

## Appendix 3.1

# Department of Journalism Assessment Plan

Revised September 2022

## Undergraduate Journalism

### I. Definition

We define assessment as a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as distinct from *grading* at the *individual* level).

The student learning can be seen at three levels of mastery:

Awareness: Familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, and processes and effects.

Understanding: Assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.

Application: Competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

### II. Rationale

The fundamental difference between assessment and more traditional methods of curriculum evaluation is that assessment focuses on outcomes. The course syllabus details what we intend to deliver to our students – a form of faculty input. With assessment, it is not enough to declare what it is that we deliver. Assessment also asks, “Are students in fact receiving the information, techniques and values we intend to give them?”

Assessment as a process is internal to the academic unit. Its foremost purposes are to provide information for the improvement of curriculum or instruction; to enhance student learning; to document what students have learned. But assessment also serves an external purpose. By demonstrating that it is monitoring and measuring student outcomes, a unit exhibits public accountability.

Assessment is *not* a tool for determining a faculty member’s merit raise; *not* a tool in assessing a faculty member for promotion or tenure; *not* a means of examining a faculty member’s student course evaluations; *not* an exercise in (nor a euphemism for) statewide or nationwide standardized testing; *not* simply a means of evaluating a student’s course performance (in addition to the course grade).

In a more pragmatic context, assessment is increasingly present among universities’ external constituencies, largely because of the high degree of accountability it implies. Also quite pragmatically, the standards of the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) include assessment.

Assessment lets us know, and lets our students know, whether they’re learning what we want them to learn in the four years they’re with us. If the answer is yes, and we can demonstrate that measurably, then we will feel, and our students will feel, much better about their

undergraduate experience. Assessment also sends a direct message to our students' prospective employers: Our students are competent.

This assessment plan has been revised in accordance with the Department of Journalism's compliance with the CU Boulder campus Office of Data Analytics (ODA), beginning in AY 2022. As ACEJMC's assessment standards has stated for more than 20 years, this process, similar to the ODA assessment program, is intended to show *what* we want our students to learn, *how* we will determine whether we are succeeding in those intentions, and *what actions* we will then take to make improvements over time based on the information we collect. It is a faculty-led, ongoing effort that measures three or four competencies each year, through both direct and indirect measures. The ODA's "program learning outcomes" (PLOs) for Journalism are aligned with ACEJMC's 10 "Values and Competencies," to maximize the process's efficiency.

- Our Direct Measures are (a) professionals' and alumni's critiques of student work completed in a capstone experience; (b) "concept assessments," through use of a question bank, that often follow the form of pre- and post-instruction testing, and (c) evaluation of our students by their internship supervisors, also in accordance with the 10 values and competencies defined below.
- Our Indirect Measures are (a) biennial surveys of recent alumni, (b) a review of awards won by student journalists each year; (c) a review of recent alumni's employment; and (d) faculty impressions of course-to-course articulation successes or failures.
- Our Special Assessment Projects are specific, detailed efforts to gather data to inform a planned revision of one area of the curriculum.

### III. Values and Competencies/Program Learning Outcomes

In accordance with the revised standards (2022) of ACEJMC, all Journalism graduates should be able to:

- 1) Apply the principles and laws of **freedom of speech and press**, in a global as well as American context;
- 2) Demonstrate an understanding of the **multicultural history** and role of professionals and institutions in shaping journalism;
- 3) Demonstrate **culturally proficient** journalism 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 journalism;
- 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 journalism.

#### **IV. How We Address These Competencies in our Curriculum**

The Department of Journalism offers a diverse and comprehensive curriculum of courses, each of which addresses at least three of the Values and Competencies listed above. To assist in the data-gathering for Direct Measures, a matrix has been developed to identify which competencies are addressed in which courses. Please see Appendix XX. Additionally, a matrix has been developed to identify which competencies will be assessed by which types of measures.

#### **V. Gathering Our Data**

Any successful assessment program must include both direct and indirect measures. The distinguishing characteristic of a direct measure is that its measurement is independent of feedback, opinions, or grading from either the students or the instructors who taught them. Direct measures are regarded as the most reliable indicators of whether the student body as a whole has learned what the faculty intended for the students to learn. Indirect measures are considered more subjective in their measurement, and they allow for self-reporting by students, but they nonetheless provide valuable insights into the quality of the unit's curriculum and instruction. The two styles of measurement, however, share this trait: They will both measure all 10 competencies in some way.

