



Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2013-14

Department: Jake Jabs College of Business & Entrepreneurship

Program(s):

- B.S. Business
- Master of Professional Accountancy (MPAc)

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

Knowledge of Business: Major Field Test in Business

As noted in last year's report, the MFT results for fall 2012 and spring 2013 were well below the College's historical 90⁺% achievement. In order to determine whether student learning has declined or whether the changed approach in BGEN 499 to administering the test may have resulted in lower performance, the committee investigated how the test was administered in 2012-13. This investigation showed that, unlike in past years, students in 2012-13 were not required to take the test, students did not receive points in the course for their performance on the test, and faculty did not explain the importance of the test.

Therefore, the committee decided, in conjunction with the BGEN 499 faculty, to administer the test again in spring 2014. In preparation:

- Taking the MFT was required of all students in BGEN 499
- Students were promised additional points in the course if the entire cohort scored better than the spring 2013 cohort
- Either Bill Brown (faculty member) or Susan Dana (Associate Dean) visited every section of BGEN 499 to explain why strong performance on the MFT benefits both students individually and the College
- Faculty in all sections who taught seniors were asked to emphasize to their students the importance of a strong performance, on the theory that students might be more influenced by faculty in their options
- Either Bill Brown or Susan Dana attended each administration of the MFT to again exhort students to do their best
- Students scoring above the 90th percentile would be publicly recognized

The results in spring 2014 were gratifying: our seniors as a cohort scored in the 92nd percentile, significantly higher than in 2012-13. These results suggest that the relatively low scores in 2012-13 were an aberration and did not reflect a real decline in student learning. The College will administer the MFT again in fall 2014 and spring and summer 2015.

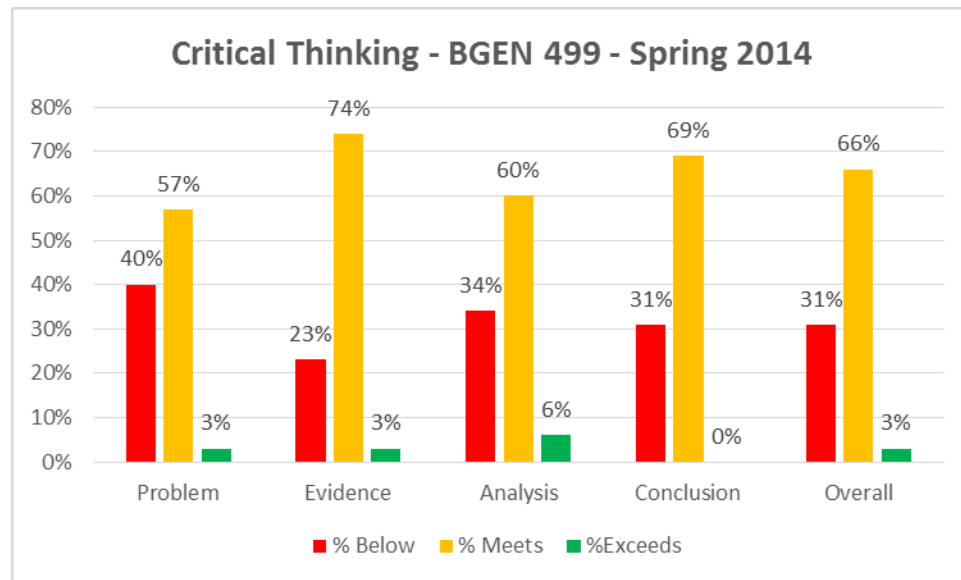
Critical Thinking

A three-member panel of the AoL Committee (Susan Dana, Amber Raile, Mike Shaw) used written analyses of a case (*Blood Bananas: Chiquita in Colombia*), required of all students in BGEN 499 in spring 2014, to assess critical thinking. Dr. Myleen Leary, coordinator of BGEN 499, randomly selected 5-6 papers from each of the six sections of the course and then randomly numbered these papers 1-35 and removed all identifying information from the papers. These 35 papers represented 26% of the *Chiquita* case analyses written in the course (35/133).

All three members of the assessment panel first assessed papers 1 and 2 using the College’s critical thinking rubric, then met to discuss the results and agree on how to interpret some parts of the rubric. Each of the 35 papers was then assessed by two members of the three-member panel using the College’s critical thinking rubric. Scores were collected, and where the two assessors differed significantly (e.g. one scored “below expectations” and one scored “meets expectations”) the third member of the panel reviewed the paper and served as the tie-breaker. Thus each member of the panel assessed 23 papers plus those requiring a tie-breaker.

