

Texas State University-San Marcos
Academic Program Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

Year 2008-2009
College/Division Business
Department/Unit Accounting
Program Name/Department Accounting (MAcy)
Program Code 555G MAcy
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Mission Statement

The mission of the MAcy program is to facilitate students' preparation for and passage of the CPA exam as well as preparation for successful careers in the accounting profession. The MAcy program emphasizes oral and written communication and technical and research skills needed for a career in public or private accounting.

Evidence of Improvement

Based on a comparison of the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 results, improvements in student learning are evident in all outcomes. Assessment has been refined in all graduate accounting courses, common rubrics developed, and discussion of results on curriculum has ensued. The outcome assessments show that the students are meeting or exceeding expectations. Based upon recommendations from the Advisory Board, an exit exam that is a scaled down version of the CPA exam is used to assess knowledge and skills of the MAcy graduate students at the end of the program. The exam is weighted and has topic coverage, including professional research and written skills, like the CPA exam. The exit exam is preparing students for professional exams by requiring students to accomplish a comprehensive review of material at the end of the program. Further evidence of improvement is the steady upward trend in the CPA pass rate of Texas State alumni; particularly those who take the exam within two years of graduation. External reviews of students in internships also provide evidence that the students and the program are meeting expectations.

Outcome Number 1

Accounting students will demonstrate applying accounting knowledge in new and unfamiliar circumstances in different accounting areas such as financial accounting, cost, accounting information systems, taxation, and audit. To fulfill this outcome, the student will correctly analyze the problem, develop and explain findings, and justify a conclusion or recommendation in different areas of accounting.

Method 1

Assessment of MAcy students' ability to apply accounting knowledge in new and unfamiliar circumstances will be accomplished in the following ways.

In ACC 5315 (Selected Topics in Financial Accounting) research or term papers will be used. It is expected that 80% of the students will score the 75% level, based on an established rubric.

In ACC 5320 (Auditing) a pretest and posttest will be given. The pretest will be used to determine a student's beginning competencies on the outcome and the posttest will determine ending competencies. The change in the two tests will reflect the improvement in comprehension of the outcome. Instructors of ACC 5320 expect that 70% of students will score 75% on posttest and 70% will improve from pretest to posttest.

In ACC 5366 (Advanced Taxation) embedded exam and final exam questions will be used to assess accounting knowledge in the area of taxation. It is expected that 75% of students will score 80% or better on embedded test questions.

In ACC 5371 (Accounting Information Systems) a case analysis with related questions will be used. Using an established grading rubric, it is expected that 80% of the students will score at least a 75 on the assignment.

In ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) a project will be used. The project will be graded using an established rubric. It is expected that 90% of the students will score at least an 80.

Result 1

In two sections in the fall and a section in the spring of ACC 5315, 62 graduate students were required to compare and contrast a financial accounting topic between US GAAP and IFRS in a research paper; 82% met or exceeded expectations.

A section of 22 graduate students in fall 2008 and a section of 28 graduate students in spring 2009 of ACC 5320 were given a pretest and posttest on auditing standards, ethics, internal controls, auditing testing and reporting; 45% scored 80% or better on the posttest. In these sections 80% met or exceeded expectations on exam questions on auditing standards, ethics, internal controls, auditing testing and reporting. In fall and spring sections of ACC 5320, 40 graduate students completed an IDEA project on auditing of accounts receivable and payable; 100% met or exceeded expectations

In a section in the fall and spring, 69 graduate students in ACC 5366 were tested over choice of entity, corporate and partnership formations, taxable income, loss limitations, and distributions; 86% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring in ACC 5371, 90 graduate students did an information system controls case; 94% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5389, 46 graduate students completed a research project on determining whether different scenarios were violations of different professional codes of ethics; 84% met or exceeded expectations.

Faculty observations are that students are able to apply appropriate accounting in new and unfamiliar situations. Some students are uncomfortable in such situations; others can apply the accounting but are hesitant to draw conclusions.

