



HUSSMAN SCHOOL  
OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA

2019-2020

# ACCREDITATION SELF-STUDY

ACCREDITING COUNCIL ON EDUCATION IN  
JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS

*The November 2020 site visit was postponed due to the pandemic. Any updates to the self-study since the original submission are indicated with shading.*



# PART II: STANDARD 9

## Assessment of Learning Outcomes



### Executive Summary

The school conforms to requirements of ACEJMC and the UNC Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Student learning outcomes are based on the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

The school assesses undergraduate student learning using three direct and four indirect measures.

Changes implemented in response to assessment findings include revamping the curriculum structure

and select course content, new course offerings and revised assessment activities.

Assessment findings guided the development of the school's 2020–2025 strategic plan, *Envisioning Tomorrow*.

Hussman students are consistently recognized for excellence across all areas of study. Significant student achievements include five overall Hearst Awards championships in the last six years.

## INTRODUCTION

The Hussman School's assessment plan conforms to the requirements of ACEJMC and the UNC Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). Student learning outcomes are grounded in the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. University guidelines limit the school to reporting the results of no more than five learning outcomes each year. As described in the assessment plan, a combination of direct and indirect measures is used to assess the 12 student learning outcomes each year. Annual assessment findings are provided to faculty in a presentation and written report, and results are used to inform changes to curriculum and instruction. The school's current written assessment plan is provided in the Undergraduate Assessment Plan 2014 (revised 2017), which is included as [Appendix 9-A](#).

Assessment became a special focus of the school when Standard 9 was found out of compliance following the 2009 accreditation review. This was the first time the school had ever received an out-of-compliance on any standard. The school's renewed attention to this standard resulted in the revision of indirect and direct measures, including a senior experience survey (2011), and a knowledge exam (2013). The knowledge exam was administered to graduating seniors and to students in MEJO 101-The Media Revolution: From Gutenberg to Zuckerberg.

In 2015, in accordance with the school's strategic plan at the time, *A Path Forward* (adopted in 2013), a new academic dean position was established to serve a variety of functions related to faculty governance, quality, and advocacy. Assessment responsibilities were placed under the academic dean's purview and a formal director of assessment was appointed to ensure a strong focus on assessment activities. This change improved on prior practices and demonstrated a commitment to the ongoing role of assessment in the school.

Most notably, the reassignment of duties resulted in a major revision of the existing assessment activities to improve the quality of data obtained for evaluating student learning outcomes and ensure measures were closely aligned with the goals of assessment. This review resulted in the identification of areas for improvement in the assessment plan. Further review and revision occurred in Fall 2017 with a major change to the undergraduate curriculum, described in Standard 2 of this report.

Numerous improvements occurred in the 2017–2018 academic year. The practice of using instructors to assess previously graded student work was eliminated in favor of high-level industry professionals as evaluators. Also, the entry-level course (MEJO 101) used to compare first-year students to graduating seniors was changed to the introductory writing and reporting course (MEJO 153). This course serves as a better point of comparison with seniors because it is a prerequisite for many of the school's more advanced courses. In addition to these changes, assessment question items were updated to improve linkages to student learning outcomes. The result was a much more rigorous annual assessment of student learning.

As discussed in our answers to questions below, several changes have occurred to the curriculum in response to assessment findings. The structure of the curriculum has undergone a sea change toward a more integrated, multi-platform and multi-industry experience. Individual courses have been revised as a result of assessment findings and new courses have been proposed to directly improve strength in certain areas of student learning. The school's current introductory vs. senior knowledge exam also goes beyond university-prioritized outcomes to collect and evaluate data on all 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

Perhaps the most significant response guided by assessment findings is the school's new strategic plan, [Envisioning Tomorrow 2020-2025](#) (adopted 2019). This new strategic plan recognizes the many strengths of our program based on positive student learning outcomes in the majority of ACEJMC values and competencies. These findings were based on the result of a combination of direct and indirect measures,

including knowledge exam, professionals' evaluations, internship supervisors' evaluations, and student feedback based on their experiences in the school and in internships. The strategic plan calls for added strength in areas that need improvement, which has resulted in new position announcements and a series of new hires that promise to infuse necessary skills in curricular areas we value.

**1. Provide a copy of the unit's written plan for assessment of student learning outcomes. This plan must include the dates of its adoption and of implementation of its components.**



The Hussman School has engaged in vigorous assessment activities and the assessment plan has been revised and improved ([see Appendix 9-A](#)). As described in our response to question 2 below, the assessment plan calls for all 12 ACEJMC values and competencies to be evaluated as student learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are enumerated in the assessment plan and in response to question 2 below. Previous student learning outcomes assessment plans for 2018–22 ([Appendix 9-B](#)) and 2015–17 ([Appendix 9-C](#)) are provided for review. Because there have been major revisions to assessment, below is a discussion of the results of assessment measures since the last accreditation review.

