



**Economics Department
Spring 2016 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) Assessment
Economics 2 (Principles of Macroeconomics)**

Learning Outcome Statement: In the Spring 2016 semester the Economics Department engaged in an in-depth exploration of the following course-level student learning outcome in Economics 2 (Principles of Macroeconomics):

- Students will identify the three major macroeconomic goals.

This course-level learning outcome supports the following Economics Department program-level outcome:

- Students will identify the three macroeconomic goals and determine economic policies to achieve them.

Means of Assessment and Criteria: In support of the identified student learning outcome, Economics Department faculty developed the following means of assessment and criteria:

- An assessment instrument will be administered to students enrolled in Principles of Macroeconomics (ECON-2) sections taught by full-time and part-time faculty. Assessment will occur approximately one week before final exams (approx. February 22nd for Fast Track 1 sections and May 2nd for all other sections). At the end of ECON-2, 60% of assessed students will generate a score of 60% or higher on the assessment instrument.

In the Fall 2015 semester Economics Department faculty identified five questions that demonstrated acquisition of the stated student learning outcome. With the support of the Office of Institutional Research, the Economics Department distributed a scannable assessment form to all students enrolled in face-to-face ECON-2 courses during the Spring 2016 semester. The form identified student responses to the five assessment items. A companion online form was also developed and made accessible to students in one online ECON-2 section, the results of which appear in a separate report.

Consistent with the stated means of assessment, assessment forms were disseminated in one Fast Track 1 ECON-2 section by February 29th and six full-term ECON-2 sections by May 9th, reaching a potential audience of 207 students. In total, 178 valid assessment forms were returned (an 86.0% response rate), allowing researchers the ability to generalize findings with a 95% confidence level (confidence interval ± 2.76).

Summary of Evidence: Table 1 provides a frequencies distribution of the number of items answered correctly out of a total of five items. The mean number of items answered correctly by students was 4.12, the median 4.00, and the mode 5.00. In examining the range of correct responses, 42.1% of students were able to identify all (100%) of the questions correctly; 78.6% were able to identify four or more of the questions correctly (80.0%); and 93.8% were able to correctly identify three or more questions (60.0%).

Table 1

Number of Questions Answered Correctly By Respondents	Post Assessment		
	Number	Percent	Cum. %
All Five Questions Answered Correctly (100.0%)	75	42.1	42.1
Four Questions Answered Correctly (80.0%)	65	36.5	78.6
Three Questions Answered Correctly (60.0%)	27	15.2	93.8
Two Questions Answered Correctly (40.0%)	8	4.5	98.3
One Question Answered Correctly (20.0%)	2	1.1	99.4
No Questions Answered Correctly (0.0%)	1	0.6	100.0
Mean Number of Items Answered Correctly	4.12		

As Table 1 indicates, evidence collected in ECON-2 sections in the Spring 2016 semester indicates that students far exceeded the thresholds established for the stated course-level learning outcome (i.e., 93.8% of assessed students were able to correctly answer at least 60% of assessment instrument items).

Additional analyses were conducted for each assessment item. For each of the five assessment questions that demonstrated acquisition of the stated student learning outcomes, Table 2 identifies the number and percentage of students who identified the correct response.

Table 2

#	Assessment Question	Correct Responses	
		N	%
1	Which of the following is a macroeconomic topic? (correct response: How to increase jobs and employment opportunities for people nationwide)	169	94.9
2	Which of the following is one of the three major macroeconomic goals? (correct response: low unemployment)	164	92.1
3	Which of the following is a macroeconomic topic related to one or more of the three major macroeconomic goals? (correct response: the Federal Reserve increase the money supply in an effort to reduce interest rates and real GDP)	166	93.3
4	If real GDP in the U.S. fell for two consecutive quarters, how might this impact the three major macroeconomic goals? (correct response: unemployment usually increases when GDP falls)	120	67.4
5	If nationwide total spending in the U.S. (U.S. Aggregate Demand) were to decrease by 20%, which of the following would economists expect to occur? (correct response: all of the following)	115	64.6

Of interest to Economics Department faculty was the distribution of incorrect responses to each assessment question. Tables 3 through 7 provide the individual responses to each assessment question (correct responses are highlighted in yellow).

