

# Using the National Student Advertising Competition sponsored by the American Advertising Federation for Assessing a Campaign Course's Learning Outcomes

Instead of focusing on traditional assessment inputs like faculty degrees, number of full-time faculty, research productivity, resources, facilities, equipment and curriculum, for example, a student's learning approach to assessment focuses on "outcomes." Instead of asking, "what do faculty need to teach," the question becomes "what do we want students to learn?"

## Definitions of Terms

### *Assessment*

Assessment refers to any process that measures what students have learned, including course-specific techniques (assignments and tests) and program strategies (exit interviews) designed to test specific content knowledge. This focus on academic content is the main characteristic of student assessment.

### *Evaluation*

Evaluation examines the student's entire academic experience. Evaluation examines classroom interaction, effectiveness of courses, quality of student support services, access to and quality of lab equipment, for example.

### *Learning Outcomes*

Learning outcomes are based on the knowledge or skills set by the curriculum. The learning outcomes should derive from the classes; each class syllabus should have list of learning outcomes. Each syllabus should have a description of how students will be evaluated to see if they have achieved those outcomes, with each assignment specifically stating which outcomes will be evaluated.

### *Indirect Measures*

Indirect measures reflect the quality of the program. Grades and student retention rates reflect academic rigor, and internship supervisors echo the performance of student interns. They are called indirect because they involve the following:

- Comparative data (grade distribution, student retentions, graduation data)
- Outside evaluation (internship, job placement, student performance in competitions)
- Participant reflection (student surveys, exit interviews)

### *Direct Measures*

Direct measures of assessment involve directly faculty assessment of student performance. Objective tests, exit exams, portfolios and capstone experiences are all direct measures of student learning.

## **STEP ONE: UNDERSTANDING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Suggestion: Look at established outcomes used by accrediting bodies, for example, ACEJMC.

### *ACEJMC Professional Values and Competencies*

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC) requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies.

1. Students will understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society
5. Students will understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
6. Students will demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity
7. Students will think critically, creatively and independently
8. Students will conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
9. Students will write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
10. Students will critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness
11. Students will apply basic numerical and statistical concepts
12. Students will apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

## **STEP TWO: WRITING STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR A CAMPAIGNS COURSE**

Suggestion: Consider which of the 12 above student outcomes works for a capstone course.

The capstone course is an excellent method of a “direct measure” assessment. It not only assesses previous learning but also provides a forum that allows an instructor to assess the student’s overall learning experience. This approach also allows a student to demonstrate the strengths of his or her learning and is represented by an ability to recall, understand and apply knowledge. The capstone course expectations should be a display of a mastery of all three levels of learning and the ability to apply them to an integrated project.

4. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.
7. Students will think critically, creatively and independently.
8. Students will conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
11. Students will apply numerical and statistical concepts.
12. Students will apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

## **STEP THREE: EVALUATION OF THE AAF NSAC PROJECT**

Suggestion: In advertising, capstone projects should follow a logical flow of information and ideas. Key concepts and a brief description in assessing the level of understanding each campaign plan are included.

### **Executive Summary**

A brief synopsis demonstrating recognition of the problem or challenge and the highlighting of the campaign's response in key areas such as:

- Target Market
- Campaign Strategy
- Creative Concept
- Media
- Integrated Concepts

### **Client's Mission Statement**

This generally has not appeared in student work, but is an integral part of a professional plan

### **Situation Analysis**

This section is divided between internal and external analyses

#### *Internal*

- Product Performance Analysis
- Strategic Determination Analysis
- Corporate Culture and Identity
- Previous promotional performances

#### *External*

- Market Analysis
- Customer Analysis
- Competitive Analysis
- Environmental Analysis

### **SWOT Analysis**

#### *SWOT Strategy or Problem/Opportunity Statement*

A disconnect often exists between SWOT findings and campaign strategy or primary research goals. Choosing a SWOT strategy or providing a problem/opportunity statement connects secondary research to primary research and development of overarching campaign strategy

## **Objective Setting for Marketing**

This section uses the same marketing objectives considered in the setting of the overall IMC marketing objectives:

- Objectives have to be realistic and measurable
- Defined in measurable outcomes
- Targeted at a specific audience
- Objectives have to be pre-tested and post-tested
- Objective pre-testing occurs in the market research portion of the program
- Results set the starting point for the campaign
- Defines the concrete corporate, marketing, communication objectives for the Overall IMC Objectives section of the plan

## **Target Audience Identification:**

- Has the target been segmented on specific demographic, geographic, psychographic, or behavioral traits?
- Does the plan demonstrate the target's connection and value to the client?
- Have the authors taken themselves/subjective value judgments out of the equation and arrived at defining the client's best-case prospects from primary and secondary research

## **Campaign Theme**

Does the campaign develop an overarching campaign theme and strategy that pulls together all further strategic and tactical elements into a unified, cohesive and single-minded plan?

