
Mastery										
Course Name	1. Law	2. History	3. Cultural competency	4. Presenting Info	5. Writing	6. Ethics	7. Research	8. Numbers	9. Editing	10. Tool/Technology
JRNL 1000: Journalism Fundamentals										
JRNL 2210: Newswriting										
CMJN 2210: Concepts of Comm and Journalism										
JRNL 2310: Reporting										
JRSP 3410: Intro to Sports Video Production										
JRSP 3510: Control Room Operation										
CMJN 4000: Mass Media Law and Reg.										
JRNL 4920: Journalism Internship										
JRSP 4920: JRNL Sport Prod Internship										

Generally, the specialized reporting, production and elective courses serve to reinforce some or all of the PLOs. Students demonstrate mastery of the PLOs in their capstone courses and internship.

Assessment Measures

The Journalism Program uses four assessment measures to gauge its success in helping students achieve the desired outcomes. They include:

An exit survey of the program's seniors, conducted within the program's five capstone courses: Advanced Reporting, Advanced Magazine and Feature Writing, Advanced Sports Reporting, Advanced Sports Video Production and Live Sports Producing. The survey includes 10 closed-ended Likert-type questions that ask students to evaluate their knowledge/skill in 10 areas that correspond with the PLOs. There are two additional closed-ended Likert-type questions that ask students to evaluate the journalism program overall and their social media skills. There are also three open-ended questions that ask students to describe the strengths, weaknesses and give an overall evaluation of the journalism program.

Internship evaluations, which are filled out by internship site supervisors and provide detailed assessment of the intern's skills in several areas. All journalism and sports production students are required to complete an internship and most do so during their senior year. The survey asks internship supervisors to evaluate their student in four areas; writing skills, multimedia skills, specialized writing skills, and personal qualities. There are several indicators and an overall Likert-type question for each area. Supervisors are also asked to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their intern, their critical thinking skills and whether the student is prepared to become a full-time employee at their organization via open-ended questions. They are also given the chance to provide additional feedback about the intern and how the journalism program is preparing interns for careers in their industry. Several of the questions are tied to the program's SLOs.

Capstone/Senior project assessments, with a panel of working professionals, are conducted for one senior-level class each academic year. The classes and assignments vary from year to year. The panel is given an evaluation rubric that focuses on the 10 PLOs and asked to give open-ended feedback.

A school-wide alumni survey, conducted every 2-3 years. This allows our alumni to assess how well the school's programs prepared them, within the context of the student learning outcomes.

The internship evaluations and project assessments are considered direct measures. The senior survey and alumni survey are considered indirect measures.

Assessment Process

All full-time faculty members take part in the assessment process, but the job of gathering and presenting assessment data lies with the program assessment coordinator (in most years, the associate director for journalism). The assessment coordinator begins gathering data at the end of the fall semester. They will visit each capstone course toward the end of the semester to administer the senior survey. If class selected for the project assessment meets in the fall, they will coordinate with the faculty member teaching the class to gather projects and assemble a panel of professionals. In the spring, the assessment coordinator will administer the exit survey to the remaining senior-level classes. If this is a year in which the alumni survey is conducted, they will work with the Advancement office to get a list of alumni emails. The internship evaluations are gathering via a Qualtrics survey administered by the school's internship coordinator. The assessment coordinator has access to that data and will begin analyzing it toward the end of the spring semester. The goal is the have all the assessment data gathered by early April.

Once all the data has been gathered, the assessment coordinator will conduct an analysis focusing on the 10 PLOs and comparing results to previous years. That analysis, as well as complete survey and evaluation results, are shared with all journalism faculty around mid-April. Before the end of the semester, the faculty meet either in person or by video conference to discuss the results and provide actionable steps to address perceived issues.

The results, analysis and action plan are then shared with the university's Office of Academic Assessment before the July 1st deadline. The assessment coordinator receives feedback on the assessment results in the Fall semester and works to incorporate this into future assessment efforts. Additionally, the action plan is reviewed at the fall program faculty meeting in August to ensure that it is being enacted for the upcoming academic year. Action plan items are revisited at the program assessment meeting the following year.