

## **ASSESSMENT REPORT: 2014–15 AND 2015-16 ACADEMIC YEARS**

Notre Dame de Namur University School of Business and Management  
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### **MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA) PROGRAM**

#### **OVERVIEW**

This report summarizes our assessment activities in the School of Business and Management's Masters of Business Administration (MBA) graduate program for academic years 2014-15 and 2015-16. The report is based on assessment data gathered during the fall and spring semesters of both academic years.

Please note that we have recently modified our assessment processes in all graduate programs in order to make them more rigorous and comprehensive and to optimize the statistical accuracy and representativeness of the findings that emerge from analysis of the assessment data. Furthermore, we have recently begun assessing Concentration Learning Outcomes which has necessitated a streamlining of our entire data collection and analysis process. 2014-16 represents our third assessment cycle of using the new assessment methodology.

The process we used for the academic years 2011-12, 2010-11 and 2009-10 consisted of evaluating capstone projects assigned within the MBA Capstone courses for achievement of all six Program Learning Outcomes. The process we have switched to as of 2012-13, have refined in 2014-15, and which we plan to continue using for the next year consists of assessing the relevant Program Learning Outcomes in the "core" Common Professional Component (CPC) classes as well as the relevant Concentration Learning Outcomes in the MBA concentrations (Human Resources Management, Marketing, Finance and Media & Promotion). We feel this approach is superior to the capstone-only method used previously since it provides a greater number of data points using a more diverse set of assessment methods and faculty evaluators as a gauge of our progress toward achieving the PLOs and allows us to collect and analyze data for the concentration outcomes (which the capstone-only method does not).

#### **GENERAL PROCESS**

The process described below was followed in order to assess our achievement of the Program Learning Outcomes in the MBA program:

1. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for each of the graduate programs were created and vetted with faculty and administration within the School of Business and Management. Our PLOs were most recently revamped and renewed in 2010.
2. Instructors teaching core (CPC) courses or concentration elective courses in the MBA program are asked to identify the set of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Concentration Learning Outcomes (ConLOs) relevant to their course(s).

3. Instructors identify provisional methods to assess each of the relevant learning outcomes identified in 2.
4. The provisional methods are vetted with the School of Business and Management's Director of Graduate Programs for appropriateness and feasibility. In some cases, instructors are asked to revise their initial assessment methods to align more closely with the PLO or ConLO, to ensure a more feasible data collection and assessment process, or to provide a greater degree of concrete evidence of outcome achievement. Instructors may also be advised to focus on different PLOs or ConLOs in order to arrive at the aforementioned beneficial outcomes.
5. Once approved, instructors are asked to assess student work according to their approved assessment plans.
6. The Director of Graduate Programs obtains data from each of the assessing instructors, and then compiles and analyzes the data, noting trends and issues (reported here). See "Program Assessment Rubric" for a description of our assessment benchmarks.
7. The Director of Graduate Programs shares the findings with SBM and NDNu faculty, staff and administration. The group jointly brainstorms action steps for "closing the loop" on outcome achievement deficiencies. Suitable ideas emerging from the discussions are then implemented as early as possible in the academic year.
8. The next review cycle's results are examined to see if improvement has occurred in the areas of deficiency.

## **DATA SOURCES**

As mentioned above, our PLO assessment data comes from assessments made in the "core" (Common Professional Component or "CPC") courses in the MBA program. ConLO assessment data comes from assessments made in the elective courses pertaining to the concentration outcomes being assessed (Human Resources Management, Marketing, Finance and Media & Promotion). We have created a system that optimizes the simultaneous collection of data for both program and concentration outcomes given our limited faculty resources. New faculty members teaching core courses may initially be exempt from providing assessment data since they are less familiar with the pedagogy used in the courses they are teaching. Furthermore, assessments are typically provided by full-time faculty and not by part-time adjunct faculty, though there are exceptions. We compensate for these data deficiencies by collecting more data in courses staffed by veteran faculty.