## **Overall IMC Objectives**

These indicate an understanding of how objectives are established and ultimately dictated from a corporate financial perspective.

- State objectives in concrete measurable tasks
- Specify the target audience
- Indicate a benchmark starting point and indicate the degree of change sought determined by market research
- Target audience's present status in terms of the response hierarchy (awareness, knowledge, image, attitudes and intentions)
- What is the degree to which these must be changed by the advertising?
- Specify time period for accomplishing objectives

### *Corporate*

- Objectives address, reinforce positive both short-term comprehension and long term issues and loyalty by generating:
- Sales
- Market share
- Profit
- Cash flow

### *Marketing*

- Positively influences brand equity by establishing goals based on increasing:
- Brand association
- Brand knowledge
- Brand image
- Marketing Objectives

### *Communication*

- Communication objectives
- Recognition of brand awareness, attitude or liking, trial purchase and attitude about liking, trial purchase
- Awareness
- Comprehension
- Conviction
- Action

### *Branding*

Key issues here are to identify the key components of brand architecture including:

- Brand elements
- Primary and secondary brand associations
- Brand characteristics – functional and emotional
- Brand personality
- Brand essence and higher calling
- Drivers for building brand loyalty and equity
- A values-based approach to branding also allows the student to understand positioning more effectively when they are required to identify and connect shared values between company and consumer.

### *Positioning*

### *Message Strategy*

## **IMC Strategy Development**

A better sense of strategic selection/determination can be gained from having the students recognized that, as with objective setting, there is an overarching corporate strategy dictating the tone and direction the campaign must take:

<i>Corporate</i>	<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Communication</i>
Grow	Differentiate	Informative
Maintain	Cost-leadership	Affective
Harvest	Focus	Habit formation
Divest	Preemptive Move	Self-satisfaction
Innovate	Synergy	

## **IMC Tactics**

Each section must list specific objectives, strategic approaches, and connection/relevance to the target audience

- Advertising
- Does the creative brief provide proper direction and insight for creative execution?
- Does the creative strategy support the overarching campaign theme, media strategy, and directly address the target?
- Direct Marketing
- Sales Promotion
- PR
- Interactive
- Personal Selling

## **Media**

Does the plan include?

- Objectives
- Strategy - flighting, continuity, pulsing
- Schedule
- Reach and Frequency requirements
- Total GRPs, TRPs, CPM
- Geographic weighting and seasonality
- Balance of traditional and non-traditional based on understanding of target's media consumption
- Budget

## **Campaign Timeline**

- Has a clear and definitive start and end dates been established?

## **Budget**

- Is there a clear budgeting method in place?
- Is the budget breakdown clearly established?
- Do budget allocations maximize the campaign's ability to meet the client's objectives?
- Does the plan recommend co-ops, partnerships, value-added components to extend the value of the plan?

## **Evaluation**

- Does the plan provide for the ability to measure the success of the campaign using evaluation criteria that correlates with the degrees of change established in the objectives?
- Does the plan examine potential ROI scenarios given the client's investment?
- Does the plan recommend monitor and control techniques during the campaign timeline?

## **STEP FOUR: ASSESSMENT OF THE AAF NSAC PROJECT**

Suggestion: When the elements of a successful plan have been articulated, then the process moves to assessment. The following matrix represents a model for that assessment. [See Table 1]

## **STEP FIVE: FINDINGS AND ACTION TAKEN FOR SEVERAL MEASURES**

Suggestion: Set the following “Criteria for Success” for “Target Levels” in order to rate students’ ability to demonstrate successful problem solving, critical thinking and strategic planning and execution, as well the ability to use channels of mass communication in a responsible and ethical manner in a capstone course.

- 55% of students will be judged as having excellent or very good skills
- 35% of students will be judged as having adequate or barely adequate skills
- 10% of students will be judged as not having adequate skills

Faculty then measure the students’ abilities based on the matrix, for example, and action is taken as needed.

### **References:**

Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. ACEJMC Accrediting Standards < <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/STANDARDS.SHTML>>  
William G. Christ, *Assessing Media Education* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006)