

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.