Near the end of each spring semester, the Curriculum Committee gathers and analyzes the results from the appropriate cohort, from all measures in use that year, and analyzes the data. They report the findings – noting especially the areas of greatest and least improvement – to the Journalism faculty.

##### **Direct Measures**

###### *The Concept Assessment/Question Bank*

This method of measurement usually takes the form of a multiple-choice test. The faculty sets a “target metric” at an average score it considers a satisfactory learning outcome. The test is administered to students at some point in the senior year (or second year for professional MA students). For some Learning Outcomes, a pre-test/post-test method is employed. This typically involves administering the same text for first-year Journalism majors and graduating seniors, and looking for significant differences (or lack thereof) in the scores from the two groups. (Please see Appendix X.)

The Question Bank covers knowledge in the ACEJMC competencies of journalism law; journalism ethics; journalism history; cultural proficiency; math and statistics, and editing.

The faculty member(s) most involved in instruction of each of the above competencies will construct questions (for each competency), taking care not to make the questions so specific or arcane that only a student who had just completed one particular course could answer successfully — nor so basic that most brand-new first-years could successfully answer all of them. Please see Appendix X for an example: the five-question set for Competency #1 (the First Amendment and Media Law).

The content of the Concept Assessment changes as often as the Curriculum Committee feels it is appropriate to do so.

### *Internship Evaluations*

Another direct, external evaluation of student learning is readily available in the evaluations that internship supervisors – the media professionals in the workplace -- routinely return to the CMCI internship office. Before 2012, the evaluations did not include questions related to the ACEJMC competencies so could not be regarded as direct measures. In the fall of 2012, the internship coordinator Christine Mahoney crafted a new questionnaire for intern supervisors that asks them to rate the intern in terms of six of the ACEJMC competencies, as well as other measures. (Appendix X is the internship evaluation form.) The Internship Evaluations measure roughly the “other half” of the ACEJMC competencies that the Question Bank does not measure.

### *Professional Assessments of Capstone Work.*

In the undergraduate JRNL program, students take the “capstone” course in their senior year: JRNL 4572, News Corps, which is designed in many ways to simulate a professional setting for in-depth journalism. Thus the work produced in this course provides an ideal source of data for direct measurement.

Each spring, the Curriculum Committee will draw a random sample of 6-10 individual reporting projects that have not yet been graded by faculty. The committee then assembles a panel of at least three members of the department’s Professional Advisory Board, all of them CU Journalism alumni, to perform the reviews of the student pieces (plus a sample of MA professional projects). The panel’s range of expertise must cover print, broadcast and Web journalism, as the student work may use any of these platforms.

We supply each panelist with rubrics for evaluating the projects (see Appendix X). Each year the panel evaluates student competence for one of the following Learning Outcomes: Visual Communication skills (ACEJMC Competency #4); Critical Thinking (Competency #7); Writing (Competency #5); and Tools and Technologies (Competency #10).

The panelists return their score sheets and comments by May.

## **Indirect Measures**

### *1) Alumni Survey*

For several years the CMCI has queried alumni who graduated 18 months earlier, regarding various aspects of their CU experience. With minor revisions, the survey instrument now seeks out the alumni’s opinions on the quality of their instruction in several of the ACEJMC competencies. For example:

“One of the goals of our program is to ensure that each of our Newsgathering graduates can write correctly, clearly and in a style appropriate to a media profession. How would you rate the quality of the *writing* instruction you received here, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 means “excellent,” and 1 means “poor”?”

In consultation with the Curriculum Committee, the CMCI Student Success staff revises each year's survey instrument. Because most of these surveys are completed during the summer, the results are usually compiled before the beginning of the next academic year.

#### *2) Update List of Student Awards*

Each year the assessment chair updates the lists of journalism awards won by undergraduate students, primarily through their work in extracurricular student media and capstone coursework such as *NewsTeam Boulder*. These may be local, regional, or national awards.

#### *3) Update Employment Data of Recent Graduates*

We want to know that our students (1) obtain gainful employment with their CU Journalism degrees, and that (2) the vast majority of them find employment in media-related fields. We have found it impossible to keep tabs on 100 percent of our former students, but the assessment chair and the CMCI communications work together to maintain contact as consistently as possible.