The assessment shows that business seniors met the goal that 75% will meet or exceed expectations only in the “evidence” category. Otherwise, students did not meet the goal, and overall only 69% of students met or exceeded expectations. These results are down from the last assessment of critical thinking, done in spring 2012, when 92% of students overall met or exceed expectations using the same *Chiquita* case. The most recent assessment suggests that students find it difficult to marshal a large set of facts into a coherent analysis and then to use that analysis to justify a conclusion.

Spring 2014 Critical Thinking Assessment, BGEN 499			
	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Problem	40%	57%	3%
Evidence	23%	74%	3%
Analysis	34%	60%	6%
Conclusion	31%	69%	0%
Overall	31%	66%	3%



There are several possible explanations for the apparent decline in critical thinking skills since 2012, including:

- Students' skills have declined.
- The three members of the panel in 2014, none of whom participated in the 2012 assessment, were more stringent in their assessments than the team in 2012.
- The assignment did not lend itself well to a critical thinking assessment. This seems unlikely given that the AoL Committee worked with the BGEN 499 coordinator to craft an assignment that would not only meet the pedagogical goals of the course but also the needs of the assessment panel.
- The assignment used for the assessment in 2012 was significantly more structured than the assignment used in 2014, resulting in more opportunity in 2014 for students to show their true reasoning ability, for better or for worse.

The most likely explanation is that the less structured assignment used in 2014 compared to 2012 more effectively revealed the weaknesses of our students. It is clear that the College must focus strongly on helping students improve their critical thinking skills. Although previous surveys have shown that as many as 70% of JJCBE faculty use the Colleges PEAS Framework for Critical Thinking in their classes, the latest assessment of learning results suggest that faculty need to continue to develop ways to help students improve critical thinking.

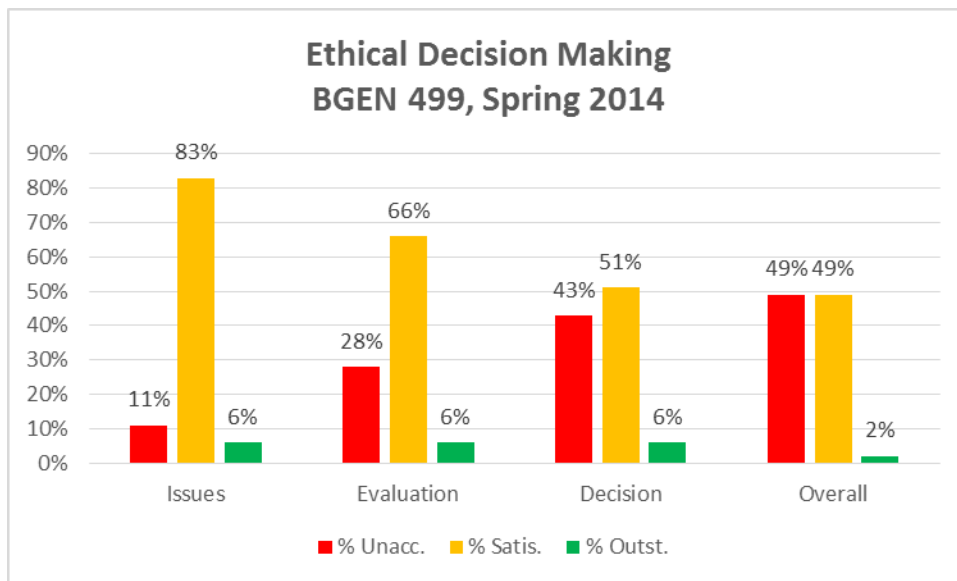
The College's new grading guidance, developed in spring 2014, is one strategy for improving students' critical thinking skills. In response to both an internal study showing significant variation in grades given throughout the College and a desire to raise performance expectations for business students, the College's Academic Programs Committee in spring 2014 developed a draft grading guidance for faculty. Informed by considerable faculty discussion, the grading guidance is intended to help faculty articulate the performance expectations of the College's faculty and to bring consistency to grades across the College. The grading guidance is heavily focused on rewarding critical thinking skills and thus should lead to a greater emphasis on critical thinking throughout the College. Faculty will use the guidance as they prepare their syllabi and course assignments for the fall 2014 semester. The Academic Programs Committee will then solicit data and feedback from faculty after the fall semester in order to assess the usefulness and effectiveness of the guidance. The guidance is attached.

Ethical Decision-Making Assessment

The same methodology was used to assess ethical decision-making as was used to assess critical thinking. The same papers analyzing the *Chiquita* case were assessed by the same three-member panel using the College's ethical decision-making rubric.

