



2024-2025

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
Equestrian General Studies

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2024-2025 Assessment Narrative on Findings

Equine General Studies (BS)

Mission and Introduction

Introduction

1. Provide an overview of the program and the context of where it's housed within the institution (what department, etc.).

Narrative:

The Equine General Studies Major includes concentrations of Equine Assisted Services, Equine Media and Equestrian Studies. It is the program that was developed to meet the needs of students who are not interested in becoming professional teachers, trainers or riders, and who do not aspire to manage a major facility. It was instantly a better fit for many students. It is housed in the College of Equestrian Studies.

Program Mission Statement

1. What changes has the program made to the mission statement over the course of this cycle? Why were these changes made? Are any revisions planned?

Narrative:

The Equestrian Studies mission statement has not changed in the annual year reporting cycle. While the statement is broad, our students often start their undergraduate experience with a narrow view of the industry. Developing and enhancing hard skills, techniques, and abilities is important, but expanding their view and exposing them to all of the diverse areas of the industry is paramount. There are few places where students can gain exposure to as many aspects of the equine industry as they can as equestrian students at William Woods. Our commitment to equine welfare remains unchanged and is the foundation for all equestrian educational programming.

Alignment to Institution Mission

1. How does the mission of the program align with the mission of the institution?

Narrative:

The mission of the Equestrian Studies program and the WWU mission share common themes. The equestrian students experience a student-centered environment in their courses, applied riding classes, practicum experiences, and co-curricular activities. Students come to the program from a wide variety of backgrounds and personal experiences with horses. Students at all levels of proficiency learn and develop together. An academic discipline that is as much an art form as a set of hard skills, it requires a high level of creativity, flexibility, and curiosity. The faculty and staff model this for students and encourage this growth mindset in and out of the

classroom. The equestrian program is focused on providing students with the knowledge and experience necessary to prepare them for a career in the equine industry.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Curriculum

Program Student Learning Outcomes

1. Describe how these outcomes pertain to the program's mission. Have any changes been made to these outcomes over the course of this cycle? Why or why not?
2. Describe the extent to which students in the program have met these outcomes.

Narrative:

The core objectives are the same for all three equestrian majors. While the courses they take begin to diverge as second-semester sophomores, they begin with the same foundational knowledge. These objectives have not changed through the review cycle. The assessment findings show that students are meeting expectations.

Evidence:

- [EQGS Annual Assessment 2023-2024](#)
- [Equine General Studies \(BS\)_2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings_2024-2025](#)

Curriculum Map

1. Describe the course pathway students take to achieve this program degree. Highlighting any key or core courses, have any changes been made to this pathway or degree requirements over the course of this cycle? Why or why not?

Narrative:

Students arrive at this major after realizing that EQA or EQS isn't the right fit, or they may start this program knowing that EQGS is exactly the right major to help them meet their career goals.

This is more likely to be the case for Equine Assisted Services students or Equine Media students.

The curriculum and sequences haven't changed in a formal manner, but low enrollment has resulted in some classes running as tutorials or being cancelled.

Measures and Results

1. Discuss the measures you've selected or developed to measure this outcome. Why were these measures chosen? Were any measures or assessment instruments changed over the

course of this cycle? Why or why not? Will different measures be chosen the next time this outcome is assessed?

2. Summarize and discuss the results of the program's measures over the course of this cycle. Have the results demonstrated improvement or mastery of this outcome? Why or why not?

Narrative:

[Equine General Studies \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)

Most core objectives measures are consistent across all three majors. Objective 2 Understand Theories and Processes of Equine Management is a bit different in that measures from EQU 201 and EQU 391 are not included (not required courses for EQGS majors). This results in just a two-measure system.

The streamlined measures also mean that the results and analysis are heavily dependent on proficiency test results (both written and the interview).

Evidence:

- [Equine General Studies \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)

Participation in Assessment

1. How do program faculty participate in assessment? What is the process? Have any changes been made to encourage participation over the course of this cycle?

Narrative:

The equestrian faculty are deeply committed to systematic assessment in their courses and the programs that they serve. Their participation in revising and improvement of measures and student performance is regular.

Faculty participation in creating, analyzing and submitting the required reports continues to be challenging. The change in systems (AIS to Watermark) took significant time from the Dean of the College of Equestrian Studies. The map and measures while duplicated from the AIS report, took time to replicate in the new system.