Method 2

Another way to assess students' accounting knowledge is through the required exit exam. The exit exam is patterned after the CPA exam, with coverage of content objectives and level of difficulty to mirror that professional exam. Twenty of the 100 multiple-choice questions on the exit exam are used to evaluate students' ability to apply accounting knowledge in new and unfamiliar situations. It is expected that 90% of the students will score 75 or better on these

questions during the first attempt and the remaining 10% of students will score 75 or better for the second attempt.

Result 2

In fall 2008, 28 graduate students took the exit exam and 92% scored at least 75 on the general accounting knowledge questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 8% of students scored at least a 75 on the questions. In spring 2009, 18 graduate students took the exit exam and 94% scored at least 75 on the general accounting knowledge questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 6% of students will retake the test during summer 2009.

Action Plan

To facilitate learning of the application of accounting in new and unfamiliar situations, faculty will adjust goals and refine assessment methods to evaluate one outcome per course to aid in assessment of student improvement. Students will be challenged to apply accounting in new and unfamiliar situations. For example, ACC 5371, Accounting Information Systems, is adding a project using Microsoft Dynamics to set up and record accounting transactions for companies.

Outcome Number 2

Accounting students will use advanced analytical and critical thinking skills at a level expected of a master's student to evaluate information, solve problems, and make sound decisions in the different areas of accounting, including financial, cost, accounting information systems, taxation, accounting ethics, professional research and audit and controls. To accomplish this outcome, the student will synthesize and evaluate the relevance of data and demonstrate analytical and critical thinking skills in exploring new questions, analyzing complex issues from multiple perspectives and arrive at reasoned conclusions.

Method 1

In order to assess MACy students' ability to use advanced analytical and critical thinking skills to solve accounting problems, the following assessment vehicles will be used.

In ACC 5315 (Selected Topics in Financial Accounting), ACC 5366 (Advanced Taxation), and ACC 5371 (Accounting Information Systems), embedded exam and final exam questions will be used. Targets for each class are: ACC 5315 expects that 80% of students will score 75% or better on the embedded test questions; ACC 5366 expects that 75% of students will score 80% or better on embedded test questions; and ACC 5371 expects that 85% of students will score 80% or better.

In ACC 5320 (Auditing) a pretest and posttest will be given. The pretest will be used to assess student analytical and critical thinking skills in areas of accounting at the beginning of the course and the posttest will assess skills at the end of the course. The change in the two tests will also measure the improvement. Instructors of ACC 5320 expect that 70% of students will score 75% on posttest and 70% will improve from pretest to posttest.

ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) will use a project. It is expected that 80% of the students will meet or exceed the 80% level. An established rubric will be used to grade student performance.

Result 1

In two sections in the fall and a section in the spring of ACC 5315, 62 graduate students were tested on pension and post retirement benefits, deferred taxes, intangibles, derivatives, accounting changes and errors, statement disclosures and international accounting; 85% met or exceeded expectations.

In a section in the fall and spring, 69 graduate students in ACC 5366 were tested over calculations of taxable income, loss limitations, and distributions for different entities; 82% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring in ACC 5371, 90 graduate students were tested on appropriate information system controls; 86% met or exceeded expectations.

A section of 22 graduate students in fall 2008 and a section of 28 graduate students in spring 2009 of ACC 5320 were given a pretest and posttest on selecting the correct auditing standards, ethics, internal controls, auditing testing and reporting; 90% met or exceeded expectations. In those sections, 80% met or exceeded expectations on exam questions on critical thinking on auditing standards, ethics, internal controls, auditing testing and reporting.

In fall and spring sections, 46 graduate students in ACC 5389 did a critique project on determining the ethical dilemma, ethical reasoning and decision making, alternative solutions, and the best ethical solutions; 80% met or exceeded expectations.

Faculty observations are that students are able to apply analytical and critical thinking skills in exploring new questions, analyzing complex issues from multiple perspectives and arriving at reasoned conclusions. Some students are very hesitant to draw conclusions.