#### *4) Faculty Impressions on Articulation*

It is important to know whether students are being adequately prepared to succeed in intermediate or advanced coursework in the same area. Faculty teaching at advanced levels are encouraged to share such impressions with faculty colleagues, for better or worse, at faculty meetings from time to time.

#### *5) Student Evaluations of Courses*

Each semester, for every course offered, students are asked to fill out a course evaluation, and some of the items reveal their opinions as to the quality of instruction in areas related to a few ACEJMC learning outcomes – most importantly, diversity, equity and inclusion. Some courses track specifically with Values and Competencies, such as the Media Law and Ethics course, and students' estimations of whether they learned a lot can prove helpful in assessing faculty teaching in those areas.

### **VI. What We Do with the Data**

No later in the academic year than every October, the Curriculum Committee summarizes the findings from the direct measures and indirect measures, and submits the report to the Journalism faculty. The faculty, acting as a Curriculum Committee of the Whole, discusses how to tweak the curriculum and/or instructional emphases in response to the findings. This final step is what ACEJMC refers to as a “closing the Loop” for the assessment process.

**VII. Plan for Implementation, AY 2020-2024**

Year	Value/Competency	Type of Measure	Date of resulting curr/instr revisions recommended	
AY 2020	(suspended due to pandemic)			
AY 2021	Special Project: Video Sequence (multiyear)	Indirect: surveys of alumni, current students; student focus groups	Spring 2023	
AY 2022	Media Law; Media Ethics; History/Journalism's Societal Role	Direct: Question Banks for all three	Fall 2022	
AY 2023	Writing; Editing,	Direct: Prof'l Advisory Board evals (Writing); Question Bank (Editing)	Fall 2023	
AY 2024	Tools/Technologies; DEI	Direct: (Tools/tech) Advisory Board Evals; (DEI) Question Banks	Fall 2024	
AY 2025	Critical Thinking; Math/Stats	Advisory Board evals (critical thinking);	Fall 2025	

		Question Bank (math/stats)		
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## Assessment Goals: Where Each Course Fits In

### Undergraduate Curriculum

Course	Freedom of Expression	History	DEI	Visual Comm/	Writing	Ethics	Critical Thinking	Numeracy and Statistics	Editing	Tools and technology
JRNL 1000: Principles of Journalism	x	x	x		x	x	x			x
JRNL 2000: Writing for the Media	X		X		X		x	x	x	
JRNL 2001: Fundamentals of Reporting Technologies				x	X		X		X	x
JRNL 2014: Race and Sports Journalism	X	X	X		X	X	X			
JRNL 2301: Journalism Ethics & History in Film		X	X	X		X	X			
JRNL 2401: Media Coverage of Diverse Populations	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 3102: Photojournalism	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 3112: Concepts in Visual Culture	X	X	X	X		X	X			
JRNL 3201: Critical Perspectives on Journalism	X	X	X		X	X	X			
JRNL 3202: Covering Political Campaigns	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 3211: History of Broadcasting	X	X	X	X		X	X			
JRNL 3221: History of Digital Journalism	X	X			X	X	X			X
Course	Freedom of Expression	History	DEI	Visual Comm/	Writing	Ethics	Critical Thinking	Numeracy and Statistics	Editing	Tools and technology
JRNL 3231: History of Documentary Film	X	X	X	X		X	X			x

JRNL 3241: History of Journalism	X	X	X	x		X	X			x
JRNL 3251: History of Sports Journalism		X	X			X	x			
JRNL 3401: Sociology of News		X	X			X	x			
JRNL 3402: Social Media Storytelling	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 3552: Multimedia Editing			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 3614: Principles of Audio Production						X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 3644: Digital Video Production 1				X		X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 3651: Media Law and Ethics	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 3674: Digital Video Production 2				X		X	X	X	X	X
<b>Course</b>	<b>Freedom of Expression</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>DEI</b>	<b>Visual Comm/</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Numeracy and Statistics</b>	<b>Editing</b>	<b>Tools and technology</b>
JRNL 3704: Sports Writing			X		X	X	X	X	x	x
JRNL 3804: Sports, Media and Society	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 3904: Sports Journalism and Gender	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 4002: Reporting 2			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 4004: The Sports Media Industry		X	X			X	X			
JRNL 4011: Principles of Media Relations		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 4102: Photojournalism Portfolio	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 4311: Literary Journalism		X	x		X	X	X		X	
JRNL 4344: Video Documentary Production	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 4351: Reporting War, Conflict and Peace	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 4354: Video News Reporting			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 4401: News and Public Perception	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 4402: Journalism and Social Identity	X	X	X			X	X			
<b>Course</b>	<b>Freedom of Expression</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>DEI</b>	<b>Visual Comm</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Numeracy and Statistics</b>	<b>Editing</b>	<b>Tools and technology</b>