**2015-2017 Assessment**

Between 2015 and 2017, the school used two direct and three indirect measures to assess student learning. Direct measures included: knowledge exam and internship evaluations. Indirect measures included: internship self-report evaluations, experience survey, student awards, and embedded course-level assessments (now discontinued).

During this period, the return rate for the senior experience survey (an indirect measure) was low, with 84, 101, and 88 students responding in 2015, 2016 and

2017, respectively. This represented a survey response rate of around 25%. Only 34, 58, and 35 seniors completed the knowledge exam in 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively. These numbers represented around a 10% response rate for the knowledge exam.

**Direct Measures**

**Knowledge exam (direct measure)**

The knowledge exam was administered in Fall 2015 and Fall 2016 as a pretest in MEJO 101-The Media Revolution: From Gutenberg to Zuckerberg. This course is a survey class offered to students interested in majoring in journalism or media, although current majors are also able to take the course. The exam was given to students in this class because of the assumption that the students would be primarily first- and second-year students planning to major in the school.

The knowledge exam was also administered to all graduating seniors as a post-test in Spring 2015, 2016 and 2017 to evaluate senior-level versus entry-level student performance. The survey included a common set of 28 questions, plus three to six questions developed by sequence chairs specifically for students in each of the school's then eight specializations. MEJO 101 students answered all questions on the pretest exam.

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Seniors answered the common questions plus those designated for each of eight program tracks:

- Advertising
- Broadcast & electronic journalism
- Business journalism
- Graphic design and editing
- Interactive media
- News-editing
- Photo & video journalism
- Public relations / strategic communication

The exam questions and results of the knowledge test are provided in the 2015, 2016 and 2017 assessment reports, which are included in [Appendix 9-D](#). As noted in these reports, exam questions were used to assess all ACEJMC values and competencies except global diversity (#4), and the ability to evaluate their own work and the work of others (#10). The exam focused on course coverage of global diversity and the word usage and grammar test served as a proxy for assessing clear and effective writing.

#### **Internship evaluations (direct measure)**

Many students enroll in MEJO 393-Mass Communication Practicum, a supervised professional one credit hour work experience during a regular semester. Internships were completed in advertising, public relations, television, multimedia, graphics, reporting and editing. Students worked in media-related positions for eight to 15 hours per week. Beginning in 2016, worksite supervisors of students evaluated student performance in internships using a standard rubric to evaluate the following student learning outcomes (ACEJMC values and competencies):

- #3 gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or other forms of diversity in relation to media and communications
- #5 concepts and theories in the use and presentation of images and information

- #6 professional ethical principles and work in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity
- #7 critical, creative, and independent thinking
- #8 the ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the profession
- #9 clear and correct writing in forms and styles appropriate to the profession
- #12 the application of tools and technologies appropriate for the profession

The internship evaluation rubric is provided as part of the annual assessment reports of internships in [Appendix 9-E](#).

#### **Course-level assessments (direct measure)**

Between 2015 and 2017, the work of students in MEJO 153-Writing and Reporting and MEJO 340-Media Law was assessed for quality of final products in these courses (final news stories or final essays) based on ACEJMC values and competencies most relevant to that course. Evaluations in both courses were performed by the instructors or graduate students of the respective course, who had also graded students' assignments using a standard grading rubric.

A review of assessment activities raised concerns about instructors evaluating their own students' work while also knowing grades assigned to the final products, as well as the lack of training (normalization of expectations and interpretations of high performance) of the evaluators. This latter issue led to questions regarding consistency and comparative usefulness of evaluations from year to year. Thus, course-level assessment was discontinued in favor of strengthening the entry- and exit-level knowledge exams and developing a new instrument to assess student work.

#### **Indirect Measures**

##### **Internship self-reports (indirect measure)**

Since 2015, student self-evaluations of their own performance in internships have been gathered for every semester for students enrolled in the MEJO 393-Mass Communication Practicum. In this self-report,

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students rated their own performance on workplace skills, such as: reliability, initiative, enthusiasm, and willingness to take instruction. Questions are detailed in the annual internship self-reports in [Appendix 9-F](#). Internship self-evaluation questions also assessed the following student learning outcomes that correspond to ACEJMC values and competencies:

- #7 critical, creative, and independent thinking
- #9 clear and correct writing in forms and styles appropriate to the profession
- #10 the ability to critically evaluate one's own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammar.

**Experience survey (indirect measure)**

In the Spring of 2015, 2016 and 2017, seniors completed a survey to assess their experiences and perceptions as a major in the school. Approximately 80 questions were included in the survey (approximation due to skip logic). Survey question items are provided in the assessment reports of results in [Appendix 9-G](#). Students were asked to describe their experiences within the following broad categories:

- Preparedness for workforce and evaluating work
- Extra-curricular activities
- Employment, career services, internships
- Academic advising
- Communication by the school
- Diversity within the school
- International programs
- Most and least favorite classes and what classes should be added
- School's strengths and weaknesses.