Method 2

The required exit exam, which is patterned after the CPA exam, contains 20 multiple-choice questions to evaluate students' ability to use advanced analytical and critical thinking skills to solve accounting problems. It is expected that 90% of the students will score 75 or better on these questions during the first attempt and the remaining 10% of students will score 75 or better for the second attempt.

Result 2

In fall 2008, 28 graduate students took the exit exam and 92% scored at least 75 on the advanced analytical and critical thinking skills questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 8% of students scored at least a 75 on the questions. In spring 2009, 18 graduate students took the exit exam and 94% scored at least 75 on the advanced analytical and critical thinking skills questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 6% of students will retake the test during summer 2009.

Action Plan

To bolster confidence and facilitate learning the analytical and critical thinking skills, faculty will adjust goals and refine assessment methods to one per course to aid in students' ability to analyze complex issues and arrive at reasoned conclusions. For example, the faculty reviewed and implemented ACC 5315 as a pre-requisite for ACC 5389 so that skills will be developed from the start of the program to the end of the program. ACC 5320 will add a writing assignment in which the students are required to analyze and draw a conclusion on the amount of risk of accepting an audit client.

Also, ACC 5315, Topics in Financial Accounting, is adding a project comparing U.S. GAAP to IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards) using current reports from companies and drafting restated financial statements.

Outcome Number 3

Accounting students will apply information technology skills in decision making at a level expected of a master's student for practice and research. To fulfill this outcome, the student will learn to use information technology (IT) and be able to apply IT in analysis and communication.

Method 1

ACC 5371 (Accounting Information Systems) will use cases and a project to evaluate IT skills in analysis and communication. It is expected that 90% of the students will meet the 80% skill level. Established rubrics will be used to assess student performance on the assignments.

Result 1

In fall and spring in ACC 5371, 90 graduate students completed an IT controls case and a database project; 90% of the students met or exceeded expectations.

Method 2

ACC 5372 (Tax Research) will use online research projects using a common rubric. It is expected that 80% of the students will meet the 90% skill level.

Result 2

In fall and spring semester sections, 27 graduate students in ACC 5372 did online research projects analyzing and identifying the appropriate tax law in an advanced tax topic; 100% met or exceeded expectations.

Faculty observations are that students are able to apply IT skills in decision making. More practice using many different kinds of software and databases will improve confidence and ability to utilize IT skills and communications in decision making.

Action Plan

Based on the results, the program faculty plan to continue the use of IT projects in the appropriate classes. For example, ACC 5371, Accounting Information Systems, is adding a project using Microsoft Dynamics to set up and record accounting transactions for companies.

Outcome Number 4

Accounting students will acquire appropriate research skills needed for practice. To fulfill this outcome, the student will learn to use professional research skills, analyze the application to a problem, and communicate authoritative sources, findings, and conclusions.

Method 1

To assess MAcy students' knowledge of research skills needed for practice, the following assessments will be accomplished.

In ACC 5366 (Advanced Taxation) a pretest and posttest will be given. The pretest will be used to ascertain research skills in area of taxation at the beginning of the course and the posttest will ascertain skills at the end of the course. The change in the two tests will also ascertain the improvement. It is expected that 75% of the students will score 50% or better on the pretest and 75% will improve between the two tests and that 75% will score 80% or better on the posttest.

In ACC 5315 (Selected Topics in Financial Accounting), a research paper will be used. It is expected that 80% of the students will score the 75% level, based on an established rubric.

In ACC 5320 (Auditing) and ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) projects will be used. It is expected that 80% of the students will meet the 75% level in ACC 5320 and 90% of the students will score at the 80% level in ACC 5389. Grading will be done using established rubrics.

Result 1

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5366, a pretest and posttest were given to 69 graduate students over the tax research area of tax entities, formations, tax deductions and losses; 86% met or exceeded expectations.

