

Journalism BA

Program Mission Statement

Program Mission Statement (Full Description):

The Division of Journalism at Southern Methodist University provides students with the intellectual, interpretive and practical skills they need to function as media professionals. With state-of-the-art technology and highly skilled faculty we have created an environment for hands-on teaching and learning while remaining true to our primary mission of training young journalists who can think clearly, write well and make ethical distinctions in a rapidly changing convergent media environment. We also provide opportunities to develop expertise in business journalism, fashion media and sports journalism, including an online course in sports and analytics and to pursue a global understanding of media through an expanding list of abroad opportunities, including England and France.

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?: Yes

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?: Yes

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?: Prior to AY2020-2021

Progress: Complete

1 Digital skills: Multimedia

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will demonstrate a full range of advanced multimedia skills that include video, still photography, audio, and the ability to embrace emerging forms of storytelling in mobile and social media platforms.

Step 2A: Measure :

Students produce a digital portfolio with four major components and are assessed on each. One of the components is a body of multimedia work.

A new digital rubric was adopted by the Division of Journalism faculty in the fall of 2022. The capstone course for the Division of Journalism is Digital Journalism. At the end of this course, each student submits an electronic portfolio that serves as the summary of the digital skill set acquired by the student over the course of instruction. The new digital rubric is in the project attachments.

Attached Files

[Portfolio rubric JOUR 4398.pdf](#)

[Portfolio rubric JOUR 4395.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Portfolio

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

The rubric measures a broad range of multimedia skills.

It is expected that 70% of all students will attain a level of accomplished or exemplary for multimedia skills on the digital rubric.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

In Fall 2022, for JOUR 4398 only 27% of students were assessed to be "accomplished" or above. In Spring 2023, only 19% were assessed at accomplished or above. Most students were in the "developing" range overall. However, if evaluating simply multimedia skills, 36% met that level in fall and 25% did so in the spring. The majority of students were in the "beginning" or "developing" range for multimedia.

For JOUR 4395, the division's capstone course for fashion media majors that is used to assess digital skills and multimedia, students performed at a much higher level — more than 70% were assessed to be accomplished.

Attached Files

[FJ 2022 2023 Assessments Davis.docx](#)

[CharlieScudder2022-2023Assessment.docx](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

There are several takeaways from the assessment work that highlight ways to improve. Most notably both professors identify issues with the current rubrics, which fail to address abilities in a key populations within our division. Students also would benefit from a more robust curriculum structure that prioritizes examples of student work and that leverages more intentionality in the development of multimedia skills. We are currently undergoing a curriculum overhaul, which will help to address these issues. Professors also mentioned the need to address students' personal social media and to evaluate student work beyond text to include ancillary content such as data visualization, graphics, and images.

In addition, I think moving beyond a single professor assessing the work of their class would be beneficial regarding how work is assessed, identifying issues and ways to improve, and in socializing the work of assessment.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

This is my first year as chair, and I found notable gaps in communicating, understanding, socializing assessment work. Many of those teaching courses that play a role in assessment were unaware of this work. In addition, the existing system relied only on professors who teach key courses to evaluate their students' work, and I think enlisting other department members to assess and make suggestions for improvements would help us be consistent, effective, and engaged with tis process.

To do this, I will create a small assessment working group at the start of Fall 2023 and devote time at the first and last divisional meeting to engage all members of the faculty, socialize our results, and help implement ideas for improvement.

In addition, members of the division have spent the last year reimagining the curriculum, which has not changed substantially in almost two decades. We have conducted more than two dozen interviews with industry thought leaders about what we should be teaching, challenges and deficits they see in entry-level hires, and important skills they expect entry-level hires to possess. The new curriculum will address many of the issues we see teased out in our assessment work.

Linked Documents

[Digital Rubric 2021-22.docx](#)

Step 5B: Type of Action: Curriculum revision

Program leadership involvement

Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Administrator

Committee

Faculty

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Assessment was discussed three times over the course of the 2022-2023 academic year — a recap at the start of the semester, the results of the new rubric approval, and then, at the end of the year, conversation about how to improve our assessment work.

Attached Files

[RubricUpdates.png](#)

[Post-meeting assessment rubrics.png](#)

[EOY Meeting w Assessment Note.png](#)

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

Upon review of the previous report, I see no action plans identified from previous assessment work or articulated based on the findings revealed during previous assessment. I also see many all-cap questions in the columns dedicated to action plans, and I don't know who originated those questions nor if they were ever answered. This year the division created revised rubrics, and those were approved and used this year. But based on feedback from this year, I think there is still work to be done on these areas as evidenced by feedback from professors.

Based on this and the fact that I am a new chair, I will identify new action plans (namely creating an assessment committee within the division, revising new rubrics, and using what we've identified as issues to inform our curricular revision, which should be completed and approved by Spring 2024) and begin from this point forward.

