

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: Fashion Merchandising

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the Course Catalog:

[Fashion Merchandising \(B.A.\)](#)

The major in fashion merchandising focuses on retail buying, product development, and fashion promotion, which includes visual merchandising, public relations and fashion events, and writing and media. Graduates attain positions such as department manager, assistant manager, assistant buyer, and fashion events coordinator. Liberal Arts Core requirements sharpen communication and organization skills; ample provision for elective choices permits a variety of minors. Many students choose a minor in business administration, communication, media design, or fashion design.

The required internship in the senior year brings students valuable experience with department stores, retail shops, clothing manufacturers, and distributors. Students in fashion merchandising participate in the Marymount Fashion Club; activities sponsored by the Fashion Group International of Greater Washington, DC, Inc.; and fashion shows on and off campus.

There is an opportunity to study product development related to prominent businesses and agencies, such as Nordstrom, L.L. Bean, and Cotton Incorporated.

Fashion merchandising students plan and produce the annual student fashion show, Portfolio in Motion.

Seniors complete a seminar in which merchandising problems are solved using the case method. The case analysis is sometimes evaluated by representatives of industry.

Upon successful completion of the fashion merchandising program, students will be able to

- identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market, and aesthetic appearance, for the purpose of retail buying;
- promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations, and fashion events;
- apply the process of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing, sourcing, and retail distribution; and
- conduct merchandising research and consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.

List all of the program’s learning outcomes: (regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market and aesthetic appearance for the purpose of buying.	2012-13 (in its previous wording, omitting visual merchandising)		2017-18
Promoted apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events.	2015-16	2016-17	2018-19
Apply the processes of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing, sourcing, and retail distribution.	-----		2017-18
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	2015-16	2016-17	2018-19

Describe how the program’s outcomes support Marymount’s mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:

The major in fashion merchandising focuses on retail buying, product development, and fashion promotion, which includes visual merchandising, public relations and fashion events, and writing and media. Graduates attain positions such as department manager, assistant manager, assistant buyer, and fashion events coordinator. In addition, the program promotes inquiry-based learning through student-faculty collaboration. Marymount’s fashion show, Portfolio in Motion, provides applicable professional development; fashion merchandising majors take the roles of Head Coordinator and Specialists and work firsthand with its elements--sound, choreography, lighting, set, marketing and public relations. Their work reflects learning in courses such as AA274 The Fashion Industry and Its Promotion, AA273 Visual Merchandising, AA320 Fashion Research and Communication, and AA414 Fashion Show Production. The well-known show (referenced in learning outcome #2 above) promotes greater awareness of Marymount and enhances its reputation, strengthens Marymount’s ties to the larger community, promotes a sense of community among students, alumni, faculty and staff, and reinforces recruitment and retention of undergraduate students who are able to succeed and contribute, as a result, to the Marymount community. Reflecting the diverse population of Marymount University at large, fashion merchandising students often represent a wealth of backgrounds, which brings a range of global perspectives to the study of the field. In addition, through their research (see outcome #4 above) and travel with the CGE, they become well aware of the global trends in fashion, most specifically in the European countries, but often with exposure elsewhere, due to interaction with the local embassies. In addition, the students do internships, take field trips to the retail stores in the area (see outcomes #1 and #3 above), both of which extend Marymount’s ties in the community, and they attend the largest international sourcing show bi-annually.

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment:

The department is still going through an adjustment in the implementation of assessment measures after having condensed the outcomes from six to four as a result of the Program Review, with each emphasizing one of the three career “directions” and research. In the past few years, the number of faculty shrunk from four tenure-track and a term position to three and a term position. The greatest challenge is on the faculty, who must assess for the fashion design program, the fashion



merchandising program and inquiry-based learning. That is a lot of assessment, when their focus is on teaching the courses and other activities, such as the student fashion show, *Portfolio in Motion*, two student clubs—Fashion Club and the Patternmaking Club, and CGE courses, such as a spring-break version to London, and the Field Study Trade Tour to an international sourcing show in Las Vegas. Due to a change in personnel, the Center for Career Services did not send the program-specific evaluation to the FM site supervisors, just the generic one, so we have no data from this year. However, that problem is being remedied, so the evaluations will count in the assessment of the 2017-18 year. As a result, the assessing presently rests with the evaluations of course-embedded projects used for inquiry learning (this year, from AA320 Fashion Research and Communication instead of AA414 Fashion Show Production) and the senior focus group.

One of these course-embedded evaluations measures the learning of a project on store design in AA273 Visual Merchandising for the sophomores. The project requires students to research an existing store and then improve upon its design and layout in terms of function and aesthetics. The students must integrate previous learning in the course (color, fixtures, traffic flow, etc.) in order to reach their solutions.

The course-embedded evaluation for juniors now takes place in AA320 Fashion Research and Communication, in which a “magazine” article is assessed for the same outcomes as the Liberal Arts core, including written communication.

At the senior level, there is evaluation of the capstone paper/presentation, which is a case analysis related to contemporary problems in the fashion industry.