In two sections in the fall and a section in the spring of ACC 5315, 62 graduate students were required to research a financial accounting topic in US GAAP and IFRS; 82% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5320, 100% of 40 graduate students met or exceeded expectations on research into auditing testing of accounts receivable and payable on the IDEA project.

Fall and spring sections of 46 graduate students in ACC 5389 did a research project on different profession codes of conduct; 95% met or exceeded expectations.

Faculty observations are that students are able to research authoritative sources, analyze the application to a problem and communicate findings and conclusions.

Method 2

Students' knowledge of accounting research skills is also evaluated through the required exit exam. The exam contains 20 multiple-choice questions used to assess this outcome for all students. It is expected that 90% of the students will score 75 or better on these questions during the first attempt and the remaining 10% of students will score 75 or better for the second attempt.

Result 2

In fall 2008, 28 graduate students took the exit exam and 100% scored at least 75 on the accounting research skills questions on the first attempt. In spring 2009, 18 graduate students took the exit exam and 100% scored at least 75 on the accounting research skills questions on the first attempt.

Action Plan

Based on the assessment results, the program faculty members plan to continue the use of professional accounting research in the appropriate classes. The research sources and problems will be expanded to include international accounting standards. To meet requirement of CPA eligibility in Texas, students will be required to take either a professional accounting or tax research class, beginning in fall 2009. These courses will be offered each semester and will use the reporting of professional research to write professional memos to prepare students for the workplace.

Outcome Number 5

Accounting students will conceptualize a complex issue into a coherent, persuasive written or oral statement. To fulfill the written portion of the outcome, the student will develop well-written reports, memos, and projects that explain findings, organize ideas into a coherent train of thought, and justify a conclusion or recommendation. To fulfill the oral portion, the student will make effective oral presentations that explain findings, organize ideas into a

coherent train of thought, and justify a conclusion or recommendation.

Method 1

To evaluate the written and oral communication skills of MAcy students, the following assessments will be conducted. Established rubrics will be used on all of the written and oral communication components.

ACC 5315 (Selected Topics in Financial Accounting) will use research or term papers to assess writing skills. It is expected that 80% of students will score a 75% or better on the written communications projects.

In ACC 5320 (Auditing) and ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics), written projects will be used. It is expected that 80% of the students will make an 80% or better on the written communication portion of projects in ACC 5320 and 90% of the students will make an 80% on written communication skills in ACC 5389.

In ACC 5366 (Advanced Taxation) a pretest and posttest will be given. The posttest will be used to evaluate student written communication skills in justifying and supporting the answers for the posttest. It is expected that 80% of the students will make 80% or better on the posttest written rework.

Result 1

In two sections in the fall and a section in the spring of ACC 5315, 62 graduate students were assessed on writing skills on a project; 77% met or exceeded expectations.

In a section of 22 graduate students in fall 2008 and a section of 28 graduate students in spring 2009 of ACC 5320, students wrote a memo on results of the IDEA project; 100% of the students met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5389, 46 graduate students were assessed for grammar, spelling and mechanics of writing on daily papers; 100% met or exceeded expectations by the end of the course. In these sections, the students wrote a critique project assessed on written communications; 90% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5366 of 69 graduate students, a pretest and posttest was given to ascertain student written communication skills at the beginning of the course and the end of the course; 86% met or exceeded expectations on the posttest.

Method 2

ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) uses presentations to assess oral communication skills. It is expected that 90% will make an 85% or better on the oral communications assignments.

Result 2

In the fall and spring sections of 46 graduate students in ACC 5389, debates on ethical dilemmas were assessed by peers, the instructor and external judges using a common rubric; 100% met or exceeded expectations.

Action Plan

Faculty observations are that students can meet or exceed expectations on written and oral communications. The courses will continue to stress these communications and provide opportunities for the students to practice and utilize the skills. Faculty have developed a standardized form of citations for the graduate students to use in the graduate accounting courses. The common rubric for writing has helped convey expectations to the students.