The results show that although students performed fairly well on identifying the key ethical issues, they did not meet the College's goal in any other area, and only 51% were satisfactory or outstanding overall. This is a significant decline compared to the spring 2012 assessment in which 91% were satisfactory or outstanding, although even in that assessment 20% scored unacceptable on "evaluation." The possible reasons for the decline are similar to those discussed in the critical thinking section above.

Spring 2014 Ethical Decision-Making Assessment, BGEN 499			
	Unacceptable	Satisfactory	Outstanding
Issues	11%	83%	6%
Evaluation	28%	66%	6%
Decision	43%	51%	6%
Overall	49%	49%	2%



The assessment panel found that although a quite a few students did use the College’s “Ethical PEAS” framework to identify Chiquita’s options in the case, many did not then use that analysis effectively to evaluate the relative merits of each option or to reach a persuasive conclusion. Thus, as with critical thinking, the College needs to help students organize and use information to create a persuasive analysis.

WorkKeys Test of Business Writing

The College requires that all students score a 3 or higher (scale 1-5) on the WorkKeys Test of Business Writing, taken during the sophomore year in BMGT 205, Professional Business Communication, in order to be formally admitted to the College. In spring 2014, 94% of the students taking the test scored a 3 or higher, which is slightly more than in past years.

Quantitative Skills

The Major Field Test in Business (see below) tests quantitative skills and JJCBE students typically do well on that section of the test, but the faculty believe it does not adequately test the skills the JJCBE wishes students to master. Therefore, during 2013 the Assessment of Learning (AoL) Committee explored the possibility of using an existing commercial quantitative skills test or of working with a private vendor to create a customized test. The Committee was unable to find an existing test that adequately measures the skills the College seeks to assess, and creating a customized test in partnership with a vendor is too expensive. Therefore, the Committee continued development of an in-house quantitative skills test.

After multiple drafts, a draft test was given to 2 volunteers in the Master of Professional Accountancy Program in early October 2013. Both were excellent students. One earned an 86% on the test and the other a 56%. Both students commented that they had a hard time remembering some basic skills that they had last used two to three years ago. It took the students about 2 hours to complete the test.

Because the draft test was so long, the committee split it up into two parts, with one focusing on statistics/managerial skills and the other on financial analysis, and improved some of the questions. In January 2014, 55 undergraduate seniors in accounting took the test in ACTG 411 as a homework assignment. Students earned points in the course for taking the test as long as they provided feedback on the test. The feedback provided by the students was very helpful in allowing the committee to further refine the content and format of the test.

Another beta test was administered to senior finance option students in BFIN 456, Financial Management for the Entrepreneur, in April 2014. The results of this test indicate that the test is almost ready for administration as part of the College's assessment of learning program. Therefore, the AoL Committee intends to administer the quantitative skills test for the first time in 2014-15.

AoL Plan for 2014-15

The AoL Committee will administer its quantitative skills test to seniors. The Committee will also assess written and oral communication skills via assignments in senior-level courses. The Academic Programs Committee will need to review the results of the 2013-14 assessments and make recommendations to the faculty on how to improve student learning in critical thinking and ethical decision making.

MASTER OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANCY PROGRAM

The MPAc program, the only graduate program in the College of Business, collected student work in order to assess ethics, technical competency in financial accounting, oral communication and professionalism. The results of the financial accounting and oral communication assessments are not yet available.

Professionalism was assessed using a reflection memo required of all 21 MPAc students who attended the required MPAc Professionalism Workshop in late August 2013. The students were asked a series of question designed to allow them to reflect on their professional strengths and weaknesses and to complete a review of their own performance using a form used by a local accounting firm. The memos were then assessed by three MPAc faculty members using the MPAc professionalism rubric, which includes the following measures:

- Identifies three concepts relevant to career planning
- Identifies own professional strengths
- Identifies own professional weaknesses and describes strategies for addressing weaknesses
- Demonstrate knowledge of issues facing the profession
- Demonstrates professional communication skills

The assessments show that MPAC students overall exceeded expectations on professionalism:

	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Identifies three concepts relevant to career planning	0	10%	90%
Identifies own professional strengths	0	10%	90%
Identifies own professional weaknesses and describes strategies for addressing weaknesses	5%	24%	71%
Demonstrate knowledge of issues facing the profession	0	10%	90%
Demonstrates professional communication skills	10%	10%	81%

Grading Guidance
DRAFT 4/11/2014

This grading guidance is intended to reflect the consensus of the JJCBE faculty on expectations for student performance in the classroom. The guidance reflects the belief that student performance should be assessed based on both performance and professional behavior because both will be essential to success in students' careers. Faculty should decide for themselves how much to weight course work compared to engagement/participation.