The 24-25 report had multiple faculty assigned so that each could input their own measure details and the own results and analysis. This was not effective in most of the report. Because initial reporting features were new to everyone, many used different methods of inputting data. Some went back later to adjust how the data was recorded to match with emerging information about the new system, while other areas had no data loaded. With the team lead gone, the vast majority of the remaining report was completed by one faculty member without group discussion or analysis.

The 25-26 report will be restructured to allow for data to be collected as the semesters progress. This would create a nearly complete outcomes report ready for group discussion and analysis in advance of both the report due date and when faculty move off contract in May.

Action Items and Use of Results

1. Summarize or highlight action items taken as a result of program's assessment results. How have the results driven improvement over the course of this cycle?

Narrative:

No actions have been added or taken as a result of assessment results during the reporting cycle.

Evidence:

- [Equine General Studies \(BS\) 2024-2025 Curriculum and Assessment Findings 2024-2025](#)

Gen Ed

1. What courses in your program are tied to general education requirements at the institution? How many students from outside the department are taking courses in the program to fulfill gen ed requirements?

Graduate Programs please note NA in this section as it does not apply to your program.

Narrative:

NA

NSSE Focused Activities

In the Spring of 2024 the faculty voted on the following NSSE objectives for focus.

2B - Connected your learning to societal problems or issues.

2F - Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept.

9A - Identified Key information from reading assignments.

6A - Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information (numbers, graphs statistics, ...)

How has your program incorporated these learning objectives into the program curriculum?

Graduate Programs please note NA in this section as it does not apply to your program.

Narrative:

NSSE 2B and 2F--EQU 327 Conflicts and Controversies (spring 2025) explored a variety of issues including the American Mustang, horse slaughter, horse racing and governmental regulation of equestrian competitions. Students were assigned a position and it often conflicted with their personal views. They worked in groups to research and then develop a position they could defend as a political action committee. Groups were challenged to use statistics and data, charts and graphs to defend their positions. Student reflections submitted after each live debate included regular examples of students changing or modifying their personal opinions based on the research they did for this course.

NSSE 6A--EQU 405 Equine Business Practices Projections Assignment and Quick Facts Assignment required students to compile the financial information for their simulated business after 4 months (projections) and then make financial projections for the rest of their fiscal year. This allowed them to estimate their quarterly tax burden and make decisions about business spending, and how to pay their tax obligation at the end of the simulation. The Quick Facts required the student business owners to produce a consolidated report with the most important information about their business presented in a visual format with accompanying analysis. Preparation for the Simulated Business Quick Facts assignment included a comprehensive review of WWU's annual quick facts reports for undergraduate, online and graduate programs (NSSEE 9A).

Concentrations

Concentration Information

Please list the concentrations that relate to your program. If you do not have any Concentrations please note N/A in the text box.

Narrative:

Equine Assisted Services
Equine Media
Equestrian Studies

Evidence:

- [Equine General Studies - ALL Concentrations 2024-25 with EXS 123 change](#)

Faculty Qualifications, Activities and Scholarship

Scholarship and Research

1. Summarize and highlight key scholarship and research activities conducted by faculty over the course of the review cycle.

Narrative:

Dean of the College of Equestrian Studies--Erin Cardea completed the application and evidence for Certified Horsemanship Association site accreditation. WWU's Equestrian Program met the criteria for successful accreditation.

Scholarship in the field includes competition, judging, an expert clinician and a presenter. The faculty curriculum vitae demonstrates continued best practices in applicable scholarship and professional expertise in the field.

[CV_McCallum_25](#)

[Haben CV 2024_2025](#)

[Petterson CV 2025](#)

[schiltz cv 25](#)

Evidence:

- [CV_McCallum_25](#)
- [Haben CV 2024_2025](#)
- [Petterson CV 2025](#)
- [schiltz cv 25](#)

Faculty Awards and Honors

1. Discuss and highlight awards and honors received by faculty over the course of the cycle.

Narrative:

Faculty did not submit awards or honors for this report.

Teaching Support and Monitoring Teaching Quality

1. How are faculty being supported to ensure high quality teaching and learning?

Narrative:

Faculty in this area collaborate regularly. Monthly meetings include curriculum discussions and adjustments to both pre-requisite courses and scaffolding to improve student understanding. Faculty guest speakers often augment course content for their colleagues with efforts made to capitalize on individual specialties.

While courses are smaller, the obligation to teach the courses even if they are small to make sure that students are able to complete their course of study on time has made daily faculty workloads a continued challenge. This has generally meant that though they are teaching fewer students, they are preparing more individual courses. Substantial changes to course rotations were initiated fall 2025 that will significantly impact both issues (enrollment and number of individual courses) for the 26-27 academic year. Academic year 25-26 will continue to be a challenge until the new rotations are fully implemented.

