

Bergen Community College

ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Assessment Period: 2015-2017

Department/Program: Social Sciences/Economics

Department Chair: Dr. Jacqueline Behn

Department Assessment Liaison: Dr. Mi Na Ahn

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❖ **Program Description or mission/outcome statement of the Department/Program:**

The Associate in Arts (AA) Degree, Economics Option, is designed to present students with introductory & intermediate level courses to build a solid foundation in economic thinking and reasoning as well as understanding of fundamental concepts of microeconomics and macroeconomics theory before students transfer to a four-year institution to complete their bachelor degree. The program promotes technical communication skills, analytical thinking, and problem solving through theoretical and practical learning methods. Students explore topics such as inflation, recession, unemployment, money & banking, fiscal & monetary policies, exchange rate movements, externalities & public goods as well as behavior of firms in pricing of products/resources and determining quantity of outputs/factors of production in different market environments.

❖ **Program Learning Outcomes:**

Students will

- Demonstrate critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate the way in which economists examine the real world to understand current events.
- State and support their own views on economic issues addressed in their courses, in written, oral, and graphical forms, with logical rigor and clarity.
- Understand the importance as well as the limitations of empirical evidence in evaluating the validity of economic models.
- Evaluate and utilize economic data found on the Internet and other sources.
- Demonstrate problem-solving and quantitative reasoning skills to address economic or policy problems.
- Demonstrate an understanding of major economic events that have shape determine the course of the economic history.

SEMESTER 1: CREATING PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT PLAN

1. Program Learning Outcome(s) to be assessed (from the above section):

State and support their own views on economic issues addressed in their courses, in written, oral, and graphical forms, with logical rigor and clarity.

2. Means of Assessment:

Fiscal and monetary policies are the two primary tools used in macroeconomics to fine-tune the economic activity of a nation. Therefore, students will be assessed in all sections of principles of macroeconomics (ECO-101) to determine whether they can; (i) critically explain the purposes and apply the appropriate tools of fiscal policy in response to a hypothetical economic problem as well as discuss the problems that governments may encounter in enacting & applying fiscal policy; (ii) critically explain the goals and apply the appropriate tools of monetary policy in response to a hypothetical economic problem as well as discuss the effectiveness and shortcomings of monetary policy implemented by the central bank; and lastly (iii) communicate their knowledge of both policies with clarity in a written format.

- **Feedback from Dean**

SEMESTER 2: DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT TOOL (s) and TIMELINE

3A. Describe or attach assessment tool (s), including sources of data, timeline for data collection and how data will be analyzed.

**RUBRIC FOR CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS
In Principles of Macroeconomics (ECO-101)
2015-2017**

Points Possible		Points Awarded
8	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>fiscal</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that governments may encounter in enacting & applying fiscal policy at a proficient level (90% accuracy or above).	
6	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>fiscal</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that governments may encounter in enacting & applying fiscal policy at a moderate (passing) level (80-89% accuracy).	
4	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>fiscal</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that governments may encounter in enacting & applying fiscal policy at a less than moderate (passing) level (70-79% accuracy).	
2	Student is NOT able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>fiscal</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that governments may encounter in enacting & applying fiscal policy at an adequate (passing) level (below 70% accuracy).	

Points Possible		Points Awarded
8	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>monetary</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that central banks may encounter in enacting & applying monetary policy at a proficient level (90% accuracy or above).	
6	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>monetary</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that central banks may encounter in enacting & applying monetary policy at a moderate (passing) level (80-89% accuracy).	
4	Student is able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>monetary</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that central banks may encounter in enacting & applying monetary policy at a less than moderate (passing) level (70-79% accuracy).	

2	Student is NOT able to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of <i>monetary</i> policy as well as discuss the problems that central banks may encounter in enacting & applying monetary policy at an adequate (passing) level (below 70% accuracy).	
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Points Possible		Points Awarded
4	In their attempt to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of the two policies, fiscal and monetary, the student demonstrates writing skills at a proficient level (90% accuracy or above).	
3	In their attempt to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of the two policies, fiscal and monetary, the student demonstrates writing skills at a moderate (passing) level (80-89% accuracy).	
2	In their attempt to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of the two policies, fiscal and monetary, the student demonstrates writing skills at a less than adequate (passing) level (70-79% accuracy).	
1	In their attempt to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of the two policies, fiscal and monetary, the student demonstrates writing skills that are NOT at an adequate (passing) level (below 70% accuracy).	

A score of 10 is deemed as an acceptable score for this assessment.

The following essay question will be used for the assessment purposes at the end of Fall 2016 semester. Students will be limited to utilize the front and back of a single sheet of paper.

STUDENT NAME:

Suppose the economy has entered the recessionary phase of the business cycle. Critically evaluate and explain the appropriate policy that the federal government as well as the central bank of the United States should implement in order to end the recession. Consider **thoroughly the purposes, tool, and limitations** of the appropriate policies that should be implemented by the government and the Federal Reserve, central bank of the United States. Please restrict your response to the front and back of this piece of paper and writing skills do count.

3B. Desired results faculty would like to see.

We wish to see our students perform at least at an adequate level (70-79% accuracy) in explaining the purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal policy as well as monetary policy in addition to discussing the problems that the federal government and the central bank may encounter while implementing such policies.

- **Feedback from CIE:**

SEMESTER 3: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

4. Summary of Results (attach aggregated data table, survey tool, etc., to support the summary)

The following organizational letter to the participating faculty was forwarded several times during the Fall 2016 semester;

Dear Economics Discipline Faculty Members,

This semester (Fall 2016) the economics discipline has the responsibility of doing an outcomes assessment project for our department.