Data for the assessments are collected in the fall and spring semesters of each academic year. We typically do not collect assessment data for summer courses given the diminished number of courses taught in summer semester. It should be noted that the most current review cycle is based on two years (i.e. four semesters) of aggregated data, as opposed to one year (i.e. two semesters) of aggregated data as we have done in the past. Limited faculty resources coupled with the additional demand of assessing concentration learning outcomes has necessitated that we collect data over a longer longitudinal timeframe (i.e. two years instead of one). The amount of data we were able to collect for each individual year (either 2014-15 or 2015-16) would have been inadequate for properly analyzing the outcomes. Combining the data for both years enables us to perform more robust analyses.

The “core” CPC courses for the MBA program that provide data for our PLO assessments are:

<b>MBA Core Courses</b>
Organization Management & Theory
Enterprise Information Management Systems
Global Operations Management
Marketing Planning & Analysis
Corporate Finance
Management Accounting
Business Policy (MBA Capstone)
Organization Management & Theory

The MBA concentration elective courses that provide data for our ConLO assessments are:

<b>Finance</b>	<b>Human Resources Mgmt</b>	<b>Marketing</b>	<b>Media &amp; Promotion</b>
Behavioral Finance	Conflict Management	Advertising & Promotion	Advertising & Promotion
Derivatives & Risk Management	Global Mgmt of Virtual Teams	Consumer Behavior	Consumer Behavior
International Finance	Human Resources Mgmt (MBA only)	Digital Marketing	Copywriting
Investments	Labor Mgmt Relations	Entrepreneurship	Digital Marketing
	Managing Diversity	International Marketing	Marketing Research
	Recruitment, Training and Development	Marketing Research	Public Relations
		Public Relations	
		Spatial Analysis	

It should be noted that we include assessments of Online MBA courses in our data, though we do not break achievement in Online MBA courses out as a separate component of analysis in the current report. Given the nascent status of courses offered online (versus the on-ground MBA program which offers a more stable and substantial number of courses each semester) that results in a scarcity of online data available to evaluate achievement of the PLOs, we are unable to produce robust evaluations of the Online MBA as a separate and distinct component of our MBA program. Our new assessment process proposed for the graduate programs (see “Next Steps” section below) addresses this challenge.

*MBA Program Learning Outcomes*

The Program Learning Outcomes for the MBA Program are as follows: (key word in ***bold blue italics***)

1. Students will be able to understand, analyze and communicate global, economic, legal, and ethical **aspects** of business.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate effective **leadership** and collaboration skills needed to make business-critical decisions, accomplish functional, organizational and professional goals.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate written and oral **communication** and information literacy competencies that support the effectiveness of strategic planning, marketing and operational activities.
4. Students will be able to evaluate and apply the effective use of **technology** to optimize business performance.
5. Students will develop comprehensive solutions to business problems by synthesizing and evaluating information using qualitative and quantitative methods of reasoning and **analysis**.
6. Students apply the NDNU mission and **hallmarks** (community engagement and social justice) to course curriculum.

### *MBA Concentration Learning Outcomes*

The Concentration Learning Outcomes for the MBA are as follows: (key word in **bold blue italics**)

#### **FINANCE**

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of the tools, techniques and frameworks for **evaluating** projects, companies and securities in order to make optimal investment and risk-management decisions.
2. Develop an understanding of the role of markets and **financial institutions** in the macroeconomy as well as the financial decision-making dynamics of the individual consumer.
3. Understand how **global financial market dynamics** impact financial decision making within firms and domestic market economies.

#### **HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

1. Understand and apply human resources **best practices**, leadership and risk management principles that foster the development of productive work environments that treat employees equitably.
2. Apply **evidence-based management** techniques and research findings to optimize the quality of employee, group and firm level managerial decision-making within organizations.
3. Gain an understanding of how to develop and analyze the **efficacy** of performance management programs within organizations.