Program Data: Student Experience

Enrollment and Recruitment

1. What are the trends with enrollment in this program over the course of the review cycle?
How does this compare to institutional trends or similar programs on campus?

2. Describe recruitment efforts or goals such as increased enrollment or diversity. Have these initiatives been successful?

Narrative:

Enrollment goals for the program have not been met. The incoming class of equestrian science students continues to drop. As efforts are made to fill rosters and recruit in Missouri and the contiguous states, equestrian program numbers have continued to decrease. It is unreasonable to believe that a specialized program like this will fill its freshman or first-year class with students from just a few states.

Initiatives in recruiting from the equestrian department have not resulted in an increase in students in the review cycle. Money spent on advertising did not result in any analytics that suggest increased engagement or an increase in either tours or applications.

[Equestrian Department Report Full](#)

[Equestrian Major Enrollment Data](#)

Evidence:

- [Equestrian Department Report Full](#)
- [Equestrian Major Enrollment Data](#)

Retention

1. Has student retention remained in an acceptable range over the course of the review cycle?
2. Discuss strategies or actions that the program is doing to impact student retention within the program?

Narrative:

The equestrian program has done an exceptional job of retaining incoming students particularly in the face of an incoming class increasingly ill-prepared for the field. Students continue to self-identify as EQS majors when they begin and then move toward EQA and EQGS at a relatively predictable rate. Many don't understand the differences between the majors or enough about the industry to select the appropriate equestrian major before they start classes. In some sense, they are all equestrian studies "majors" as they begin the core classes and then begin to branch off into EQS, EQA and EQGS as they learn more about the purposes of each. Every faculty member in the program is committed to assisting students in finding their best fit in the program and the industry.

Major specific data for 23-24 to 24-25 retention of freshman or first year, and retention in the major/program and university isn't available for use in this report.

Using student rosters and SSR report features, as well as withdrawn student reports, we only had 3 equestrian students officially withdraw in 24-25. One ended up changing her mind and is on campus and pursuing her major now (fall 2025). The other two actually left the university the year before, but had not yet officially withdrawn.

[Equestrian Department Report Full](#)

Evidence:

- [Equestrian Department Report Full](#)

Curriculum/Course Retention and Success

1. Describe enrollment trends in the courses within the program.
2. Reflect on the success of the students within the courses over the course of the cycle. Highlight some completion or DFW rates in the core courses. Were these in line with expectations?
3. Assess student performance and success in online vs. on-campus courses.

Narrative:

Student enrollment in most equestrian classes continues to drop creating many instances of classes being cancelled, resulting in student dissatisfaction. Four years of small incoming equestrian classes have created a difficult situation in classes where much of the coursework is directly aligned with daily, necessary tasks that are part of the regular care of the herd or the facility. Low enrollment in those classes or those courses being cancelled for low enrollment means that someone else (graduate assistants or faculty) must pick up the slack. This can also result in low enrollment courses, increasing the pressure on students who are enrolled (fewer students with no less practical work). Major adjustments in course content continue to be made to accommodate the shifts.

The DWF (grades of D, withdrawals, and F's) report reflects that faculty work diligently to get students proficient in practical tasks. There are courses where the student simply can't be allowed to produce failing work or effort because it would be dangerous.

Onboarding courses tend to uncover a handful of students who are not transitioning to college well, and who are struggling in spite of the extensive academic support built into the courses (EQU 101 and EQU 111).

Completion

1. How many students are graduating from the program? Have the completion rates been in line with expectations?
2. Describe findings resulting from exit surveys or program alumni surveys that were conducted over the course of the cycle.

Narrative:

The equestrian program did not implement any graduate or program surveys. Stakeholders and graduates regularly contact faculty or administration that they have relationship with to express their opinions, but no formal survey was done over the course of the reporting cycle.

Equestrian student capstone courses reflect 14 equestrian student majors (individual students) with some individuals graduating with double majors in 24-25.

Course Evaluation Data

1. What were some positive and negative feedback received from students who completed the courses? Highlight any trends or insights that came from course evaluations over the course of the cycle.

Narrative:

Faculty did not submit positive or negative feedback for this report.

Student Advising

1. What advising mechanism is in place for the student?

Narrative:

1. Students in the equestrian program are assigned a faculty member to serve as their academic advisor. They are able to change advisors if they find a better fit with a different faculty member. In addition to primary advisors, they generally have two faculty members who can view their academic information if they have a second major outside of those in the equestrian program. Students are required to meet with their academic advisor before registration opens each semester.