The most relevant questions in the experience survey pertain to student ratings of their learning in courses, perceptions of diversity and global learning opportunities in the school that correspond to the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies.

**2018-2020 Assessment**

Following a revision of the school's assessment plan, three direct and four indirect measures are now used to assess student learning. Direct measures include external evaluations of student projects, knowledge exam, and aggregate internship evaluations. Indirect measures include internship self-report, experience survey, student awards, and employment data.

In 2018, to improve the response rates, a change was made in the administration of the senior experience survey and senior knowledge exam. The two measures were shortened and combined into one instrument, as discussed below. The question items on these revised instruments are described in the 2018 experience survey ([in Appendix 9-G](#)) and the 2018 knowledge exam ([in Appendix 9-D](#)).

**Direct Measures**

**Knowledge exam (direct measure)**

A review of assessment procedures determined that many students in the opening survey course (MEJO 101) did not complete the knowledge exam. Further examination of the composition of students in this course raised questions about the assumption that students were primarily first- and second-year students in the school. Some were upper-level students in other majors who were taking the course as an elective.

The opening course (MEJO 101) was replaced with MEJO 153-Writing and Reporting, a prerequisite for many upper-level courses and a core course requirement for all Hussman majors. Because all majors must take MEJO 153 early in the curriculum, this course is believed to be more appropriate for identifying new majors for pretest purposes.

Given the low response rate to the knowledge exam, questions were raised about the representativeness of the data as well as the number and appropriateness of questions. As a result, the knowledge exam was reduced to 20 questions, all of which are now administered as both a pre-test and post-test. This

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ensured that performance of entry-level students on all items could be compared with seniors. Because the number of tracks was reduced to journalism and advertising/public relations, it is no longer necessary for the exam to assess all of the individual tracks described above. The current knowledge exam focuses on the school's core content: all students answer all questions regardless of their track.

The question items in the new knowledge exam are listed in results for 2018, 2019 and 2020 in [Appendix 9-D](#). Questions were revised to reflect curriculum changes and new technologies. For example, new questions about APIs (application programming interface) and responsive web design were added and questions about obsolete technologies were removed. Also, questions were revised to better reflect knowledge of media history, ethics, and professional roles of media practitioners.

To encourage completion of the knowledge exam, the school heavily publicizes participation to students. As an incentive for seniors to respond to the online instrument, a drawing for one large prize (Apple Watch) and several smaller prizes (gift cards) are offered. Also, the director of assessment visits senior-level courses to promote the exam and encourage instructors to provide time in their courses for seniors to complete the instrument. The result has been a significant improvement in response rate: 184 (57%) responses in 2018, 207 (61%) responses in 2019, and 188 responses (49%) in the chaotic pandemic of Spring 2020.

**Professionals' evaluations of student projects (direct measure)**

In 2018, a new assessment tool was developed and pilot-tested to provide a direct measure for assessing the quality of work of graduating students by high-ranking industry professionals. A more detailed description is provided in the assessment reports of evaluations of professionals in 2018, 2019 and 2020 in [Appendix 9-H](#).

Each summer, industry professionals – selected from members of the school's Board of Advisers, Foundation

Board, or the school's Media and Journalism Alumni Association – review the work of graduating seniors enrolled in capstone courses in addition to reviewing the work of master's level students as a point of comparison. Student projects from the following capstone courses were evaluated: MEJO 634-Public Relations Campaigns, MEJO 542-Business Reporting, MEJO 625-Media Hub, and MEJO 584- International Projects.

Examples of student work in these courses include: a final report for the semester's public relations client, final journalistic articles in written form, and documentary videos or other visual works. Undergraduate capstone projects are selected at random from the prior academic year and submitted for review by a panel of advertising/PR and journalism professionals. These reviewers agreed to read training materials, attend a synchronous online training session, and complete a set of training evaluations prior to receiving their assigned capstone and master's level work for evaluation.

Industry evaluators provide quantitative ratings and qualitative comments. The following ACEJMC values and competencies are the focus of this assessment of student learning outcomes by these professionals.

