

## **JMC Assessment Plan**

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Abilene Christian University

Adopted: September 14, 2022

The Department of Journalism and Mass Communication assesses its learning outcomes based on the Professional Values and competencies identified by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

### **Values and Competencies**

Graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and in the United States;
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and service to all people and communities.
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

### **Program Outcomes**

Those values and competencies are incorporated into several program outcomes tied to direct and indirect measures within the department curriculum. The program outcomes that are common to all majors in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication include:

- Outcome 1: Students will be able to write and edit clearly and correctly.
- Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and legal underpinnings of the industries related to mass media and their impact on society.
- Outcome 3: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how mass media are used differently around the globe and of how to communicate effectively across the cultural boundaries found within a single diverse society.
- Outcome 4: Students will be able to apply appropriate technologies to present information and images effectively and creatively.

In addition, each major has one unique program tied to the critical thinking and professional ethical principles values and competencies described above.

For the Advertising and Public Relations major, that outcome is:

- Outcome 5A: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the advertising, public relations and strategic communications professions.

For the Journalism major, that outcome is:

- Outcome 5B: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the journalism professions.

For the Multimedia major, that outcome is:

- Outcome 5C: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the multimedia professions.

For the Journalism/Multimedia with Teacher Certification major, that outcome is measured by the School of Education, which is also in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

### **The Assessment Plan**

The unit uses direct and indirect measures to assess learning, using exam questions, course projects, and internship evaluation responses.

### **Course Content-Based Measures**

To assess Outcome 1: Students will be able to write and edit clearly and correctly, learning is evaluated through the following measures in the departmental core completed by all students in all majors.

### *JMC 224 Media Writing*

A portfolio of eight major writing assignments selected from 12 completed during the semester are edited by the student, then defended during a one-on-one meeting with the instructor to defend the assertion that they have improved each item in the portfolio. The writing samples included: deadline news story, team reporting assignment for the student newspaper, professional cover letter, governmental news release, descriptive writing passages, script for an existing video, traditional editorial, and a messaging/positioning document for marketing.

### *JMC 224 Media Writing*

In preparation for creating a writing portfolio, students are required to complete a two-hour online course titled "Cleaning Your Copy" created by the Poynter Institute, a nonprofit media institute and newsroom that provides fact-checking, media literacy and journalism ethics training to students and professional journalists. Because the instrument locks out students after a certain number of errors, successful completion of the course is considered to demonstrate competence.

To assess Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and legal underpinnings of the industries related to mass media and their impact on society, learning is evaluated through the following measures in the departmental core completed by all students in all majors.

### *JMC 488 Communication Law*

Students complete a 9-12-page research paper on a topic related to communication law. Papers are evaluated through the use of a rubric that includes application of principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in a global context.

### *JMC 100 Media Issues*

From the course's first and third exams, 10 multiple-choice questions are selected as pertinent to demonstrate both student understanding of media history and the department's adherence to the multicultural standard of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

To assess Outcome 3: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of how mass media are used differently around the globe and of how to communicate effectively across the cultural boundaries found within a single diverse society, learning is evaluated through the following measures in the departmental core completed by all students in all majors.

### *JMC 302 Introduction to Race and Media*

In the one-semester-hour Introduction to Race and Media course, 25 students are required to write a memo in the role of Senior Diversity Adviser to the CEO of an imagined media corporation. Within this 1,200- to 2,000-word document, they are to provide a corporate rationale for giving higher priority to issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion – including recent events within the United States and the company’s home state – then offer specific details for how this mandate would affect each of three divisions within the wide-ranging company. Students also provided a list of 10 relevant articles, books, or other relevant resources for distribution to employees.

#### *JMC 100 Media Issues*

Students are required to select a nation, then research quantitative answers to 19 questions related to the nation's use of mass media, the extent of free speech for citizens and press, and the extent of Internet availability. Using this information, students also wrote a paragraph describing the biggest difference they observed between media practices in the United States and their selected nation, offering an opinion of whether one of the systems was “better” and why. Note: The Media Issues course, while required for all JMC majors, is also available to non-JMC majors as a menu choice to satisfy a social science requirement.

To assess Outcome 4: Students will be able to apply appropriate technologies to present information and images effectively and creatively, learning is evaluated through the following measures in the departmental core completed by all students in all majors.

#### *JMC 342 Communication Design*

Students design a digital publication that presents complex content through cohesive visual storytelling. The project emphasizes effective use of layout and imagery to communicate information creatively and clearly using industry-standard technologies. For this assessment, only the final project is evaluated based on defined design criteria; progress work is graded separately and is not included in this assessment.

