

Agricultural Business BS -  
Assessment Plan  
Summary

Agricultural Business BS

1-Develop Professional Marketplace Skills

Goal Description:

Students earning a BS in Agribusiness will develop the skills necessary to seek initial job placement as they begin their professional careers.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

1-Development of Professional Marketplace Skills

Learning Objective Description:

Students completing the BS in Agribusiness will demonstrate the skills necessary to compete in the professional marketplace.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

1-AGRI 4120- Professional Employment Portfolio

Indicator Description:

All students seeking a degree in Agribusiness are required to complete AGRI 4120. The course addresses essential skills necessary for job placement in the work force - resume preparation, interview skills, technical writing skills and employment opportunities. Faculty will review student assignments compiled into a portfolio and assess student performance using a faculty-developed rubric.

Attached Files

[AGRI 4120 Portfolio Rubric Matrix](#)

Criterion Description:

Faculty evaluations expect that at least 70% of the Agribusiness students enrolled in AGRI 4120 will perform at an acceptable level and score a 3 (meets expectations) or higher on a scale of 1-5.

Findings Description:

The instructor of the course chose to report results based on an average score, rather than the proportion of students achieving a 3 or greater on the portfolio this year. We will likely return to the proportion measurement in future assessments.

On average, Agribusiness students (n=30) scored 3.45/5.0 on the standardized rubric. The portfolio included a cover letter, resume, reference page, letters of recommendation and an employment application. Generally, Agribusiness students performed comparably to previous semesters. However, there is room for improvement.

Strengths:

- Resumes are well done
- Applications and cover letters are organized and neatly completed

Weaknesses:

- Alignment issues between cover letter, resume, listed references and letters of recommendation need correction

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

1- Development of Marketplace Skills

Action Description:

Students are exceeding expectation, but there is room for improvement. Recommendations include to 1) place more attention in class on stressing the importance of “Alignment” in the portfolio and 2) inclusion in the course packet of the importance of selecting references.

2-Framework to Encourage Productive Discussions in Agricultural and Food Policy

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

2-Development of Framework to Encourage Productive Discussions in Agricultural and Food Policy

Learning Objective Description:

Students will take their exposure to agricultural and food policy gained in AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs, to develop a framework encouraging productive discussions with other segments of society pressing for changes in agricultural policy, in its broadest sense.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

2-AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs, Framework for Productive Discussion

Indicator Description:

All students enrolled in the Agribusiness program as majors must complete AGBU 4386 (some students pursuing the minor in Agribusiness choose to take the course) in their senior year. AGBU 4386 focuses on concepts related to agricultural and food policy, both domestically and internationally. In the course, students are exposed to 1) global food inequities and societal desires to correct them, including trade, 2) the historical progression of U.S. agricultural policy including major legislation and organizational development and 3) the use of economic principles to make informed decisions and recommendations about agricultural policy and programs in a political environment. Evaluation of these competencies is accomplished by reflective writing assignments, analysis/evaluation assignments and a policy paper.

From among the various writing assignments, the policy papers produced by students will be scored using a writing rubric developed at Oklahoma State University. The rubric is based on a 1-5 scale with a 3 (meets expectation), 4 (exceeds expectation) and 5 (far exceeds expectation).

The policy paper is on a topic chosen by the student from the course material. Students are encouraged to identify the topic (more narrowly defined the better) in an introductory statement followed by a brief objective history (i.e, synopsis) of the topic or issue. They are then asked to carefully outline the opposing views with supportive evidence, the view they support and why they support this position. A final summary paragraph is expected. This paper is 1500-1750 words in length excluding word-count on the literature cited page. A minimum of five high quality peer-reviewed sources are required with proper citations using the [http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/ajae/for\\_authors/guide.pdf](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/ajae/for_authors/guide.pdf). Internal citations in the narrative must be documented using the Harvard style. Failure to include a literature cited page and/or internal citations will result in a grade of zero (0). If the student fails to meet the minimum number of peer-reviewed sources expected, the highest grade they can earn on the assignment is a 3.