Table 3

Q1	Which of the following is a macroeconomic topic?	Responses	
		N	%
a	How to run a business and earn a profit	3	1.7
b	How to reduce abuse by companies with monopoly power	5	2.8
c	How to retire at age 50 with a million dollars	0	0.0
d	How to increase jobs and employment opportunities for people nationwide	169	95.5
e	how to prevent nearby companies from polluting local groundwater	0	0.0

Table 4

Q2	Which of the following is one of the three major macroeconomic goals?	Responses	
		N	%
a	better public safety	3	1.7
b	high rates of home ownership	1	0.6
c	low unemployment	164	92.7
d	more loans for small business owners	4	2.3
e	reducing international trade to keep out cheap foreign goods	5	2.8

Table 5

Q3	Which of the following is a macroeconomic topic related to one or more of the three major macroeconomic goals?	Responses	
		N	%
a	all of the following	8	4.5
b	Monsanto sues farmers for failure to pay Monsanto for genetically engineered crops	0	0.0
c	the Federal Reserve increases the money supply in an effort to reduce interest rates and real GDP	166	93.8
d	a local company contaminates the groundwater	2	1.1
e	pensions for police, fire fighters, and teachers are reduced in California	1	0.6

Table 6

Q4	If real GDP in the U.S. fell for two consecutive quarters, how might this impact the three major macroeconomic goals?	Responses	
		N	%
a	all of the following	29	16.4
b	inflation will always increase when GDP falls	21	11.9
c	unemployment usually increases when GDP falls	120	67.8
d	businesses will typically increase investment and hire more workers when GDP falls	3	1.7
e	people usually increase their spending to help fuel the economy	4	2.3

Table 7

Q5	If nationwide total spending in the U.S. (U.S. Aggregate Demand) were to decrease by 20%, which of the following would economists expect to occur?	Responses	
		N	%
a	all of the following	115	66.9
b	lower household income in the U.S.	5	2.9
c	higher unemployment rate in the U.S.	17	9.9
d	lower levels of business investment in U.S.	14	8.1
e	lower real GDP in the U.S.	21	12.2

Use of Results for Planning:

As Table 2 indicates, all of the five assessment items were correctly identified by greater than 60% of Economics 2 students. ***In regard to questions #1, #2, and #3, Economics Department faculty may want to consider: a) whether question response options sufficiently challenge students to reflect acquisition of the learning outcomes; and/or b) examining other course-level learning outcomes if future assessments suggest that the currently identified learning outcome criteria has been met.***

Continuous Improvement:

Economics Department faculty initiated formal assessment of program- and course-level learning outcomes in the Fall 2010 semester. After discussing learning outcomes findings at their August 2011 department meeting, Economics Department faculty developed new program- and course-level learning outcomes to assess starting in the Fall 2011 semester. Assessment of these learning outcomes continued through the Spring 2013 semester. Economic Department faculty re-examined learning outcomes and associated means of assessment at their Fall 2013 departmental flex meeting and developed new learning outcomes and assessment questions, which ran through two cycles prior to assessment items being updated for Fall 2014. After two examinations of the findings related to these revised questions, the Economics Department elected to examine a different student learning outcome for ECON-2 beginning in the Fall 2015 semester. The current research brief reports the second examination of findings related to this newly examined SLO. The Economics Department learning outcomes assessment process meets the sustainable continuous quality improvement criteria established by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), namely:

- Student learning outcomes and assessment are ongoing, systematic and used for continuous quality improvement.
- Dialogue about student learning is ongoing, pervasive and robust.
- Evaluation of student learning outcomes processes occurs.
- Student learning improvement is a visible priority in all practices and structures.
- Learning outcomes are specifically linked to program review.