2. In response to student confusion about equestrian courses, the majors and minors, and other graduation requirements, a new onboarding course was developed prior to the annual reporting cycle. Two assignments specific to advising occur in this course--the graduation plan and the advising study questions. These activities connect the new students with the catalog, major checklists, pre-requisites, and other important areas related to advising. As a result of the new curriculum, most advisors immediately reported that new students knew more about classes and the majors/minors than their upperclassmen. It continues to be an effective method to familiarize new equestrian students with the advising and registration process.

3. Equestrian program faculty have always advised as many students as assigned. However, as a performance-based area and an academic program that is heavily profession-oriented, many hours are spent with each advisee and any other students who need career or professional advice. For this reason, the two weeks designated for advising appointments are extremely challenging for equestrian faculty.

[EQU 101 Four Year Plan Study Questions Brightspace](#)

[EQU_101 Graduation_PLAN_ASSIGNMENT brightspace](#)

Evidence:

- [EQU 101 Four Year Plan Study Questions Brightspace](#)
- [EQU_101 Graduation_PLAN_ASSIGNMENT brightspace](#)

Student Awards and Achievements

1. Highlight the accomplishments and external honors received by students in the program over the course of this cycle.

Narrative:

Students earned a variety of local, regional and national awards during the reporting cycle in a wide variety of equestrian competitions.

The 24-25 year included one equestrian Honors Thesis--Lily Brachio: DEI Policy Satisfaction by AQHA and NAIA Membership, faculty mentor Jennie Petterson

WWU Intercollegiate Judging Team students earned multiple top five and top ten honors at U.S. Arabian and Half Arabian Nationals in the senior collegiate division in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Program Analysis

SWOT Analysis

1. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Narrative:

Strengths

The equestrian program is a niche offering that appeals to students outside of William Wood's traditional recruiting geography. The full complement of academic tracks within the program provides a profession-oriented education suitable for students pursuing many different career paths in the industry. With a foundation of 50 years of innovative equestrian education to build on, the program enjoys a firm reputation and foothold in the equestrian job market for its graduates.

Weaknesses

The equestrian facilities, except the Center for Equine Medicine, are suffering from both annual neglect (by virtue of budget) and reluctance to make improvements. An aging equestrian facility requires regular maintenance, and deferring this gives our competitors a distinct advantage. The equestrian program has historically relied on students to do the bulk of the daily work with the horses and the facility. When enrollment declines, so does the workforce. While some regular tasks have been moved to WWU staff (afternoon feeding, for example), the overall daily operations still rely heavily on enrolled students.

Opportunities

While our facility is aging, it has two indoor, heated arenas with sound systems in a region where indoor equestrian facilities have transformed into antique malls and fireworks warehouses practically overnight. The community wants to come to our complex and is willing to financially support community programming. It is incredibly inconvenient to plan and run regular events that bring the community to the barn to rent stalls, pay entry fees, and generate revenue during the semester, but this is a clear opportunity for revenue generation. Faculty are experts and professionals who know how to make money in the industry and can be incentivized to engage in these activities to support the program while enrollment recovers. The program has a variety of revenue-generating opportunities that should be explored and implemented aggressively.

Threats

The equestrian program becomes expensive when the ratio of students to horses is out of balance, or the total enrollment drops below what provides a sustainable number of riders, horse caretakers, and facility workers. A program left to pull new students without any marketing or recruitment plan is ultimately doomed to fail. Prospective students don't look for colleges the way they did in the past, and equestrians aren't entering the sport in the same fashion either. We risk losing our foothold if we rely on tradition and our own perception of our worth in the marketplace. Waiting for things to change without doing anything differently is likely to be detrimental to the program's sustainability.

Industry and Program Trends

Senior Exit Surveys

1. What were some positive and negative feedback received from students as they complete their degrees? Highlight any trends or insights that came from exit surveys over the course of the cycle.

Narrative:

No exit survey data reviewed by the faculty for this report.

Recommendations from Previous Annual Assessment Reports

1. Summarize Action Items, goals from the program that were listed in the previous Annual Assessment report, describe how/if those recommendations were applied this year.

Narrative:

Suggestions for additional tutor sessions in the 23-24 report for proficiency testing in 24-25 were implemented on a limited basis.

Other suggested modifications outside of specific course details were not applied during this cycle.

Evidence:

- [EQGS Annual Assessment 2023-2024](#)