JRNL 4411: International Media and Global Crises	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 4502: Reporting 3				x	x	x	x	x	x	x
JRNL 4521: Data Journalism				x			x	x		x
JRNL 4562: Digital Journalism		X		X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 4572: News Corps			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 4573: News Corps Investigative Reporting Leadership			X	X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 4602: Opinion Writing	X		X		X	X	X		x	
JRNL 4614: Advanced Audio Practices					X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 4624: News Team	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 4634: Broadcast Projects			X	X	X	X	X		x	x
JRNL 4651: Advanced Media Ethics	X		X		X	X	X			
JRNL 4674: Digital Video Production 3				X			X		X	x
JRNL 4684: The Art of Visual Storytelling				X	X		X		X	x
<b>Course</b>	<b>Freedom of Expression</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>DEI</b>	<b>Visual Comm</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Numeracy and Statistics</b>	<b>Editing</b>	<b>Tools and technology</b>
JRNL 4702: Arts/Cultural Reporting and Criticism			X		X	X	X		x	
JRNL: Athletic Media Relations			x	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 4714: Sports Broadcasting				X	X	X	X	X	X	x
JRNL 4724: Sports Announcing						X	X	X		x
JRNL 4802: Feature Writing			X		X	X	X		x	
JRNL 4822: Reporting on the Environment				X	X	X	x	X	X	

### Master's Curriculum

Course	Freedom of Expression	History	DEI	Visual Comm	Writing	Ethics	Critical Thinking	Numeracy and Statistics	Editing	Tools and technology
JRNL 5001: Media Technology Boot Camp				X	X	X	X			X
JRNL 5011: Newsgathering and Multimedia Reporting	X		X	X	X	X	x	x	x	
JRNL 5102: Photojournalism Portfolio				X			X		X	X

JRNL 5201: Principles of American Journalism	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 5211: Funding Journalism in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	X	X				X	X	X		
JRNL 5221: Entrepreneurial Journalism		X	X			X	X	X		
JRNL 5231: Video Newsgathering	X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 5241: Coding for Journalists				X		X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 5311: Literary Journalism		X	X		X	X	X			
JRNL 5344:Video Documentary Production				X	X	X	X		X	X
<b>Course</b>	<b>Freedom of Expression</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>DEI</b>	<b>Visual Comm</b>	<b>Writing</b>	<b>Ethics</b>	<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<b>Numeracy and Statistics</b>	<b>Editin g</b>	<b>Tools and technology</b>
JNL 5402: Journalism and Social Identity	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 5411: Global Journalism and International News	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 5502: Newsgathering 2	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 552: In-Depth Reporting	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	x	
JRNL 5514: Newsgathering for Television			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 5521: data Journalism				X	X		X	X		X
JRNL 5552: Multimedia Editing				X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 5562: Digital Journalism	X	X	X	X			X			
JRNL 5572: News Corps			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
JRNL 5602: Opinion Writing	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	
JRNL 5624: News Team			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JRNL 5634:Broadcast Projects				X	X	X	X		X	x
JRNL 5651: Journalism Law and Ethics	X	X	X	X		X	X			
JRNL 5684: The Art of Visual Storytelling			X	X	X	X	X			X
JRNL 5702: Arts/Cultural Reporting and Criticism			X		X	X	X		X	
JRNL 5704: Sports Journalism			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
JRNL 5802: Feature Writing					X	X	X		X	

JRNL 5804: Sports,Media and Society		X	X			X	X			
JRNL 5812: Science Writing				X	X	X	X	X	X	
JRNL 5822: Reporting on the Environment				X	X	X	X	X	X	
JRNL 6551: News Media Representation and Identity	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 6651: Media Law	X	X	X			X	X			
JRNL 6862: Visual Communication and Mass Media	X	X	X	X		X	X			