Linked Documents

[MSA Journalism BA 2021-2022.pdf](#)

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress: Complete

2 Digital Skills: Personal Branding and Social Media

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

Social media remains a critical skill for journalists and for those working in fashion media. Students must be able to develop a personal approach to how they brand their professional image and develop and post content across a range of social platforms.

Step 2A: Measure :

An evaluation by the professor of each student's uses of social media through their capstone course and as demonstrated as part of their portfolio.

Attached Files

[Portfolio rubric JOUR 4398.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Capstone project
Portfolio

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

It is expected that 70% of students will be assessed as accomplished or exemplary.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Not Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

As expressed in the professor's evaluation of student work there needs to be a renewed focus on personal social media usage. Less than 40% of one section were assessed to be accomplished, and none were assessed to be accomplished in the other section.

Attached Files

[CharlieScudder2022-2023Assessment.docx](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

We must do better. In the short term, this requires a revision of assignments, of rubrics, and of curriculum.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

1. Revise rubrics.
2. Identify ways to develop social media skills across the curriculum as we revise the curriculum.
3. Create an assessment committee to socialize and enlist buy-in from division for this work.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Additional emphasis or time on content

Additional activities or assignments
Course redesign
Curriculum revision
Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Administrator

Committee
Faculty
Staff

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This is my first year at SMU and as chair, and when reviewing former assessment work I saw not action plans. So I will be addressing this and articulating these going forward.

Linked Documents

[MSA Journalism BA 2021-2022.pdf](#)

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): In progress

Progress: Complete

3 Writing Skills: Idea Development and Critical Thinking

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

The ability to write well, develop an idea, and to think critically while reporting and creating content are the cornerstone of professional practice — especially in the era of AI, deep fakes, and misinformation.

Step 2A: Measure :

Final assignments in our upper-level writing classes will be used to evaluate this outcome.

Attached Files

[WritingRubric.docx](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Rubric

Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

It is expected that 70% of students will be assessed as accomplished or exemplary.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Of six writing classes, students in four sections were assessed to be accomplished or exemplary.

Attached Files

[AnnetteNevins Fall 2022_Assessment_Feature Writing.docx](#)

[ArterberyAssessment2022-2023.docx](#)

[Mchessher Spring JOUR 3362_Assessment_Magazine Writing.docx](#)

[FJ 2022_2023 Assessments_Davis.docx](#)

[AnnetteNevins 2022-2023_Assessments_Advanced Reporting.docx](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

Although all professors expressed positive views of their students overall ability to think critically and develop ideas, most faulted a lack of robust reading habits and a lack of reporting skill and ability to identify expert sources for their work — critical abilities to develop ideas and think critically about an issue.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

It is the overall opinion of members of the journalism division that a revised curriculum — one that adds a required editing course and a second writing course — will assist greatly in this learning outcome.

Step 5B: Type of Action: Curriculum revision

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Administrator

Committee

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Attached Files

- [August Faculty Meeting Agenda.png](#)
- [September Meeting DEI training.png](#)
- [November Meeting Agenda.png](#)
- [December Meeting Agenda.png](#)
- [February Faculty Meeting.png](#)
- [EOY Meeting Agenda.png](#)

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This is my first year at SMU and as chair. The previous assessment work identified no plans of actions.

Linked Documents

- [MSA Journalism BA 2021-2022.pdf](#)

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): In progress

Progress: Complete

4 Writing Skills: Style and Usage

Step 1C: PLO Statement (Full Description):

All media outlets use some type of style guide, and for most of them, it is the Associated Press Guide. If you work in media, as a journalist, a content creator, an editor, or a social media manager, it is critical that you know grammar, style, punctuation, and because we value writing well, we value students' ability to apply the rules of writing well.

Step 2A: Measure :

For this outcome, we use the final writing assignments in our advanced writing courses for assessment purposes.

Attached Files

- [Writing Rubric.docx](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply): Rubric

Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

It is expected that 70% of students will be assessed as accomplished or exemplary.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Partially Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Across five sections of advanced writing courses (advanced reporting, feature writing, magazine writing, and fashion journalism), students in four of the six classes were assessed to be accomplished or exemplary.

Attached Files

- [Annette Nevins 2022-2023 Assessments Advanced Reporting.docx](#)
- [Annette Nevins Fall 2022 Assessment Feature Writing.docx](#)
- [Mchessher Spring JOUR 3362 Assessment Magazine Writing.docx](#)
- [FJ 2022 2023 Assessments Davis.docx](#)
- [Arterbery Assessment 2022-2023.docx](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

In our current curriculum we have one one-credit class that targets these skills through the use of style quizzes. Research demonstrates that students acquire style, grammar, and punctuation more effectively through application of those rules in context. We are revising our curriculum to include a three-credit editing course, which will better develop these skills.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

Revision of curriculum to create a course that more effectively develops these abilities.