- #5 concepts and theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- #7 critical, creative, and independent thinking
- #8 the ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the profession
- #9 clear and correct writing in forms and styles appropriate to the profession
- #12 the application of tools and technologies appropriate for the profession

**Internship evaluations (direct measure)**

As described above, the same procedures are used to gather evaluations of interns from internship supervisors in MEJO 393-Mass Communication Practicum. Worksite supervisors evaluate the

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performance of students using a standard rubric to assess the following student learning outcomes:

- #3 gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or other forms of diversity in relation to media and communications
- #5 concepts and theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- #6 professional ethical principles and work in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity
- #7 critical, creative, and independent thinking
- #8 the ability to conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the profession
- #9 clear and correct writing in forms and styles appropriate to the profession

**Indirect Measures**

**Internship self-reports (indirect measure)**

Students are asked to provide self-reported evaluations of their own internship performance in MEJO 393- Mass Communication Practicum. As in the past, students assess their performance in the internship and on the following student learning outcomes:

- #7 critical, creative, and independent thinking
- #9 clear and correct writing in forms and styles appropriate to the profession

- #10 the ability to critically evaluate one's own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammar

**Experience survey (indirect measure)**

To improve the response rate of seniors, the experience survey was combined with the knowledge exam into a single instrument, and the number of items was reduced from 80 to approximately 35 (approximation due to skip logic). This number was further reduced by removing questions asking students about their internship experiences in the Career Services section, because these details are already captured in the internship evaluations.

The new experience survey is detailed in the assessment reports for 2018 to 2020. The most relevant indirect findings are student ratings of how well their coursework covered learning outcomes pertinent to the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies. The new survey also solicits student feedback regarding operational outcomes, such as career services, preparation for the workforce, perceptions of diversity, course availability and enrollment, funding support through awards and scholarships, and other school resources (communication, library, global programs).

A summary of results for direct and indirect measures for each year since the previous accreditation review is provided in [Appendix 9-I](#).

**2. Provide the unit’s definition of goals for learning that students must achieve. If this definition is incorporated into the plan for assessment, a page reference will suffice.**



The school has adopted verbatim the 12 ACEJMC values and competencies as its student learning outcomes. Every course in the curriculum touches on every ACEJMC competency in some way. Instructors in these courses ensure that all students are exposed to these learning outcomes.

As presented in [Appendix 2-B](#) in Standard 2, the curriculum matrix below (Figure 9.1), shows where ACEJMC competencies are taught as a primary objective in core and required courses.

**Figure 9.1**

ACEJMC Values and Competencies	Required Core Courses (All Students)			Required Ad/PR Courses (Ad/PR Students Only)*	
	MEJO 121- Introduction to Digital Storytelling	MEJO 153- Writing and Reporting	MEJO 340/341- Introduction to Media Law	MEJO 137-Principles of Advertising and Public Relations	MEJO 379-Advertising and Public Relations Research
Principles of freedom of expression					
History and role of media in society					
Diverse society and audiences					
Global cultural perspectives					
Presentation of images and information practices					
Ethical principles for communications					
Critical, creative and independent thinking					
Research methods and analysis					
Clear and precise writing					
Accuracy, fairness and clarity					
Data, numbers and statistics					
Communication tools and technology					

*\*Since the journalism area of study branches into a variety of specializations, there are no common required courses for journalism students beyond the three in the core.*

Competency is a primary objective of the course
  Competency is explored in some way in the course

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**ACEJMC Values and Competencies**

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press... 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.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation, and as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
  - Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information (academically informed communication practices).
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
  - *Think critically, creatively and independently.*
  - *Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.*
  - *Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.*
  - Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
  - Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
  - *Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.*

Note: Adjacent to our internal assessment analysis and reporting activities, the university asks for periodic reports of assessment of no more than five student learning outcomes. We have italicized the outcomes we provide to fulfill these university reporting requests in the listing above.

**3. Describe the collection and reporting of data from both direct and indirect assessment measures and how the unit used its analysis of the data to improve curriculum, instruction, etc. Provide copies of any end-of-year assessment reports. If there are multiple reports from the six-year period, summarize the findings and make the reports available in a separate digital file.**

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The school collects and reports assessment data each year. As summarized above, the school's assessment plan was revised in 2017 in response to the need to improve assessment measures. The plan guides assessment activities for accreditation purposes and serves the annual assessment requirement of the university. As described in the Undergraduate Assessment Plan in [Appendix 9-A](#), the revised plan uses seven assessment measures:

**Direct Measures**

- Knowledge pre-/post-test exam
- Aggregate Internship evaluations
- External evaluations of student projects

**Indirect Measures**

- Experience survey
- Internship self-reports
- Student awards
- Employment data

Information about data collection and reporting is provided above and in our annual reports of direct and indirect measure findings provided in [Supplement V](#). The following assessments reports are provided:

- AY 2014–15 – knowledge pre/posttests, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (3 reports)
- 2016 – knowledge pre/posttests, internship supervisor evaluations, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (4 reports)

- 2017 – knowledge pre/posttests, internship supervisor evaluations, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (4 reports)
- 2018 – industry professionals' evaluations, knowledge pre/posttests, internship supervisor evaluations, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (5 reports)
- 2019 – industry professionals' evaluations, knowledge pre/posttests, internship supervisor evaluations, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (5 reports)
- 2020 – knowledge pre/posttests, internship supervisor evaluations, industry professionals' evaluations, student experience surveys, and student internship self-reports (3 reports)

Summary tables of quantitative scores show trends in data points over time for the most relevant direct and indirect measures ([Appendix 9-I](#)).