#### *JMC 165 Media Maker I*

Students in Media Maker I produce a two-minute video as a final project. The assignment consists of writing a script for an on-camera opening, identifying subjects and setting up the interviews with them, recording the interviews using industry-equivalent video production equipment and editing the content into a concise and engaging package. Throughout the project students are expected to maintain standards for visual aesthetics and sound management established earlier in the semester.

For the Advertising and Public Relations major, to assess Outcome 5A: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the advertising, public relations and strategic communications professions, learning is evaluated through the following measures in courses completed by all students in the Advertising and Public Relations major.

*JMC 349 Principles of Strategic Communication*

Students produce a report, in the format of a presentation, on a research topic relevant to the advertising and public relations industry. The project is evaluated by several criteria, including quality of sources, quality of research and analysis, and quality of verbal and visual presentation. The first of the criteria evaluates a student's ability to work ethically, pursuing reputable and accurate sources to support their research points. In addition, nearly half of the assigned research topics required an analysis of related ethical issues. Further discussion on the ethical implications of various topics was held with the entire class after each presentation. The second criterion evaluates the student's ability to think critically about burgeoning topics and trends and present informative points about its impact in the industry. We plan to re-evaluate how successful the assignment is in instilling an understanding of and affording an opportunity to apply ethical principles.

*JMC 349 Principles of Strategic Communication*

Students produce a report, in the format of a presentation, on a research topic relevant to the advertising and public relations industry. The project is evaluated by several criteria, including quality of sources, quality of research and analysis, and quality of verbal and visual presentation. The first of the criteria evaluates a student's ability to work ethically, pursuing reputable and accurate sources to support their research points. In addition, nearly half of the assigned research topics required an analysis of related ethical issues. Further discussion on the ethical implications of various topics was held with the entire class after each presentation. The second criterion evaluates the student's ability to think critically about burgeoning topics and trends and present informative points about its impact in the industry. We plan to re-evaluate how successful the assignment is in instilling an understanding of and affording an opportunity to apply ethical principles.

For the Journalism major, to assess Outcome 5B: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the journalism professions, learning is evaluated through the following measures in courses completed by all students in the Journalism major.

*JMC 324 Advanced Reporting*

Students complete an in-depth writing assignment, in which critical thinking is a component of the evaluation rubric and the overall grade.

*JMC 324 Advanced Reporting*

Students complete an in-depth writing assignment, in which application of journalistic ethics is a component of the evaluation rubric.

For the Multimedia major, to assess Outcome 5C: Students will be able to apply critical thinking skills to and consider ethical issues specific to the multimedia professions, learning is evaluated through the following measures in courses completed by all students in the Multimedia major.

*JMC 361 Advanced Media Production*

Students in Advanced Media Production are tasked to create a promotional video for a non-profit client in the community. The project is evaluated by several criteria, including quality of sources, quality of research and analysis, quality of visual presentation, and students' ability to work with and portray clients in an accurate light. The first of the criteria evaluates a student's ability to work ethically, pursuing reputable and accurate sources to support the group's points. In addition, the assigned clients required an analysis of related ethical issues. The second criterion evaluated the ability to accurately portray the positives of the non-profit without excessive dramatization.

*JMC 361 Advanced Media Production*

Students in Advanced Media Production are tasked to create a promotional video for a non-profit client in the community. The project is evaluated by several criteria, including quality of sources, quality of research and analysis, quality of visual presentation, and students' ability to work with and portray clients in an accurate light. The first of the criteria evaluates a student's ability to work ethically, pursuing reputable and accurate sources to support the group's points. In addition, the assigned clients required an analysis of related ethical issues. The second criterion evaluated the ability to accurately portray the positives of the non-profit without excessive dramatization.

**Additional Indirect Measure Through Internship Presentation**

Learning outcomes are further assessed for the ethics, critical thinking, visual, writing and editing, and evaluation values and competencies through the submission and defense of a student portfolio required of all graduates of the program. Each student submits a portfolio

that includes information summarizing his or her internship experience as well as an assignment that requires students to discuss and demonstrate understanding and/or application of the ethics competencies and values. Students must write a brief essay that addresses this question:

- An ethical dilemma I grappled with was ...

Each student submits the portfolio no more than four weeks after the completion of the internship and no less than one week before a defense date scheduled each semester. The student defends the portfolio before a panel of no fewer than three faculty members on the date specified. JMC classes are canceled on defense days. The student is allowed to select an available time for the defense when the portfolio is submitted. The defense is a total of 30 minutes, typically divided into 15 minutes for the student presentation and 15 minutes for questions from the panel. The portfolio must meet professional standards with regard to design, content and presentation. The defense must meet professional presentation standards with regard to content, dress and demeanor.