#### **MARKETING**

1. Develop an awareness and facility with the tools and techniques used to make **sustainable marketing strategy** decisions in product design, pricing, distribution and promotion activities.

2. Gain a comprehensive understanding of domestic and global *consumer behavior* and how cultural dynamics impact upon marketing strategy.
3. Gain a comprehensive understanding of modern-day *marketing trends* and techniques that can be used to sense and fulfill evolving consumer demand patterns.

### **MEDIA & PROMOTION (MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS)**

1. Develop a comprehensive understanding of social, digital and traditional *media practices* using a framework of integrated marketing communications.
2. Hone copywriting and messaging skills to *effectively communicate* an organization's brand story to the appropriate audiences.
3. Gain an understanding of how organizations can *effectively partner* with key publics to accomplish organizational and social goals.

### **OUTCOME ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

PLO and ConLO data is coded on a 2-5 scale, with the following point descriptors:

- 5 = Exemplary Achievement of Learning Outcome
- 4 = Satisfactory Achievement of Learning Outcome
- 3 = Questionable Achievement of Learning Outcome – Possible Deficiency
- 2 = Learning Outcome Not Achieved – Definite Deficiency

Data for the PLOs and ConLOs are reported as averages and standard deviations. We generally consider averages between 4 and 5 to be acceptable and averages between 2 and 3 to be unacceptable outcomes. Averages between 3 and 4 are considered on a case by case basis, but generally indicate a cause for concern, especially if the average is tending closer to the 3.0 mark. Standard deviations are used to evaluate the confidence level of the calculated averages (i.e. high SD means we are less confident in the data).

Our assessment goals for the program are to:

1. Maintain all yearly PLO / ConLO averages above 4.0.
2. Maintain all semesterly PLO / ConLO averages above 4.0.
3. Reverse and rectify any significant, sustained downward trends in PLO / ConLO averages, including those having central tendencies in the lower part of the 4-5 range.