As you know, two of the most important topics in our ECO-101 Principles of Macroeconomics course are the rigorous understanding of fiscal and monetary policies. Therefore, we would like to see if our students have a good knowledge of these two policies, whether they can apply them to a given hypothetical economic scenario, and whether they can do this while demonstrating reasonably effective writing skills. They would do all of this in **all sections of ECO-101** (online and face-to-face).

As some of our sections are online and some in the classroom, you have the choice of administering the essay in the classroom or permitting students to write their answers at home. Please remember that students are limited to two pages only. If two pieces of papers are used then please staple the pages together. We would **not** identify the students or the faculty members, as this would be an analysis of how effectively we, the faculty, part-time and full-time alike, are doing this part of our job (teaching fiscal & monetary policy) as a department.

The format of the document, as it currently appears, will enable us to cut off the top page on each essay to hide the student and section number.

If you choose to make the essay a graded activity for your class, you will need to make a copy for the assessment that does not include your comments or the grade that you have assigned to the essay for the students.

When you have collected all of the essays at the end of the semester, please put them in an interoffice envelop as soon as possible and kindly forward them to my attention; Takvor Mutafoglu, Social Sciences, A-306, Paramus Campus.

If you have any questions at all regarding the process please do not hesitate to contact me at tmutafoglu@bergen.edu.

Thank you very much for your assistance in advance.

Best Wishes,
Takvor Mutafoglu, Ph.D.

Since the essays were administered in the latter portion of the Fall 2016 semester, including the last class, faculty were asked to submit their student essays by the end of the semester or upon their return to College after the winter break. As a result, some of those essays have been submitted, but others have not and will be submitted in the latter part of January.

The assessment device should indicate how well the students;

- Know the fiscal & monetary policies
- Apply those policies
- Understand the limitations of those policies
- Can communicate in written form their knowledge of those policies

The essays – without any reference to the identity of the students or their professors – will be scored in February and results of the assessment will be presented in the latter part of the Spring 2017 semester.

5. Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Feedback from Dean:**

SEMESTER 4: CLOSING THE LOOP AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

6. Use of Results:

The 2015-2017 Economics discipline assessment project has been completed.

The project focused on all sections of ECO-101, Principles of Macroeconomics, that were taught during the Fall 2016 semester – online & face-to-face, at any of the College’s several campuses. Students in 20 sections of the course, taught by 7 different instructors, two of whom were full-time faculty members, participated in the project. There were a total of 267 student submissions.

As has been noted in detail elsewhere in this project, faculty members gave their students a two page essay assignment that asked students to explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal and monetary policies in response to an economic contraction. The essays were collected during the period between the end of the fall semester in late December and early February. The essays had no information on them about the names of faculty members and/or students who participated in the activity.

Thirty percent of the essays were randomly selected for the purposes of this study and essays from all sections were considered. Each of the two full-time faculty members participated in the evaluation of the essays on three criteria: (i) how well did the student explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal policy, (ii) how well did the student explain the purposes, tools, and limitations of monetary policy, (iii) and how effectively did the students communicate their thoughts (writing skills)?

The statistical results of the assessment appear below. The maximum point a students could earn was eight points for the explanation of the purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal policy, eight points for the explanation of the purposes, tools, and limitations of monetary policy, and finally four points for writing skills. Students needed to earn a grade of 4 points each for the explanation of purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal and monetary policies and 2 points for writing skills to meet the minimal standards expected at the start of the project.

	Explain purposes, tools, & limitations of fiscal policy	Explain purposes, tools, & limitations of monetary policy	Writing skills	Total Score
Average Scores	4.73	4.69	2.96	12.37

What does the data tell us?

1. Total scores: Students needed a score of 10.00 to pass this test (a minimum grade of seventy percent). The average for all the students who participated in the assessment activity was, in fact, above that minimum required grade. The total score was 12.37.
2. Scores for each of the three rubric categories
 - a. Explain purposes, tools, & limitations of fiscal policy: students were relatively comfortable in explaining the purposes, tools, and limitations of fiscal policy to an economic contraction. The response of the federal government to the Great Recession, during 2007-2009, was mentioned in several essays submitted by the students. It is clear that faculty, both full-time and part-time, spent a considerable amount of time discussing the reaction of the U.S. government to the longest recession experienced since World War II.
 - b. Explain purposes, tools, & limitations of monetary policy: students were also relatively comfortable in explaining the purposes, tools, & limitations of monetary policy to an economic contraction. The conventional as well as the unconventional response of the Federal Reserve, the central bank of the United States, to the Great Recession, experienced from December 2007 to June 2009, was indicated in several essays evaluated. It is, once again, clear that faculty, both full-time & part-time, spent a substantial amount of time discussing the reaction of the U.S. central bank to the longest recession experienced since World War II.
 - c. Writing skills: our hypothesis was that when students were told that writing skills would count on an academic activity then most students would write reasonably well. The earned scores for writing skills were well above the minimal passing score of 2.00. In fact, it was 2.96.
3. What will we do differently as a result of the assessment activity? As the average score achieved on the assessment activity for all students in all sections was a passing grade, there is no urgency to make changes in this course. However, there were a couple of interesting observations while evaluating the submitted student essays and perhaps they need to be considered before the next assessment cycle begins.
 - a. Some students had chosen to write extensively about only one of the policies in question rather than both of the policies despite the fact that the essay question had strongly emphasized to students to evaluate both policies. Perhaps the essay question should be revisited and revised in a way so that the objective of the activity becomes even clearer to students.

b. Some students had chosen to complement their explanations with graphical expressions used in the classroom. Although the use of graphics were not required in the activity, it is always a pleasure to see students addressing economics issues with graphical forms. Perhaps future assessment activities should require the use of graphics in addition to written explanations.

▪ **Feedback from CIE:**