**Closing the Loop**

The most comprehensive action taken in response to assessment findings during the 2015–2017 time period was the significant revision to the undergraduate curriculum. As described in Standard 2, a change in the core curriculum introduced a foundational audio/video information gathering course across journalism, advertising and public relations. This change was made in response to the need to provide the already documented strengths in the presentation of images and in the application of tools and technologies to all students across the undergraduate program.

Another significant change in response to assessment findings during this period was merging of journalism specializations into one overarching major. This change affords students with a greater ability to engage in multiformat storytelling and capitalize on strengths in writing, presentation of images, and application of tools and technology.

Assessment findings directly shaped the school's new strategic plan, *Envisioning Tomorrow* ([Appendix Pt. II-A](#)). The new strategic plan gives more attention to basic statistical and numerical concepts, an area in need of improvement; and on sense-making, which is informed by a greater emphasis on numeracy and research knowledge. New faculty have been hired who are able to offer a greater focus on numeracy in existing courses, as detailed below. New courses are also in different stages of development and approval that will provide students with more opportunities to develop numeracy and data skills to derive insights for journalistic and advertising/PR work.

Specific student learning outcomes assessment findings and actions are provided below:

### 1. Laws and freedom of speech

**Findings:** Direct and indirect assessments suggest an acceptable, if not high, level of student understanding of this outcome. Results of the new knowledge exam indicate an upward trajectory since 2017. More data are needed to establish any upward trend in this learning outcome, given the newness of the current knowledge exam.

**Actions:** Core journalism-oriented and strategic communication-oriented law courses (MEJO 340/341) have been revised to provide more real-world discussion of the application of law and legal activities in the professions, and emphasize new issues dealing with digital media. In addition, to further strengthen overall knowledge, a new elective survey course on the First Amendment titled "Freedom of Expression" is being taught for the first time in Fall 2020.

### 2. History of industry and professional roles

**Findings:** Direct and indirect measures show fair and consistent performance of this learning outcome. Results suggest the need to strengthen general business acumen and historical underpinnings of the industry.

**Actions:** In 2013, the entry-level course, World of Mass Communication, was re-envisioned as a more dynamic course called The Media Revolution: From Gutenberg to Zuckerberg and Beyond (MEJO 101). This course introduces students to the origins, similarities, differences, and relationships between the various businesses, jobs, and skillsets within the myriad and changing media industries. In addition, a new introductory undergraduate course is currently being discussed that would provide an even more comprehensive overview of professional communication, focused on business and economic models of these industries.

### 3. Diversity (local)

**Findings:** Direct and indirect measures show that understanding of diversity issues, such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, has improved since 2015 to a strong area of learning in 2018–2019.

**Actions:** Throughout the past several years, as documented in Standard 3, the school continues to host discussions of issues of diversity and inclusion, including diversity of thought. Tangible steps have included meetings with the university's chief diversity officer, who met twice with faculty groups.

To improve enrollment in courses focused on issues of diversity, the curriculum committee developed a rotation of course offerings so that the large survey course, MEJO 441-Diversity and Communication, would be offered each semester and more specialized courses (e.g., MEJO 342-The Black Press and U.S. History or MEJO 442-Gender, Class, Race & Mass Media). The rotation of these courses has reduced competition that might have inadvertently reduced enrollment for students who had limited space for electives.

#### 4. Diversity (global)

**Findings:** Indirect measures reflect promise in students understanding of this learning outcome. Findings suggest the need to develop a direct measure to assess this outcome. Development of this direct measure is underway.

**Actions:** In response to assessment findings, in Fall 2016, a global communication course, MEJO 446-Global Communication and Comparative Journalism, was introduced as a means of strengthening this area of knowledge for students interested in journalism. In Spring 2020, MEJO 490-International Public Relations was introduced to further strengthen this outcome in advertising/public relations.

In addition, participation in the school's global programs has been strengthened through student knowledge of and enrollment in MEJO 447-International Media Studies, and MEJO 490: International Media Markets: China. These study-abroad courses includes travel to London or China where students learn about international media organizations. Knowledge of global diversity has also been strengthened by MEJO 584-International Projects, which takes students to different international locations to engage in multimedia journalistic storytelling and MEJO 592-Workroom FashionMash: Product Design, which has traveled overseas for product research and client meetings the last three Spring Breaks (the 2020 trip to Paris was cancelled due to the pandemic).