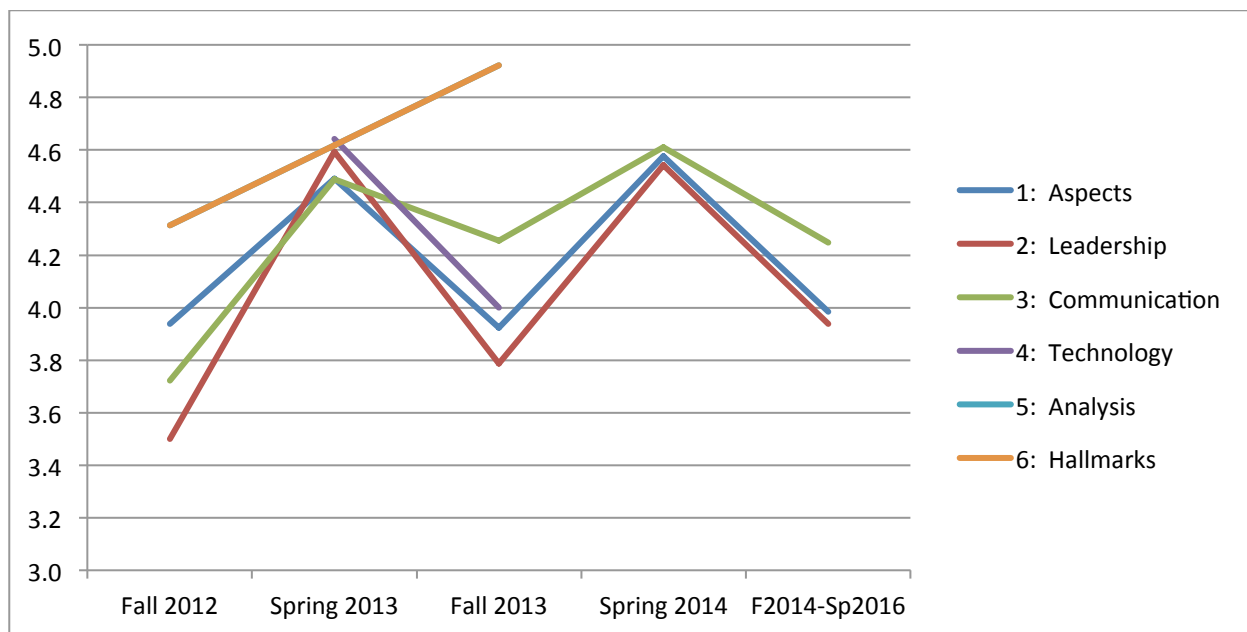
### **CURRENT ASSESSMENT DATA**

Below we present data summaries for our Fall 2014 – Spring 2016 review cycle PLO and ConLO assessments.

Program Learning Outcomes						
<b>MBA Program</b>						
	<u>1: Aspects</u>	<u>2: Leadership</u>	<u>3: Communication</u>	<u>4: Technology</u>	<u>5: Analysis</u>	<u>6: Hallmarks</u>
2014-16 Average	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.3
2014-16 St Dev	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
<b>Concentration Learning Outcomes</b>						
<b>MBA Program</b>						
<b>Finance</b>						
	<u>1: Evaluating</u>	<u>2: Institutions</u>	<u>3: Global Market</u>			
2014-16 Average	4.2	-	-			
2014-16 St Dev	1.1	-	-			
<b>Human Resources Management</b>						
	<u>1: Best Practices</u>	<u>2: EBM</u>	<u>3: Efficacy</u>			
2014-16 Average	3.8	4.0	-			
2014-16 St Dev	0.7	0.9	-			
<b>Marketing</b>						
	<u>1: Strategy</u>	<u>2: Consumer</u>	<u>3: Trends</u>			
2014-16 Average	-	3.8	-			
2014-16 St Dev	-	0.7	-			
<b>Media and Promotion</b>						
	<u>1: Practices</u>	<u>2: Communicate</u>	<u>3: Partner</u>			
2014-16 Average	-	3.9	-			
2014-16 St Dev	-	0.8	-			

Below we present in tabular and graphical formats a trend analysis of PLO data for three consecutive analysis periods.

MBA - Trend Data by Semester						
	<b>1: Aspects</b>	<b>2: Leadership</b>	<b>3: Communication</b>	<b>4: Technology</b>	<b>5: Analysis</b>	<b>6: Hallmarks</b>
Fall 2012	3.9	3.5	3.7		4.3	4.3
Spring 2013	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.6
Fall 2013	3.9	3.8	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.9
Spring 2014	4.6	4.5	4.6		4.6	
F2014-Sp2016	4.0	3.9	4.2	4.0	4.2	4.3
Trend	0.02	0.08	0.12	-0.17	-0.01	-0.02



## DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Program Learning Outcomes*

The following observations can be made about the most recent and cumulative MBA PLO data:

1. Results were satisfactory for all PLOs in the Fall 2014 – Spring 2016 period with “Hallmarks” scoring the highest (4.3) and Leadership scoring the lowest (3.9). Results for PLOs occupied a fairly narrow range of scores with only 0.4 difference between the highest and lowest average score. All scores were at or near the “satisfactory” mark of 4.0.
2. Average scores for three outcomes (Communication, Analysis and Hallmarks) were slightly to moderately above satisfactory. Average scores for two outcomes (Aspects and Technology) landed exactly at the “satisfactory” mark (4.0) and one outcome (Leadership) scored slightly below the “satisfactory” mark (3.9).
3. A trend analysis was conducted for all PLOs using data inclusive from Fall 2012 to Spring 2016 semesters. See the “Trend” line results in the Excel statistics presented below. The ‘Aspects’ and ‘Leadership’ outcomes showed small to moderate positive trends over time (.02 and .08 increases per semester, respectively). The ‘Communication’ outcome showed a more pronounced upward trend (.12 increase per semester). The ‘Analysis’ and ‘Hallmarks’ outcomes showed slight declines (.01 and .02 decreases per semester, respectively), though, as previously mentioned, both outcomes scored above the satisfactory mark for the most recent Fall 2014-Spring 2016 analysis period. Note that this trend analysis is complicated somewhat by the fact that the most recent analysis period is an average computed by aggregating data from Fall 2014-Spring 2016 semesters.

