

Assessment Report – Business and Information Technology Program 2014

Program Objectives:

	Skills	Assessment Method
1	Students identify business requirements and evaluate technology solutions, as well as their effect on businesses processes and on organizational goals and objectives.	Business case analyses in BUIS 477
2	Students use software applications and productivity tools for analysis, communication and collaboration and to create professionally appropriate work products.	Team project in BUIS 398
3	Students evaluate and analyze the organizational, political, legal, ethical and global ramifications of managing information, technology and IT professionals, including those related to IT security and privacy.	Business case analyses in BUIS 477; team research project
4	Students build and articulate a business case incorporating concepts for strategy, operational excellence, value analysis and benefit realization.	Business case analyses in BUIS 477
5	Students identify and apply common methods and tools used to manage IS/IT projects, processes and professionals.	Team project in BUIS 398
6	Students demonstrate interpersonal, communication and time management skills as members of teams, including virtual teams.	Team project in BUIS 398
7	Students demonstrate awareness that globalization requires a willingness to consider multiple perspectives and adjust behavior to accommodate cultural differences.	n/a

Industry Involvement in Setting Program Objectives:

The Business and Information Technology program resulted from collaboration between two academic departments at Framingham State University, the Department of Economics and Business Administration, and the Computer Science department. An industry advisory board was formed in 2008 to shape the program's objectives and content. The board includes managers and executives from local businesses that provide or use information technology services. Participating companies include Akamai, All9s, Bose, Citizen's Bank, CSC, EMC, Gurnet Consulting and TJX. Board members reviewed and revised the program objectives five years ago and plan to review them again this year. Board members observe student project presentations in the BUIS 398 course and provide feedback to students.

Description of BUIS 398 Team Project:

Assessment Report – Business and Information Technology Program 2014

In BUIS 398, students work in small teams to provide technology-related services to a local small business. Projects have included website design or improvements, plans for using social media for marketing, and evaluating business software applications. A random number generator is used to identify team leaders, who are responsible for selecting team members based on skill requirements. Each student completes a skill self-assessment, which team leaders use to select team members. Team selection is done by written ballots and team leaders are asked to not share information about whom they selected first or last.

We invite small business owners in nearby Natick to apply for advice from student teams. Students prepare emails and interview questions for their initial meeting with clients. The teams present their proposals in formal presentations, which business advisory board members attend. At the end of the semester, teams present their final work products in a second presentation. Their clients provide feedback at both presentations.

Assessment Observations and Plans for Improving Outcomes:

Student projects for actual clients – Business clients are overwhelmingly positive about student work and report benefits from student perspectives and energy. Several note that students need more direction in preparing for the initial client interview. Business advisory board members noted some areas for improvement in presentation content, skills and materials.

As a result of feedback, the course was modified to provide more time for rehearsal and faculty review of the first student presentation. In addition, students review client and advisory board feedback from previous years to design the presentation feedback form. For next year, faculty will seek industry advisory board assistance in preparing students for client interviews.

Business case analyses – Until last year, the business case analyses in BUIS 477 were completed as team assignments, which did not work well as an assessment of student skills. The results were uneven and difficult to interpret. Last year we changed the business case analysis to an individual assignment and several problems in critical thinking were immediately apparent. About 10% of the students argued an extreme position which cannot be supported by the evidence and 15% failed to choose an alternative or make a recommendation. About 10% concluded with recommendations which are not consistent with their initial stated position.

Faculty discussed these results with faculty in the English department. English faculty noted that the General Education writing course emphasizes expressive writing, which is not necessarily consistent with the approach needed for analytical writing. Faculty who teach BUIS 398 and BUIS 477 now discuss these different approaches with students and require students to read articles about writing logical arguments. Two additional changes were made

Assessment Report – Business and Information Technology Program 2014

related to business case analysis. Business case analysis is now introduced in BUIS 398, which precedes BUIS 477, as an individual written assignment. Students are instructed to focus on only three goals for the first case, which are: (1) avoid extreme positions and language, (2) make a recommendation or decision and (3) ensure the recommendations are internally consistent. The first assignment is not graded for use of evidence or strength of support for the position. Student performance on the first business case was the same as in previous years, but most students remedied these problems in their second case analyses.

Reuse of Team Products – Some team assignments, such as creating team charters and peer evaluation criteria, are required in both BUIS 398 and BUIS 477. Many students assume it is appropriate to reuse these materials, even when the team members are not the same in both cases. Faculty now discuss assumptions about team assignment authorship and reuse as part of the assignment requirements.

Plans for Improving Process:

Collaboration among faculty teaching different courses in the program must be strengthened. A number of faculty from both departments participate in the industry advisory board meetings and meet biweekly to review program effectiveness. This group needs to explore more effective options to shepherd recommendations from the subcommittee to both departments. Some recommendations for additions to the program content have yet to be implemented. Objectives related to virtual teams and global awareness need to be addressed in the program.