We currently lack other assessment measures for the career-applied outcomes related to buying and to product development. These are courses currently taught by the individual who holds a term appointment, who has been working with the Department Chair, the CTL and the Library in order to improve learning in AA381 Buying Fashion Apparel, AA382 Merchandise Planning and Analysis, and AA407 Product Development II.

The rubric for the course-embedded evaluations has been changed to mirror the performance outcomes of the liberal arts core—active research and sound reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. It also measures the quality of communication and presentation.

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Promote apparel effectively through writing and media, public relations and fashion events, as demonstrated through Marymount’s prestigious fashion show.	Because the curriculum is already strong in the related fields, the department hopes to better identify fashion promotion as an area of study in the major and reflect that by consolidating visual merchandising into the same, more global objective. These areas have been strong at Marymount for many years, and students often obtain related employment. The change of objective will stimulate a change on the internship evaluation.	The consolidation of the program objective occurred in 2016. Due to a change in personnel, the program-related internship evaluation was not sent by the Center for Career Services to on-site supervisors. However, that error will be remedied during Fall 2017, so it will include the change of objective.

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Employ visual merchandising skills.	As discussed above, the department is interested in consolidating Fashion Merchandising learning into three main areas of study, reflecting them in three global program objectives, one focusing on fashion promotion. It intends to consolidate visual merchandising along with writing and media, public relations and fashion events. Product development and buying are the other two anticipated areas of study in the program.	As stated above, the change to a more global objective occurred in 2016.
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis and apply findings to merchandising problems.	However, as discussed above, the consolidation of visual merchandising with the other areas of fashion promotion may indicate a different measure for that related program objective, but not necessarily for the purpose of evaluating inquiry learning at the sophomore level.	The course-embedded assessment of a store design project in AA273 Visual Merchandising continues to be implemented as a measure of inquiry learning and can also function one measure of this more global objective, as evident in this report.

Provide a response to last year’s University Assessment Committee review of the program’s learning assessment report:

As noted on the Academic Assessment Evaluation Rubric, the Department was not able to discern a lot of meaningful information last year. However, we were still making an adjustment to all of the changes from the last Program Review, including the focus on three specific career paths or goals, the decrease from 6 to 4 program outcomes, the decrease of 5 to 4 faculty, the addition of another student club to the department, while running the annual fashion show and related receptions. Dean Clark observed that we needed to add faculty in order to support the courses and the work of the department, especially since there are two senior faculty members. As a result, we did put in a request for a new mid-career tenure track fashion merchandising position, but we do not know yet whether it has been approved. (Ironically, while we were making the adjustments, the fashion industry was undergoing profound change, and that indicates the necessity to re-evaluate what courses should be required as part of the major.

For instance, last Christmas was the first in which more money was spent purchasing gifts online than in brick and mortar stores. It was also the point at which Amazon beat WalMart as the #1 retailer in the country.

1. The program catalogue description was added to the FM Assessment Report.
2. Language explaining how program learning supports the strategic plan was added.
3. “As demonstrated through Marymount’s prestigious fashion show” was removed from the outcome.

4. The department acknowledges that Outcome # 3 is “multi-barreled.” The attempt there was to summarize all of the processes conducted in order to develop an apparel product. These processes are simulated in AA407 Product Development II. The professor in that course does ask individuals from outside the university to assess the garments and presentations at the end of the course. However, there has not been an opportunity to develop a reliable rubric or to substantiate the reliability of the “judges”. One problem is whether a member of the Focus Group (a potential consumer of the product) has the knowledge to evaluate the quality of the garment or the effectiveness of presentations or processes that occur within the industry and vice versa. This is a key reason why the related outcome is not being assessed this year.

5. Because of limits to time and opportunity, it is difficult to employ multiple judges of the assessments, except in the plan for Outcome #3. However, the same project in AA320 Fashion Research and Communication is evaluated for its WI (Writing Intensive) learning. Perhaps there is a way to get feedback from the committee that assesses WI work for the Liberal Arts core.

Outcomes Assessment 2016-2017

Learning Outcome 2: Promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events.

(This outcome has not been evaluated in its most recent form, grouping visual merchandising with the other fashion promotion functions.)

Assessment Activity

<u>Outcome Measures</u> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<u>Performance Standard</u> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<u>Data Collection</u> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<u>Analysis</u> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Direct measure: Evaluation of fashion magazine article in AA320 Fashion Research and Communication.	80% of respondents will obtain ratings of strong, (4) or adequate (3). Other ratings are marginal (2), attempt that fails (1), No evidence (0).	The faculty member in the course evaluates the students' work. The ratings are tabulated by the Department Chair.	Out of 20 students, the ratings were: Active research and sound reasoning: 2 strong (4), 15 adequate (3), 3 marginal (2) Information literacy: 2 strong (4), 15 adequate (3), 3 marginal (2) Critical thinking: 2 strong (4), 15 adequate (3), 3 marginal (2) Written communication: 2 strong (4), 15 adequate (3), 3 marginal (2) 85% of responses were strong (4) or adequate (3).
Indirect measure: Senior Focus Group	Seniors make positive comments assessing their own knowledge of their ability to promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising,	The faculty member in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising conducts the Senior Focus Group in that	There were two Senior Focus Groups this year –December grads and May grads. In both cases, 100% of seniors unanimously answered in the affirmative when asked. The Dec. grads attributed their comfort with the outcome to AA414 Fashion Show Production, AA320 Fashion Research