### **Action Items:**

1. **Leadership and Communication:** In the prior PLO analysis, both 'Leadership' and 'Communication' had shown a need for improvement. The current analysis shows 'Leadership' still needing improvement (though not as significantly as before) and a satisfactory improvement in the 'Communication' outcome. As part of the program review process, we have endeavored to improve our MBA students' leadership and communication skills by integrating more leadership pedagogy, activities and assessments into our curriculum.

We plan to integrate more of a Leadership focus into the MBA curriculum as follows:

- More emphasis on Leadership topics within the BUS 4000 Organizational Management course.
- Greater focus on evaluation of leadership abilities and outcomes in team projects.
- Proposal to add 'Leadership Concepts' course to the list of MBA HRM electives.

### *Concentration Learning Outcomes*

The SBM Graduate Business Programs began collecting Concentration Learning Outcome (ConLO) data for all MBA concentrations in Fall 2014. Each concentration has three learning outcomes which were developed by faculty having the appropriate subject matter expertise and implemented in Fall 2014. For three of four concentrations, we were only able to collect data (and therefore assess) on one of three outcomes. For the fourth concentration, we were able to collect data (and therefore) assess on two of three outcomes. However, given the paucity of data points collected for the assessed outcomes, we are hesitant to draw firm conclusions as to the level of achievement represented by the data. Thus, our conclusions are tentative and need to be reconsidered in light of data acquired in future assessment cycles.

Data collection for the ConLOs was complicated by the following factors: (1) The new implementation of a requirement to assess ConLO data and perform ConLO assessments, (2) the concurrent need to assess Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for graduate and undergraduate business programs which, along with the ConLO assessment requirement, placed an undue burden on faculty to assess and collect data.

The following observations can be made about the MBA ConLO data:

### *Finance*

1. The 'Evaluating' outcome scored above the satisfactory mark.
2. To date, insufficient data has been collected to make firm conclusions about any of the three finance outcomes.

### *Human Resources Management*

1. The 'Best Practices' outcome scored slightly below the 'satisfactory' mark (3.8).
2. The 'Evidence Based Management' (EBM) outcome scored right at the 'satisfactory' mark.
3. We were unable to collect data (and therefore assess) on the 'Efficacy' outcome.



4. To date, insufficient data has been collected to make firm conclusions about any of the three HRM outcomes.

#### *Marketing*

1. The 'Consumer' outcome scored slightly below the 'satisfactory' mark (3.8).
2. To date, not enough data has been collected to make firm conclusions about any of the three Marketing outcomes.
3. To date, insufficient data has been collected to make firm conclusions about any of the three Marketing outcomes.

#### *Media and Promotion*

1. The 'Consumer' outcome scored slightly below the 'satisfactory' mark (3.9).
2. To date, insufficient data has been collected to make firm conclusions about any of the three Media and Promotion outcomes.

#### **Action Items:**

1. **Reformulate MBA ConLO Data Collection Processes:** As part of our master plan to reformulate the assessment process, we will ensure that an adequate amount of data is collected each semester for each of the Concentration Learning Outcomes in each concentration. A greater extent of ConLO assessment and data collection will primarily result from a streamline PLO data collection process which will allow most faculty to concentrate their efforts on solely collecting ConLO data.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

The following next steps will be implemented during our 2016-17 academic year:

1. 2014-16 assessment results will be discussed broadly with SBM graduate faculty and administration. The main focus of the discussion will be on assessment process reformulation in response to our sole action item of needing to collect more ConLO data.
2. Assessment process reformulation is currently underway and will continue throughout the 2016-17 academic year. See "New Assessment Processes" below for an outline of the reformulated process.