Additionally, students are asked to submit a final reflection addressing the most significant concept learned in this class during the semester and why they consider it so. This document is reviewed to see if a common/dominant theme or themes were identified by students that can be related back to the stated learning competencies.

Attached Files  
[OSU Writing Rubric](#)

**Criterion Description:**  
Agribusiness faculty agree that at least 80% of students enrolled in AGBU 4386 will perform at a level of 3 (meets expectation) and that 50% of students will achieve a score of at least 4 (exceeds expectation) or higher at assessment of the policy paper described in the indicator description.

Agribusiness faculty will also review the final reflection submitted by students. The most significant self-reported learning by each student will be categorized to determine if a dominant theme or themes emerge that can be tied back to one of the major learning competencies.

**Findings Description:**  
This is the initial assessment of a new goal established by the Agribusiness faculty for students enrolled in AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs. A review of results from all three semesters that the course was taught in 2016-17, only 52% of students (N=66) scored a 3 (meets expectation). Out of this 52%, approximately 50% scored a 4 (exceeds expectation). Therefore, there is considerable room for improvement.

Students were asked to submit a final written reflection identifying the most significant thing they learned in the course. Responses were highly varied among students. Yet, the overall observation was the generally thoughtful nature in how students approached the concept they chose, indicative of the development of a more balanced view and resulting critical analysis.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

2-AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs, Framework for Productive Discussion

**Action Description:**  
Since this is the initial assessment of a new goal established by the Agribusiness faculty for students enrolled in AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs, findings will be evaluated by the faculty to determine next steps. Given that students failed to perform at the expected levels has several possible explanations including lack of technical writing preparation (even though these are senior students and that explicit instructions were given and examples provided). It could also be attributed to failure to follow instructions and/or that this was the first time they had been asked to write a technical paper to develop an opinion, rather than a more traditional informational piece.

We will also look more closely at the final reflective assignment and/or student course evaluation comments to see if major themes emerge about what overarching concepts/ideas students are capturing from the course.

3-Knowledge of Key Disciplinary Concepts and Skills

**Goal Description:**  
Students will take the conceptual knowledge and practical skills relevant to Agribusiness gained in the Agribusiness Program and effectively demonstrate there use in the capstone course, AGBU 4375- Advanced Agribusiness Management.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

### **3-Development of Students' Knowledge of Key Disciplinary Concepts and Skills**

#### **Learning Objective Description:**

Students will demonstrate competency in key areas of agribusiness by applying conceptual knowledge and practical skills gained through their course of instruction. Students, working as part of a team, will identify a publicly-traded agribusiness firm and perform the following, 1) investigate and acquire appropriate data/information from various legitimate, public sources, 2) conduct an assessment of internal and external environmental data/information, 3) complete a financial analysis of the company from publicly available information and 4) create a strategic plan for the company. Results from each final project report developed by student teams will be shared in a professional presentation before their peers and faculty.

#### **RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2**

### **3-AGBU 4375- Agribusiness Capstone, Conceptual Knowledge and Skills Assessment**

#### **Indicator Description:**

All students enrolled in the Agribusiness program must complete AGBU 4375 in their senior year. AGBU 4375 addresses key concepts and skills relevant to the field of agribusiness and strategic management. Student teams' assignments from AGBU 4375 will be reviewed by faculty members with expertise in the field of agribusiness. Faculty members will score the assignments using a scale of 1 - 5 with 3 "meets expectations," 4 "exceeds expectations," and 5 "far exceeds expectations."

Attached Files

[!\[\]\(3e2231b1ad3ca8da8658228c00dd08e0\_img.jpg\) AGBU 4375 Assessment Rubric](#)

#### **Criterion Description:**

Agribusiness faculty agree that at least 80% of student teams in AGBU 4375 will perform at a level of 3, "meets expectations" or higher on the overall final report, with at least 70% scoring a 3 or higher in the technical writing component, a specific weakness identified in previous assessment periods.