#### 5. Presentation of images (visual communication practices based in scholarly research)

**Findings:** Direct and indirect measures indicate adequate knowledge and strong performance by students in the practical application of skills in the creation of projects. 2018 data suggests room for improvement in common knowledge of visual literacy as applied to the newest technologies. Responses to senior survey questions regarding concepts and theories in the use and presentation of images show improvement from incoming majors to graduating seniors over the past three years.

**Actions:** Assessment findings guided the development of MEJO 121-Introduction to Digital Storytelling, which was launched in 2017. This course, which gives equal attention to video, web design and graphics, is required for all students in journalism and advertising/public relations; thus ensuring that all majors acquire basic skills in the use of graphics to present information.

In addition, the school's new strategic plan, *Envisioning Tomorrow*, calls for new capstone coursework that integrates multi-platform storytelling and data analysis through joint journalism, advertising and PR projects. In Spring 2020, a joint capstone course proposal to strengthen this learning outcome was approved by the school's curriculum committee.

## 6. Ethics

**Findings:** Assessment results indicate variable performance over time, ranging from adequate to strong. One possible reason for these mixed findings is that many of the instructors in the media ethics course have been doctoral students. These students are now required to shadow the course and receive instructor training. This extra focus on training should result in more uniform results.

**Actions:** Based on student performance on this learning outcome between 2015 and 2017, MEJO 141-Media Ethics was removed from the core curriculum, however faculty are encouraged to incorporate ethics in their courses and syllabi to more directly address this outcome. The majority of our majors, and many non-majors, take the course because it is designated as meeting the university's general education requirement for understanding philosophical and moral reasoning. Given the prior evidence, this change provides more space within the limitations of course credits to further strengthen instruction in learning outcomes 5, 8, and 11.

## 7. Critical/creative thinking

**Findings:** Historically, this student learning outcome has been strong in both direct and indirect measures, but more recent assessment findings are mixed. Results of the new knowledge exam suggests the need for improvement, while evaluations of student work suggest this area continues to be strong.

Assessment of this learning outcome by industry professionals and internship evaluations indicate this is an area of continued strength. Findings on the knowledge exam since 2018 that demonstrate inconsistency may be due to issues with new critical/creative thinking questions on the exam.

**Actions:** The need for critical and creative thinking are both reiterated in the new strategic plan and are embedded within the pillars of data-driven insight

and sense-making. Recent efforts to improve this learning outcome have included one new faculty hire in investigative journalism and two focused on market intelligence and audience analytics.

## 8. Research and evaluation

**Findings:** Assessment results of this learning outcome have been consistently strong, although some of the recent indicators suggest a need for improvement. Assessment findings from internship evaluations suggest research and evaluation is an area of strength, while open-ended comments from industry professionals and the knowledge exam indicate the need for improvement. Differences in findings may be due to the introduction of new exam questions that focus on changing industry needs in audience analysis and data journalism.

**Actions:** Although assessment findings of this student learning outcome are mixed, results helped to support three new faculty hires that focus on audience analytics, marketing intelligence and investigative journalism. At this writing, a fourth faculty position in health marketing and communications has been submitted for university approval. The description of this position was written to develop courses in strategic communication with a significant research component.

In addition, assessment results have guided the creation of a joint capstone course that was approved by the school's curriculum committee. The course combines production of an online news program that relies on gathering and interpreting audience metrics to make informed decisions about content, content delivery and promotion. The new capstone follows similar changes that were made last year to MEJO 252-Audio Journalism and MEJO 421-TV News Reporting and Producing, which now incorporate a section on viewing and interpreting Nielsen and digital audience data.

## 9. Writing

**Findings:** This student learning outcome is a stalwart of the school and assessment of this area has been consistently strong on all direct and indirect measures. However, in 2018, the average percentage of correct responses to writing items on the new knowledge exam was lower than expected. This result likely reflects new questions on the knowledge exam, given the high marks by industry professionals and by internship evaluators. Also, responses to writing questions on the senior survey have shown improvement from incoming majors to graduating seniors since 2018.

**Actions:** The core MEJO 153-Writing and Reporting course continues to evolve as a result of assessment. An effort has been made to ensure that different styles and forms of writing are consistent with ever-changing industry requirements. Learning modules now incorporate more information and practice writing for online, social media and video/broadcast. Guest lecturers have contributed their expertise to these new lesson modules by offering real-world insights that demonstrate the need for versatility in writing for different formats.

## 10. Evaluating own work

**Findings:** Assessment results of this outcome using direct and indirect measures in 2015 indicate this is an area of strength in the curriculum.

**Actions:** The school continues to emphasize the importance of high-quality work and many courses include critiques of the work of others. For example, in MEJO 371-Advertising Creative, each student develops and presents a campaign that is discussed and the best campaign is named the “best in class.”

## 11. Basic numerical and statistical concepts

**Findings:** Despite attention to this area, variable performance on this student learning outcome suggests the need for continued improvement. These results are being addressed in conjunction with the learning outcome regarding research and evaluating information.