The rationale for the reformulation is:

- a. To simplify and standardize the generation, collection, analysis and reporting of assessment data for faculty and administration

- b. Our current assessment process is too complex and confusing which lowers the level of faculty participation and discretionary effort in assessment efforts. We want more faculty collecting a manageable amount of assessment data.
- c. To offset the added demands of Concentration Learning Outcome (ConLO) assessment.
- d. To standardize assessment methods between ground and online programs

The goal is to produce a set of learning outcomes that:

- a. Are easy and straightforward to assess
  - b. Reflect what MBA students should know / skills they should have
  - c. Address market needs and boost employment potential
  - d. Incorporate some aspect of dealing with complexity
  - e. Are aligned to the SBM Strategic Plan
  - f. Standardize assessment methods between ground and online programs
3. We will endeavor to reflect upon and assess our own assessment processes. Faculty will be asked to provide feedback about ease of conducting assessments, whether they believe assessments are helping to improve learning outcomes, whether our rubrics adequately address the PLOs and about the quality and usefulness of the PLOs and ConLOs themselves.

## **NEW ASSESSMENT PROCESSES**

Final Implementation Target – Fall 2017

*PLO Assessment Process:*

- A new set of Program Learning Outcomes for the MBA Program meeting the requirements stated above will be developed and approved by SBM faculty and administration. We are currently in the process of reformulating these outcomes based on peer school research, advisory board recommendations and faculty input.
- Summative assessments of all (new) PLOs will be conducted exclusively in the MBA Capstone course using the capstone project as the signature assignment.
- The capstone project will co-developed by MBA faculty teaching the Capstone course and the Program Director as a standardized assignment to be used in all MBA Capstone instances (ground, online and satellite programs). The assignment will be designed to yield assessment data on all MBA PLOs.
- A rubric will be developed to assess the MBA PLOs using the signature capstone project assignment. We expect to have 2-3 dimensions per PLO.
- Faculty teaching the MBA Capstone course and second readers will independently evaluate the capstone projects based on the newly designed rubric.
- MBA Capstone instructors will coordinate the PLO assessment process in conjunction with the Program Director.
- Given our current course cycling, we expect to produce one full PLO assessment each year for the ground MBA and one full PLO assessment each year for the online MBA.

*ConLO Assessment Process:*

- The graduate faculty will revisit the current set of MBA concentration learning outcomes (ConLOs) and suggest any tweaks to be made. SBM faculty will then approve any minor revisions to the ConLOs. We expect, for the most part, to continue using the original ConLOs that were developed in 2014. Doing so lends the advantage of maintaining data continuity.
- We do not intend to create specific standardized rubrics for the ConLOs at this time. Instead, faculty will be asked to create an assessment map linking Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) to Concentration Learning Outcomes (ConLOs) using signature assignments. The maps will be approved by the Program Director. A template version of this map is shown below.

	<b>ConLO #1</b>	<b>ConLO #2</b>	<b>ConLO #3</b>
<b>CLO #1</b>		Signature Assignment #2 Evaluation Method for SA#2	
<b>CLO #2</b>	Signature Assignment #1 Evaluation Method for SA#1		
<b>CLO #3</b>			Signature Assignment #3 Evaluation Method for SA#3

- Faculty not assessing the capstone for PLOs will be asked to provide three ConLO assessments in one or more concentration elective courses, preferably covering all three concentration outcomes.
- Identical assessment methods (i.e. mappings, signature assignments and evaluation methods) will be used for all program modalities (ground, online, satellite) to ensure comparability across modalities.