

## **Assessment plan for 2022-2023: JCM Graduate Program**

*ACEJMC competencies are rotated each year for assessment. In the 2022-23 plan, **Professional ethics, critical thinking in reporting, writing, and tools/technology** receive emphasis. Several other competencies will also be assessed as part of ongoing, annual assessment instruments.*

### **Schedule for 2022-2023 assessment and reporting of results:**

- *Fall 2022: The annual assessment plan is generated during the annual fall meeting of the JCM Assessment Committee and is informed by discussion with faculty as a whole, with the JCM Graduate Committee, and with the Department Chair.*
- *Fall, Spring, Summer 2022-23: Data will be collected.*
- *Summer/Fall 2023: Data will be analyzed and the reports written.*
- *Fall 2023: Results will be reported in several ways:*
  - *Findings will be shared during the first faculty meeting in August 2023: Faculty discuss results and provide feedback.*
  - *Assessment reports will post online for faculty.*
  - *Findings will be discussed with the Department Chair: The Assessment Committee chair is on the advisory committee to the Department Chair.*
  - *The JCM Assessment Committee chair is an ex officio member of the JCM Graduate Committee and will discuss 2022-23 report results as well as plans for the 2023-24 plan during the fall meeting of this committee.*
  - *The JCM Assessment Committee meets each fall to review the previous year's results, consider faculty feedback, and finalize the upcoming year's plan.*

## **OUTCOME 1: UNDERSTAND ETHICS**

***Students will demonstrate an understanding of professional ethics in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.***

### **MEASURE 1: Internship eval: Professional ethics**

#### *Details/Description:*

The students in the 2022-23 class of the Community Journalism (Com-J) Master's Program are evaluated by internship supervisors at WVUA-TV and Alabama Public Radio on a variety of items. All items are measured on a 5-point scale (5=Excellent; 4=Very Good; 3=Good; 2=Fair; 1=Poor). One evaluation item is "Understanding of professional ethics."

Three supervisors provided ratings: the WVUA-TV news director, the WVUA digital producer, and the Alabama Public Radio news director.

#### *Expectations of achievement:*

Supervisors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for each area. Trends over recent years show either improvement or consistently acceptable scores.

#### *Schedule for data collection:*

This assessment based on evaluations by Com-J MA student internship supervisors is conducted annually, at the end of the annual summer internship. Select ACEJMC competencies such as this one receive stronger analytical focus (additional assessment) every two years, generally. Particular needs or obstacles may alter this frequency.

*Key personnel:*

The JCM assessment committee and the department's internship coordinator collaborate on internship eval measures. The internship on-site supervisors complete the evaluations for each student and submit them to the assessment committee and internship coordinator

**MEASURE 2: Professional review of M.A. culminating projects /Comparing offline & online programs, Professional ethics**

*Details/Descriptions:*

The culminating projects for students in the 2022-2023 professional track ONLINE M.A. program and OFFLINE M.A. program (in Community Journalism) are evaluated by news media professionals on a variety of aspects, listed below. These evaluations are compared between online and offline programs. This evaluation focuses on professional ethics: specifically, *sourcing claims, fairness in terms of balanced sourcing and diversity of sourcing* – aspects of the competency's definition that are manifest in the content and that therefore may be evaluated.

Media professionals provide:

- (a) Quantitative rating for several aspects of the students' work (Excellent=5, Very Good=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1), and
- (b) Qualitative feedback on these aspects and on the professional program curriculum generally.

The question asks professionals to rate student projects based on the following competencies:

- **Professional ethics** (claims sourced, fairness/balance, diversity of sourcing – focus of this assessment)
- Critical thinking in news reporting (in evaluating information)
- Writing quality

*Expectations of achievement:*

- Professionals' evaluations will average to a mean of 3.5 (Rounding to Very Good) or higher on each of the aspects of the students' work.
- Results for online and offline programs will not be substantially different.
- Qualitative comments will be largely consistent with quantitative ratings -- i.e., scores of 3.5 or higher will correspond with largely favorable qualitative comments (though we expect constructive critique as well).

*Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to use reviews by media professionals as a form of assessment each year, and offline v online comparisons will also be annual. The "ethics" competency will be measured every two years, on average.

*Key personnel:*

The JCM assessment committee develop measures and collect projects for evaluation. Selected media professionals evaluate the projects for each student and submit these ratings to the assessment committee.

**MEASURE 3: Assessment of core courses/Comparing offline & online programs, Professional ethics**

*Details/Descriptions:*

Instructors of two core courses in our MA program each assess final papers in their online-track version of the class and the offline-track version of the class. These two courses are JCM 562 Contemporary Issues in Journalism and MC 551 Communication Theory.

In each course, the instructor rates student final papers for understanding of "*professional ethics*," and ratings are compared (a) between online and offline tracks and (b) between the first half of each course and for the last half of each course, so possible improvement may be assessed and compared between offline and online.

The following criteria are used to guide assessment of the "*professional ethics*" competency. Course instructors created these criteria:

1. Accuracy in reporting/research
2. Fairness and diversity in selection of sources and viewpoints

These criteria are measured using a 5-pt scale: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Neutral, 2=Fair, 1=Poor.

*Expectations of achievement:*

-- Instructors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for both offline and online courses.

-- Neither offline nor online course shows a drop in ratings from the first half to the second half of the semester.

*Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to provide annual comparisons between core courses in the online and offline tracks. Each track includes the same core courses, which makes comparison possible. Courses and competencies assessed will likely vary somewhat each year.

*Key personnel:*

Instructors of the core courses helped conceptualize measures and gathered data. JCM assessment committee members assessed data.

## **OUTCOME 2: THINK CRITICALLY IN CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

***Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.***

### **MEASURE 1: Internship eval: Critical thinking in research/reporting**

#### *Details/Description:*

The students in the 2022-23 class of the Community Journalism (Com-J) Master's Program are evaluated by internship supervisors at WVUA-TV and Alabama Public Radio on a variety of items. All items are measured on a 5-point scale (5=Excellent; 4=Very Good; 3=Good; 2=Fair; 1=Poor). One evaluation item is "Critical thinking" and another is "Reporting."

Three supervisors provided ratings: the WVUA-TV news director, the WVUA digital producer, and the Alabama Public Radio news director.

#### *Expectations of achievement:*

Supervisors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for each area. Trends over recent years show either improvement or consistently acceptable scores.

#### *Schedule for data collection:*

This assessment based on evaluations by Com-J MA student internship supervisors is conducted annually, at the end of the annual summer internship. Select ACEJMC competencies such as this one receive stronger analytical focus (additional assessment) every two years, generally. Particular needs or obstacles may alter this frequency.

#### *Key personnel:*

The JCM assessment committee and the department's internship coordinator collaborate on internship eval measures. The internship on-site supervisors complete the evaluations for each student and submit them to the assessment committee and internship coordinator

### **MEASURE 2: Professional review of M.A. culminating projects/Comparing offline & online programs, Critical thinking in evaluating information**

#### *Details/Descriptions:*

The culminating projects for students in the 2022-2023 professional track ONLINE M.A. program and OFFLINE M.A. program (in Community Journalism) are evaluated by news media professionals on a variety of aspects, listed below. These evaluations are compared between online and offline programs. This evaluation is for critical thinking in reporting.

Media professionals provide:

- (a) Quantitative rating for several aspects of the students' work (Excellent=5, Very Good=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1), and
- (b) Qualitative feedback on these aspects and on the professional program curriculum generally.

The question asks professionals to rate student projects based on the following competencies:

- **Critical thinking in news reporting** (in evaluating information – the focus of this assessment)
- Professional ethics (claims are sourced, fairness/balance, diversity of sourcing)
- Writing quality

*Expectations of achievement:*

- Professionals' evaluations will average to a mean of 3.5 (Rounding to Very Good) or higher on each of the aspects of the students' work.
- Results for online and offline programs will not be substantially different.
- Qualitative comments will be largely consistent with quantitative ratings -- i.e., scores of 3.5 or higher will correspond with largely favorable qualitative comments (though we expect constructive critique as well).

*Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to use reviews by media professionals as a form of assessment each year, and offline v online comparisons will also be annual. The "ethics" competency will be measured every two years, on average.

*Key personnel:*

The JCM assessment committee develop measures and collect projects for evaluation. Selected media professionals evaluate the projects for each student and submit these ratings to the assessment committee.

### **MEASURE 3: Assessment of core courses/Comparing offline & online programs, Critical thinking in conducting research and evaluating information**

*Details/Descriptions:*

Instructors of two core courses in our MA program each assess final papers in their online-track version of the class and the offline-track version of the class. These two courses are JCM 562 Contemporary Issues in Journalism and MC 551 Communication Theory.

In each course, the instructor rates student final papers for "*critical thinking in conducting research and evaluating information*," and ratings are compared (a) between online and offline tracks and (b) between the first half of each course and for the last half of each course, so possible improvement may be assessed and compared between offline and online.

The following criteria are used to guide assessment of the "*critical thinking in conducting research and evaluating information*" competency. The assessment coordinator and course instructors worked together to create these criteria:

1. Critical thinking in source selection and use
2. Critical thinking in evaluating information

These criteria are measured using a 5-pt scale: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Neutral, 2=Fair, 1=Poor.

*Expectations of achievement:*

- Instructors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for both offline and online courses.
- Neither offline nor online course shows a drop in ratings from the first half to the second half of the semester.

*Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to provide annual comparisons between core courses in the online and offline tracks. Each track includes the same core courses, which makes comparison possible. Courses and competencies assessed will likely vary somewhat each year.

*Key personnel:*

Instructors of the core courses helped conceptualize measures and gathered data. JCM assessment committee members assessed data.

**OUTCOME 3: WRITE CORRECTLY AND CLEARLY**

*Students will write correctly and clearly in forms and styles that are appropriate for the professions, audiences, and purposes they serve.*

**MEASURE 1: Internship eval: Writing quality**

*Details/Description:*

The students in the 2022-23 class of the Community Journalism (Com-J) Master's Program are evaluated by internship supervisors at WVUA-TV and Alabama Public Radio on a variety of items. All items are measured on a 5-point scale (5=Excellent; 4=Very Good; 3=Good; 2=Fair; 1=Poor). One evaluation item is "Writing ability."

Three supervisors provided ratings: the WVUA-TV news director, the WVUA digital producer, and the Alabama Public Radio news director.

*Expectations of achievement:*

Supervisors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for each area. Trends over recent years show either improvement or consistently acceptable scores.

*Schedule for data collection:*

This assessment based on evaluations by Com-J MA student internship supervisors is conducted annually, at the end of the annual summer internship. Select ACEJMC competencies such as this one receive stronger analytical focus (additional assessment) every two years, generally. Particular needs or obstacles may alter this frequency.

*Key personnel:*

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**MEASURE 2: Professional review of M.A. culminating projects/Comparing offline & online programs, Writing quality**

*Details/Descriptions:*

The culminating projects for students in the 2022-2023 professional track ONLINE M.A. program and OFFLINE M.A. program (in Community Journalism) are evaluated by news media professionals on a variety of aspects, listed below. These evaluations are compared between online and offline programs. This evaluation is for *writing quality*.

Media professionals provide:

- (a) Quantitative rating for several aspects of the students' work (Excellent=5, Very Good=4, Good=3, Fair=2, Poor=1), and
- (b) Qualitative feedback on these aspects and on the professional program curriculum generally.

The question asks professionals to rate student projects based on the following competencies:

- **Writing quality** (the focus of this assessment)
- Professional ethics (claims are sourced, fairness/balance, diversity of sourcing)
- Critical thinking in news reporting (in evaluating information)

*Expectations of achievement:*

- Professionals' evaluations will average to a mean of 3.5 (Rounding to Very Good) or higher on each of the aspects of the students' work.
- Results for online and offline programs will not be substantially different.
- Qualitative comments will be largely consistent with quantitative ratings -- i.e., scores of 3.5 or higher will correspond with largely favorable qualitative comments (though we expect constructive critique as well).

*Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to use reviews by media professionals as a form of assessment each year, and offline v online comparisons will also be annual. The "writing" competency will be measured every two years, on average.

*Key personnel:*

The JCM assessment committee develop measures and collect projects for evaluation. Selected media professionals evaluate the projects for each student and submit these ratings to the assessment committee.

### **MEASURE 3: Assessment of core courses/Comparing offline & online programs, Writing quality**

#### *Details/Descriptions:*

Instructors of two core courses in our MA program each assess final papers in their online-track version of the class and the offline-track version of the class. These two courses are JCM 562 Contemporary Issues in Journalism and MC 551 Communication Theory.

In each course, the instructor rates student final papers for "*writing quality*," and ratings are compared (a) between online and offline tracks and (b) between the first half of each course and for the last half of each course, so possible improvement may be assessed and compared between offline and online.

The following criteria are used to guide assessment of the "*writing quality*" competency. The assessment coordinator and course instructors worked together to create these criteria:

1. Writes with technical correctness: grammar, punctuation, spelling
2. Writes clearly: organization, clarity and logic of meaning

These criteria are measured using a 5-pt scale: 5=Excellent, 4=Very good, 3=Neutral, 2=Fair, 1=Poor.

#### *Expectations of achievement:*

-- Instructors' quantitative ratings average 3.5 (rounding up to "very good") or higher for both offline and online courses.

-- Neither offline nor online course shows a drop in ratings from the first half to the second half of the semester.

#### *Schedule for data collection:*

We expect to provide annual comparisons between core courses in the online and offline tracks. Each track includes the same core courses, which makes comparison possible. Courses and competencies assessed will likely vary somewhat each year.

#### *Key personnel:*

Instructors of the core courses helped conceptualize measures and gathered data. JCM assessment committee members assessed data.

### **OUTCOME 4: TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY**

*Students will demonstrate the ability to apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions.*

### **MEASURE 1: Broadcast news audio production quality following professional feedback**

#### *Details/Descriptions:*

As discussed in 2022 faculty-meeting sessions on assessment findings, audio production instruction was identified as an area of concern, based on recent internship and portfolio assessments. Many of the grad students have internships (some required) with Alabama Public Radio and WVUA-TV in the Digital Media

Center, and it was decided to better integrate expertise and technology from these professional outlets with classroom instruction. This course of action was also suggested by APR and WVUA staff on internship evaluations. This action plan idea emerged from the faculty meeting and was developed by assessment committee members, in collaboration with the classroom instructor.

The plan involves an intervention in which media pros from Alabama Public Radio work with students in the Spring 2023 media production course to improve their audio production skills and knowledge. The intervention will involve students receiving additional instruction and critique from media pros (in addition to the course instructor) about the sound quality/creativity in the TV and radio stories that the students produce. Instruction will be at least partly embedded within the APR newsroom.

Direct measures: Media pros and the classroom instructor will quantitatively rate relative improvement in skills and knowledge based on early and later stages of the stories, before and after instruction and critiques. Measurement scales will be consistent with the assignment grading rubric. Course instructor and assessment committee member will collaborate on creating these quantitative measures, with consultation from the media pros. Qualitative comments will also be gathered and analyzed.

Indirect measures: Student perceptions of their understanding of the competency will be assessed via multiple scaled items in a student survey (e.g., Likert scales SD=1 to SA=5).

*Expectations of achievement:*

- It is expected that the mean evaluation of the student's final assignment will fall in the B+ range (very good), in terms of assessed understanding and quality.
- It is expected that instructors' ratings of students' final assignments will show student improvement before and after critiques, on average.
- It is expected that students' own evaluations of perceived knowledge gain will show perceived improvement in understanding the competency.

*Schedule for data collection:*

Data will be collected Spring 2023, data will be analyzed and results written up Summer 2023, and results will be reported to faculty in fall 2023.

*Key personnel:*

Assessment Committee member assigned to coordinate measurement and data collection.

JCM 502 course instructor: Help implement the assessment

Alabama Public Radio director and staff: Help implement the assessment.

Assessment committee chair: Help with analysis; write up results in report