**Actions:** Assessment has guided the development of a number of courses that support this learning outcome, including: MEJO 570-Data-Driven Journalism, which provides instruction on basic statistics and data literacy; MEJO 479-Market Intelligence, which teaches statistics, audience metrics, and market research to inform business decisions; and MEJO 670-Digital Advertising and Marketing, which provides additional instruction in applying statistics to strategic communication decisions.

Existing courses were also revised to strengthen understanding of numerical concepts. The journalism courses MEJO 252-Audio Journalism and MEJO 421-TV News Reporting and Producing were changed to incorporate lessons on reading and interpreting Nielsen television audience data, as well as the use of digital audience data provided by an industry contact. Current capstone courses also combine audience analytics with decision making in news production for online audiences.

In addition, proposed courses include a second data journalism course and a joint capstone course that combines online news production with audience metrics, and examines public television data, thanks to a recent partnership between the Hussman School and UNC-TV Public Media North Carolina.

As informed by assessment, numeracy and data literacy are a pillar in the new 2020–2025 strategic plan, *Envisioning Tomorrow*. This plan resulted in two

job announcements in the 2019–2020 academic year and two new hires in market intelligence/ audience analytics, which bring additional strength to the areas of data and quantitative research methods and provide support of needed skills in both journalism and strategic communication.

## 12. Tools and technology

**Findings:** Recent findings for this learning outcome are mixed. The knowledge exam, which assesses new aspirational online technologies and basic traditional audio/video, suggests the need for improvement, while input from industry professionals and internship evaluators indicate this is an area of great strength.

**Actions:** Among the actions related to the tools of technology, MEJO 121-Introduction to Digital Storytelling was launched as a core requirement to provide basic video, web, and graphics skills in the presentation of images for students in both journalism and advertising/public relations. We continue to strengthen our curriculum by providing students with knowledge and skills in the newest analytics and data mining/data scraping tools of technology. MEJO 570-Data-Driven Journalism and MEJO 479-Market Intelligence have provided the first introduction of these tools to our students.

## 4. Describe the involvement of journalism and mass communication professionals, including alumni, in the assessment process.

The school engages with three volunteer groups of media professionals and alumni that provide assistance in the assessment process: the Board of Advisers, Hussman Media Foundation of North Carolina, and our alumni association. The members of these groups regularly interact with current students, serve as guest speakers in classes, and assist in the school's assessment process.

These industry professionals work closely with the dean to support the school's mission, and advance and inform the direction of the school. They also interact with the school's leadership to guide the creation of a new strategic plan and revision of the curriculum.

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media Foundation of North Carolina, Inc., cultivates private support for teaching, research and service. Members of the board help to sustain the school with adequate resources and governance policies.

The school's alumni association, whose members are graduates who are media industry leaders, brings diverse perspectives to help foster student development and alumni connections. These alumni are in an excellent position to share their recent professional experiences with students.

Members of the three boards, other industry professionals and alumni, actively engage with and provide invaluable perspectives to students, and participate in assessing their work and performance across the communication disciplines. They visit classes to interact with students and provide feedback on projects and other work, and help identify areas that need further attention, which provides an opportunity for students to make mid-course corrections.

A notable example of professional involvement is in the school's senior capstone assessment, which is detailed in our 2018 through 2020 assessment reports.

**PART II – STANDARD 9**  
ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

As part of our assessment process, at the end of the semester, professionals independently evaluate final projects. Further, internship supervisors provide an evaluation of student work as part of our assessment of learning outcomes. These observations are also factored into student grades by the instructor. Finally, feedback from professionals (through assessment and internship evaluations) have been used to help refine and improve our curricula, provide experiential learning opportunities, and critique student work.

### **Experiential Learning**

Students work with professionals as clients in a number of courses. In addition to providing students with direction and feedback throughout these courses, professionals play a critical role in assessing performance and the final products of student teams. Specific examples of professional and alumni involvement in courses include:

**MEJO 232-Public Relations Writing.** Students in this course have worked with more than 50 nonprofit organizations since the last accreditation team visit. They write press releases and other materials for clients who review the strategies and PR products.

**MEJO 376-Sports Marketing and Advertising.** This class works each semester with a client that is a major sports organization. Clients and other professional guests provide input and feedback to students at several points throughout the semester.

**MEJO 634-Public Relations Campaigns (previously MEJO 434).** Clients in all sections of this capstone course formally evaluate at least three campaign components over the course of the semester: research reports, final presentations and a written plan. Some faculty members use a formal client-evaluation form, while others allow reviewers to provide verbal feedback directly to students.

**MEJO 671-Social Marketing Campaigns.** This course works with public health sector clients who attend the class three times during the semester. The client presents an overview of the public health challenge and answers

questions from students. They also attend a strategy presentation, where student teams present the results of their formative research and plan for interventions. Last, the client attends final student presentations and provides verbal comments, which the instructor collects and incorporates into a feedback rubric.