Outcome Number 6

Accounting students will understand the importance of culture and diversity. To fulfill this outcome, the student will comprehend the nature and significance of differences in individuals and groups based on their culture, ethnicity, religion, and other background factors and understand the impact of globalism and multiculturalism.

Method 1

ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) will use case write-ups and papers to determine the impact of culture, diversity and global issues in accounting. It is expected that 90% of the students will correctly identify, analyze and synthesize the impact of diversity and culture in the class. Established rubrics will be used for grading.

Result 1

In the fall and spring sections of ACC 5389, 46 graduate students discussed and wrote case write-ups on the impact of culture, diversity and global issues in accounting; 87% met or exceeded expectations.

Method 2

Culture and diversity issues are also addressed on the required exit exam. There are 16 multiple-choice questions contributing to the assessment of this culture and diversity outcome. It is expected that 90% of the students will score 75 or better on these questions during the first attempt and the remaining 10% of students will score 75 or better for the second attempt.

Result 2

In fall 2008, 28 graduate students took the exit exam and 96% scored at least 75 on the culture and diversity issues questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 4% of students scored at least a 75 on the questions. In spring 2009, 18 graduate students took the exit exam and 94% scored at least 75 on the culture and diversity issues questions on the first attempt. For the second attempt, the remaining 6% of students will retake the exam during summer 2009.

Action Plan

Faculty observations are that the students need to be exposed to more diversity issues. The impact of the IFRS timeline set by the SEC will expand opportunities to discuss these issues in more classes (for example, ACC 5315, ACC 5366, and ACC 5371). Faculty and the courses will continue to stress diversity, culture and global issues in accounting. ACC 5366 is considering adding an international component on how accounting standards affect the transfer pricing and inventory methods of companies, and thus, taxation of these items.

Outcome Number 7

Accounting students will apply ethical reasoning for resolution of ethical dimensions of accounting and reporting in the business world. To satisfy this outcome, the student will be able to recognize an ethical dilemma, apply ethical reasoning to resolve it and provide support for the resolution and effects on stakeholders.

Method 1

ACC 5320 (Auditing) and ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) will use embedded test and exam questions to assess ethical reasoning. It is expected that 80% of the students will be score 80% or better on these questions.

ACC 5389 (Corporate Governance and Ethics) will use term papers. It is expected that 90% of the students will correctly identify, apply ethical reasoning and provide support for the resolution in these papers.

Result 1

In a section of 22 graduate students in fall 2008 and a section of 28 graduate students in spring 2009 of ACC 5320, students were assessed on ethical standards of the auditing profession; 90% met or exceeded expectations.

In fall and spring sections of ACC 5389, 46 graduate students were assessed on ethical theories, ethical reasoning, and professional ethics on the mid-term and through a critique paper; 88% met or exceeded expectations on the exam questions and the paper. The paper was graded through the use of an established rubric.

Method 2

Students' ability to apply ethical reasoning in an accounting environment is also assessed through the required exit exam. There are 12 multiple-choice questions contributing to the assessment of this ethics related outcome. It is expected that 90% of the students will score 75 or better on these questions during the first attempt and the remaining 10% of students will score 75 or better on the second attempt.

Result 2

In fall 2008, 28 graduate students took the exit exam and 100% scored at least 75 on the ethical reasoning questions on the first attempt. In spring 2009, 18 graduate students took the exit exam and 100% scored at least 75 on the ethical reasoning questions on the first attempt.

Action Plan

Faculty observations are that students are able to apply appropriate ethical reasoning and decision making and professional ethics in accounting. Faculty will continue to stress the expected ethical environment of the profession in all classes. The ethical dimension is discussed not only from the viewpoint of the code of professional conduct for accountants, but also from a classical ethical reasoning viewpoint. The present economic stresses and financial scandals since 2000 provide timely case examples for the classes. ACC 5389 has added debates to the class, with external grading of ethical reasoning.

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