#### **Findings Description:**

There were 23 students divided into six teams (five four-person teams and one three-person team). Each team acted as a consulting firm performing the strategic analysis of an agribusiness company of their choice. The teams developed write-ups in each class, which served as project components. The instructor made edits and provided suggestions on these write-ups. Students addressed the comments and submitted external, internal, financial and strategic analysis. The instructor made corrections and provided instructions for improvement on these reports. The teams addressed the comments and compiled the reports into the final project report. The final project report was evaluated using the rubric provided.

Most initial write-ups developed in class had considerable issues related to both content and technical writing. Technical writing and style were the areas that required considerable improvements. However, because of the continual feedback and edits from the instructor, all the final reports scored 3 or more on average. The weakest area in the final reports was style (references and formatting). More emphasis will be placed on this section in future semesters.

The evaluation of the final reports of all the teams in Spring 2017 are provided below.

#### **Team 1**

##### **Agribusiness Firm: Sanderson Farms**

Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.2
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.2
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.2
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.2
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	3.8
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	4.0

Team 2

Agribusiness Firm: Syngenta AG

Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.4
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.2
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.4
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.3
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	4.2
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	3.5

**Team 3**

**Agribusiness Firm: The Kroger Company**

Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.1
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.5
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.3
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.0
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	4.5
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	4.2

**Team 4**

**Agribusiness Firm: John Deere**

Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.5
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	3.8
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.3
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.2
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	4.2
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	4

**Team 5**

**Agribusiness Firm: Whole Foods Market**

Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.0
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.0
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.4
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.1
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	4.2
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	2.8

**Team 6**

**Agribusiness Firm: The J.M. Smucker Company**



Attribute	Scale					Grade
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b><i>Internal Company Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	3.8
<b><i>External Environment Analysis</i></b>	Missing or seriously lacking	Adequate, with weak explanations	Adequate, with acceptable explanations	Well Developed	Exceptional	4.8
<b><i>Financial Analysis</i></b>	Missing major components	Incomplete, but with good explanation for what is there	Complete, but with poor or no explanation	Complete, but somewhat lacking full explanation	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.6
<b><i>Strategic Analysis</i></b>	Poor	Little understanding	Understands Concepts	Knowledgeable	Knowledgeable with Depth of Understanding	4.5
<b><i>Technical writing skills</i></b> (grammar, typo, spelling, etc.)	2 or more errors per page avg.	1 or more errors per page avg.	4 Errors max	2 Errors max	No Errors	4.4
<b><i>Style</i></b> (formatting, organization references, etc.)	Major flaws in formatting and organization. More than 12 errors in references	Minor flaws in formatting and organization. Less than 8 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 5 errors in references	Good formatting and organization. Less than 3 errors in references	Excellent formatting and organization. No errors in references	4.3

The average scores of all teams across the areas are presented in the following Table

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3	Team 4	Team 5	Team 6	Avg.
Internal	4.2	4.4	4.1	4.5	4	3.8	<b>4.17</b>
External	4.2	4.2	4.5	3.8	4	4.8	<b>4.25</b>
Financial	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.6	<b>4.37</b>
Strategic	4.2	4.3	4	4.2	4.1	4.5	<b>4.22</b>
Technical	3.8	4.2	4.5	4.2	4.2	4.4	<b>4.22</b>
Style	4	3.5	4.2	4	2.8	4.3	<b>3.80</b>
<b>Avg.</b>	<b>4.10</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>4.27</b>	<b>4.17</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>4.40</b>	

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

3-AGBU 4375- Agribusiness Capstone, Conceptual Knowledge and Skills Assessment

Action Description:

It is critical to continue the team orientation of this course as most students will find themselves in this type of work environment in their professional careers. The iterative nature of the development of student strategic plans with expert (instructor) feedback is also relatively common in the marketplace. This allows students to experience the complexity of the market and how collaboration can generate better investigation, results and decision-making compared to acting alone.