Faculty are expected to communicate their expectations around grading of the course and individual assignments to students. This document is intended to provide guidance and some sample phrases for faculty use. It is not expected that every faculty member will use this language verbatim in every course because content and pedagogy vary course to course based both on level of offering and subject matter. Overall, however, it is expected that a student graduating in business with a particular grade average will be considered by most faculty members to have demonstrated the attributes described below for that grade.

A Grade

A student who earns an A grade has demonstrated the ability to synthesize and evaluate course material at an exceptionally high level commensurate with the level of the course. Attributes of students performing at this level may include:

Qualitative course work:

- Demonstrates original thought, new information and/or perspectives, exceptionally thorough research, visual impact, etc.
- Offers exceptionally persuasive, insightful, interesting analysis, solution
- Includes consideration of alternative approaches, methods, perspectives, etc.
- Demonstrates ability to evaluate and create commensurate with the course level
- Stands out as significantly more accomplished than most other students

Quantitative/Technical course work:

- Work is accurate and complete
- Consistently demonstrates ability to evaluate among several possible approaches to select the best or most appropriate approach for solving a particular problem
- Is easily able to apply knowledge and/or skills to new problems
- Is efficient at solving problems

Engagement/Participation:

- Is consistently well-prepared for class
- Consistently and proactively adds value and original thought to class discussions and activities in a respectful and beneficial way, including by asking insightful questions
- Makes the class an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding experience for all
- Never gives up when challenged, takes responsibility for own learning
- Proactively identifies and solves situational challenges

B Grade

A student who earns a B grade has demonstrated the ability to apply and analyze course material at a high level commensurate with the level of the course. Attributes of students performing at this level may include:

Qualitative course work:

- Closely follows instructions in assignment
- Demonstrates ability to apply and analyze, with occasional success at evaluating and creating
- Offers competent analysis, solution, etc.
- Delivers work that is more accomplished than that of many other students
- Demonstrates competency in understanding of course topics

Quantitative/Technical course work:

- Work is reliably accurate and complete
- Knows how to solve most problems
- Demonstrates a general understanding of why a particular approach is appropriate for solving a particular problem
- Is usually able to apply knowledge to new problems but often needs time to figure out how

Engagement/Participation:

- Almost always attends class and is usually well-prepared for class
- Participates in class when called upon, occasionally adding value through thoughtful questions and original perspectives
- Is attentive, responsive and respectful to others in class
- Works to understand and master course material
- Identifies and offers ideas for solving situational challenges

C Grade

A student who earns a C grade has demonstrated the ability to remember and understand course material. Attributes of students performing at this level may include:

Qualitative course work:

- Generally follows instructions in assignment
- Offers basic analysis, solution, etc.
- Delivers work similar to that of many other students
- Demonstrates understanding of course topics with occasional ability to apply and analyze

Quantitative/Technical course work:

- Work contains multiple but generally not substantive errors in approach and/or execution
- Generally understands how to solve a problem but often struggles with execution
- Generally does not demonstrate an understanding of why an approach is the best or most appropriate for solving a particular problem
 - Struggles with applying knowledge and/or skills to new problems

Engagement/Participation:

- Attends class regularly and is usually prepared for class

- Participates in class when called upon, but normally adds little value through thoughtful questions and original perspectives
- Does not interfere with or obstruct class discussions and activities
- Does not demonstrate commitment to trying to understand and master course material
- Tends to offer excuses for own performance and conduct and fails to solve situational challenges

D Grade

A student who earns a D grade demonstrates only rudimentary knowledge of course material.

Attributes of students performing at this level may include:

Qualitative course work:

- Does not complete all parts of the assignment
- Offers incomplete analysis, solution, etc.
- Delivers less good work than most other students
- Remembers course material but does not demonstrate understanding or attempt to apply or analyze

Quantitative/Technical course work:

- Work contains frequent substantive errors in approach and/or execution
- Generally remembers how to solve a problem if a very similar problem has been presented previously
- Does not demonstrate an understanding of why an approach is the best or most appropriate for solving a particular problem
 - Is generally unable to apply knowledge and/or skills to new problems

Engagement/Participation

- Is often unprepared for class
- Is often unable or unwilling to participate in class
- Occasionally interferes with or obstructs class discussions and activities
- Does not demonstrate commitment to trying to understand and master course material
- Blames others for own poor performance and fails to solve situational challenges

F Grade

A student who earns an F grade has demonstrated essentially no knowledge of course material or has engaged in unacceptable conduct.