### **MEJO 690-Advanced Advertising Campaigns.**

Students in this course enter their campaigns in the American Advertising Federation's National Student Advertising Competition. These campaigns (written plans plus 20-minute live presentations) are judged by professionals at the district level. Winners advance to the semifinals where a second panel of professionals evaluate the campaigns; and those winners advance to the national finals, where they are judged a third time.

### **Critiquing Student Work**

Students who produce broadcast, audio, print and multimedia projects, and public relations-advertising campaigns as part of coursework and extracurricular activities regularly have their work critiqued by professionals in these fields. A few examples follow:

**MEJO 422-Producing Television News.** This class produces the school's "Carolina Week" TV news program. Each semester broadcast professionals spend a day with the news team, producing and critiquing student's work following the newscast. They provide a real-world assessment of what the team is doing well and how it might improve. Professional critiques are provided to individuals as well as to the group.

**MEJO 252-Audio Journalism.** This class often uses professionals to critique student work and present examples of professional work from their organizations.

**MEJO 634 (previously MEJO 434)-Public Relations Campaigns.** Students in this course produce public relations materials that are critiqued by professionals, and their work and ideas are often used by organizations. This work includes, press releases, fact sheets, public service announcements, and social media campaigns.

**5. In a digital file, list the major awards won by the unit’s students in local, regional or national competitions in the past six years. Limit to five a year.**



Students in the Hussman School have been consistent in submitting and successful in winning awards in local, regional and national competition. Figure 9.2 below

provides a list of five student awards each year since the last accreditation review. A full list of major awards won is provided in [Appendix 9-J](#).

**Figure 9.2 Student Awards in National Competitions**

	2019–20	2018–19	2017–18	2016–17	2015–16	2014–15
Hearst Journalism Competition	Overall champion. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, two individual 3 <sup>rd</sup> place, one individual “Best Use”	Overall champion. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one individual 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, one individual 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	2 <sup>nd</sup> place overall. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one individual 2 <sup>nd</sup> place	Overall champion. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one individual 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Overall champion. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Overall champion. Two individual 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, two 3 <sup>rd</sup> place
Society of Professional Journalists	One national winner, one Best All-Around	Three national finalists	One Mark of Excellence	Seven Mark of Excellence	One Mark of Excellence	Two Mark of Excellence
Society for News Design –International Student Competition	Four 1 <sup>st</sup> place, four 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Four 1 <sup>st</sup> place, four 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Three 1 <sup>st</sup> place, two 2 <sup>nd</sup> places, four 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Three 1 <sup>st</sup> place, four 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Four 1 <sup>st</sup> place, six 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, four 3 <sup>rd</sup> place	Seven 1 <sup>st</sup> place, seven 2 <sup>nd</sup> place, four 3 <sup>rd</sup> place
Bateman Competition				1 <sup>st</sup> place		
Broadcast Education Awards	One 3 <sup>rd</sup> place, one “Best of Festival”	One 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one 2 <sup>nd</sup> place		One 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place, one “Best of”	One 2 <sup>nd</sup> place	Two 1 <sup>st</sup> place, one 3 <sup>rd</sup> place
College Photographer of the Year	Five gold, two silver, one bronze	Four gold, one silver, one bronze	One gold, one silver, two bronze	Two gold, two silver, one bronze	Overall winner, six gold, three silver, two bronze	Three gold, three silver

**6. In a digital file, list by specialty each member of the graduating class of 2016 and those graduates' current jobs. If practical, give a total number of "unknowns" rather than including them in the list. Describe the program used to track graduates to assess their experience in the profession and to improve curriculum and instruction.**



The Hussman School of Journalism and Media maintains regular and consistent contact with its graduates. Multiple methods are used to provide ongoing information to alumni about the school, fellow alumni, students, faculty and staff. Methods of contact include a monthly electronic newsletter, a print newsletter twice a year, and multiple social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, which are overseen by Hussman's communication team. The school's website is updated on a regular basis, so graduates are able to stay aware of and engaged in the school's activities, both domestically and internationally.

The school uses a database maintained by UNC's Office of Development and the university's General Alumni

Association to reach out to alumni by mail and email. The database has 16,039 graduates of the school (9,211 in North Carolina), with the remainder in the 49 states and 45 countries. In addition, the school maintains its own alumni records. LiveAlumni, an innovative program that utilizes public social profiles to capture the most current contact and employment information, ensures that the school's alumni data is kept current.

Of the 238 graduates in May 2016, the school has employment records on 232 (97.5%). Employment records are not available for five (2.1%). A list of the 2016 graduates detailing their academic specialty and their current employer, job title and location is provided in [Appendix 9-K](#).