As noted earlier, most of the initial write-ups developed in class had considerable issues related to both content and technical writing. Technical writing and style were the areas that required considerable improvements. However, because of the continual feedback and edits from the instructor, all the final reports scored 3 or more on average. The weakest area in final report was style (references and formatting). More emphasis will be placed on this section in future semesters.

## Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

### Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

We must be diligent in continuous assessment of the learning objective, "Development of Marketplace Skills" to ensure that students are prepared to enter the marketplace. Students are exceeding expectations, but there is room for improvement. Recommendations from the current course instructor were 1) to pay more attention to stressing the importance of “Alignment” among items in the portfolio and 2) to add to future course expectations the importance of selecting references.

A major change will occur in Fall 2017, when assessment of marketplace skills development for Agribusiness students will begin migration to AGBU 4363- Agribusiness Sales and Consulting.

As it relates to content mastery among students in our capstone course, most students know the content, but had difficulty communicating it in a professional manner. With coaching from the faculty member, improvement occurred. However, style, especially references continued to be an issue. Therefore, more emphasis will be placed on this section in future semesters.

### Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

Assessment of marketplace skills development for Agribusiness students will migrate to AGBU 4363- Agribusiness Sales and Consulting in fall 2017, which we believe will encourage better alignment with goal assessment.

We will continue to investigate the appropriate manner to assess our students in Agriculture and Government Programs (name change to Agricultural and Food Policy beginning fall 2017) after initiating evaluation in 2016-17.

We are seeing improvement in our students' ability to communicate strategically as they undergo an iterative process with the course instructor (coach), mimicking certain marketplace environments. We will continue to work on style.

## Plan for Continuous Improvement

### Closing Summary:

1. Development of Professional Marketplace Skills - Transition: The Agribusiness faculty engaged in curriculum mapping of the SHSU Agribusiness program in the 2016-17 academic year. After

carefully evaluating topics covered in all courses, it was discovered that a number of the professional development skills covered in AGRI 4120- Professional Career Skills, a required one-hour course, were also covered in AGBU 4363- Ag Sales and Consulting, an elective three-hour course. Subsequently, the Agribusiness faculty discussed ways to achieve the student professional career development goal, while reducing redundancy in course delivery. The Agribusiness faculty proposed eliminating AGRI 4120 for Agribusiness majors and making AGBU 4363 a required course for all Agribusiness majors beginning in Fall 2017. The learning outcomes previously evaluated in AGRI 4120 will now be assessed, along with some additional measures, in AGBU 4363. The proposal was approved unanimously by the Agricultural Sciences and Engineering Technology faculty. The faculty person coordinating AGBU 4363 has partnered with SHSU Career Services in the past on delivery and assessment of professional career development skills. The faculty person engaged SHSU Career Services in Spring 2017 to assess evaluation rubrics for key career development components (e.g., resume). Additionally, conversations occurred regarding opportunities for external evaluation of student career documents by Career Service personnel. Further assessment will occur as the transition begins in Fall 2017.

2. A Framework to Encourage Civil Discussions in an Increasingly Discordant Society: This is a newly identified learning objective. The overarching goal is to see if we are helping students gain the ability to engage in civil discussions in a thoughtful, educated manner in an increasingly hostile civic environment. Since this is the initial assessment of a new goal established by the Agribusiness faculty for students enrolled in AGBU 4386- Agriculture and Government Programs, findings will be evaluated by the faculty to determine next steps. Students failed to perform at the levels expected, so we will investigate potential reasons why this might be the case. We will also look more closely at the final reflective assignment and/or student course evaluation comments to see if major themes emerge about what overarching concepts/ideas students are capturing from the course.

3. Development of Students' Technical Writing Skills: Faculty will continue to emphasize technical writing skills across the AGBU curriculum enabling success in the capstone course. Though most of the initial write-ups developed in class had considerable issues related to both content and technical writing, the iterative nature of the development of student strategic plans with expert (instructor) feedback was helpful to students. The continual feedback and edits from the instructor moved all final reports to an average score exceeding 3 or more on average. The weakest area in final report was style (references and formatting). More emphasis will be placed on this section in future semesters.