Step 5B: Type of Action: New course developed/proposed

Curriculum revision

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Administrator

Committee

Faculty

Staff

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue :

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This is my first year at SMU and my first year as chair. The previous assessment plan included no plans for action.

Linked Documents

- [MSA Journalism BA 2021-2022.pdf](#)

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): In progress

Progress: Complete

1 Diversity & Inclusivity

Step 1C: PO Statement (Full Description):

The division has responded to initiatives by the university and the Meadows School of the Arts by seeking to increase the percentage of students of color among majors in Journalism and Fashion Media. In addition, news media organizations have for some years made attempts to increase diversity among professional journalists.

Step 2A: Measure :

The division's Diversity Committee engages in visits to high schools in Dallas and Houston areas to recruit students. Recruiting also occurs in conjunction with the Meadows School in community colleges in North Texas, with scholarship funding committed to help recruit those students. The division will coordinate with Meadows School of the Arts recruiting staff as well as university recruiting to continue this initiative.

Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?: Indirect

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

The division's goal is to pursue the school's goal as stated: "Increase under-represented minorities* in majors, by either a three-year average or the most recent year with the goal of achieving 40% diversity, as per the 2019 federal census data. *Includes Asian, African American, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islander, and more than one race/ethnicity. Does not include international students."

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?: Not Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

The latest data provided by Meadows document an ongoing downward trend in terms of the number of BIPOC students in the journalism division in the last three years — from 24% in 2020 to 21% in 2021 and 22% in 2022. See uploaded charts documenting divisional numbers and Meadows overall. Additionally, drop, fail and withdraw data for journalism also demonstrate one course — JOUR 2103 Writing and Editing Law, which is a prerequisite for journalism and fashion media majors — as particularly challenging for first-gen and BIPOC students.

Attached Files

- [Total MSA enrollment.png](#)

[UGBipocEnrollment.png](#)

[Ethicity&GenderMSAdivisions.png](#)

[DFW Data JOUR 2022 Dashboard.pdf](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results :

The simple and accurate interpretation of these results is that we have work to do. And, as a new chair, I identified improving the diversity and inclusivity of our division as one of my top goals. I devoted several faculty meetings to teach-ins regarding diversity and inclusivity for the classroom and for searches. We created a strategic partnership with Forbes Magazine to launch an internship for BIPOC students that seeks to diversity business journalism and placed two students from the division for this ongoing commitment. We continued to focus on work with local high schools and created a special partnership with Duncanville High School and developed a writing workshop, which we offered there. We also launched the division's (and university's) first chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists.

But as evidenced by data connected to JOUR 2103, our main diversity work has been evaluating and reimagining our curriculum. We leaned into this question: Does the data provide an opportunity to do something different, approach this course in a new way? And our answer was to not only overhaul that course but also overhaul our entire curriculum, which will include the requirement of all journalism students to take Race, Gender and the Media.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan) :

Our main action item will be the completion of the revision of our curriculum and secure approval by Spring 2024 — work that will address D,F and W issues and that will require a newly designed Race, Gender and the Media for all students.

Continue outreach to local high schools and community colleges with the goal of providing at least three workshops for students from Duncanville and at least one program or visit to a community college.

Relaunch Punto, our Spanish-language broadcast program during 2023-2024 school year.

Bring at least two BIPOC speakers to campus.

Empower and expand division's Diversity Committee and leverage their work to create at least two community events this school year along with regular presentations on their work during monthly faculty meetings.

Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply): Administrator

Committee

Faculty

Staff

Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue :

Attached you'll find several of agenda for our divisional meetings. The September meeting was devoted to diversity training and all members of our two searches participated in Searching Intelligently training. Also, when agenda items reference Performance Based Funding, it's important to note that we picked "diversity" as our measure for this opportunity. So when you see that referenced on an agenda know that is a conversation around DEI (as is agenda items that reference curriculum working group, which is addressing DFW issues and the requirement of Race, Gender and Media).

Attached Files

[August Faculty Meeting Agenda.png](#)

[February Faculty Meeting.png](#)

[DecemberMeetingAgenda.png](#)

[EOY Meeting Agenda.png](#)

[SeptemberMeetingDEItraining.png](#)

[NovemberMeetingAgenda.png](#)

Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This is my first year as chair, and, it seems as though most diversity work previously centered on engagement with high schools, community colleges and the only measure was the number of BIPOC students. As a new chair who identified diversity work as one of her four primary goals in the first faculty meeting, I see a huge opportunity to improve based on the action items identified.

Linked Documents

[Journalism diversity 2021.png](#)

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s): Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress: Complete