<u>Outcome Measures</u> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<u>Performance Standard</u> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<u>Data Collection</u> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<u>Analysis</u> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
	writing and media, public relations and fashion events.	course and reports responses to the Department Chair.	and Communication, AA274 Fashion Industry and Its Promotion, AA273 Visual Merchandising and MKT301 Principles of Marketing. Spring grads commented that they would like to see three program specializations—one in visual merchandising, one in buying, and one in fashion media and writing. They felt that visual merchandising could be supported by electives in art, buying by electives in business, and fashion media and writing by electives in communication and communication media design.
Direct Measure: Course-embedded Assessment in AA273 Visual Merchandising	80% of students achieve ratings of strong (4) or adequate (3). Other ratings are marginal (2), attempt that fails (1), and no evidence (0).	The professor in the course AA273 Visual Merchandising evaluates the project in store design and gives responses to the Department Chair, who tabulates them.	Out of 21 students, ratings were: Active research and sound reasoning: 13 strong (4); 7 adequate (3), 1 marginal (2); Information literacy: 4 strong (4); 12 adequate (3); 3 marginal (2); 1 attempt that fails (1); Critical thinking: 13 strong (4); 7 adequate (3); 1 marginal (2) Scope, focus, execution: 11 strong (4); 9 adequate (3); 1 marginal (2); 92% of responses were strong (4) or adequate (3) and 8% were marginal or below.

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students (*Use both direct and indirect measure results*):

The learning outcome was achieved via each outcome measure--whether senior focus group feedback or course-embedded assessment in fashion writing and visual merchandising. The standard of 80% was suggested in last year's Academic Assessment Evaluation Rubric.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

The current curriculum strongly supports learning in visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events. It is strengthened by our own Marymount fashion event, Portfolio in Motion, for which students direct all activities. Students made positive comments about AA414 Fashion Show Production, AA320 Fashion Research and Communication, AA274 Fashion Industry and Its Promotion, AA273 Visual Merchandising and MKT301 Principles of Marketing. One student

asked for a level 2 of Fashion Research and Communication. Other students suggested that art electives could support a specialization in Visual Merchandising, business electives for the specialization in Buying and communication and communication media design electives for a specialization in fashion writing and media.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

The confirmation of sound learning for this outcome reinforces the department’s decision to identify fashion promotion as an outcome or area of specialization in the major and reflects the worth of consolidating visual merchandising into that objective. Faculty should consider recommending related electives in art for the student who wants to emphasize visual merchandising, in business for those who want to focus on buying and communication and communication media design for those interested in fashion writing and media

Learning Outcome 2: Conduct merchandising research and consumer data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.

Assessment Activity

<u>Outcome Measures</u> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<u>Performance Standard</u> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<u>Data Collection</u> <i>Discuss the data collected and student population</i>	<u>Analysis</u> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
Direct Measure: Course-embedded evaluation in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising	80% of students will attain a rating of strong (4) or adequate (3) in their merchandising research and application to merchandising problems.	The professor in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising conducts the evaluations and gives them to the department Chair who tabulates the ratings.	This assessment was conducted twice in the past year—once for December graduates and again for spring graduates. <i>December Assessment</i> Out of 10 students, ratings were: Active research and sound reasoning 9 strong (4), 1 adequate (3); Information literacy 5 strong (4), 5 adequate (3); Critical thinking 10 strong (4); Written communication 4 strong (4), 6 adequate (3). 100% of seniors attained ratings of strong(4) or adequate (3). <i>May Assessment</i> Out of 11 students, ratings were: Active research and sound reasoning: 9 strong (4), 2 adequate (3); Information literacy: 7 strong (4), 3 adequate (3), 1 marginal (2); Critical thinking: 10 strong (4), 1 adequate (3);

			Written communication 5 strong (4), 5 adequate (3), 5 marginal (2); 95% of students attained ratings of strong (4) or adequate (3); 5 % attained ratings of marginal (3)
Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Group	Seniors make positive comments assessing their ability to do merchandising research and apply findings to merchandising problems.	The faculty member in AA422 Senior Seminar in Fashion Merchandising conducts the senior focus group and reports responses to the Department Chair.	100% of seniors, in both the December Focus Group and the May Focus Group, stated they felt confident about conducting merchandising research and applying it to solve merchandising problems. Comments: Students wanted more consumer data analysis in AA407 Product Development II.

Interpretation of Results

Extent this learning outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results):*

The outcome has been achieved in both measures- 2 senior focus groups and 2 course-embedded assessments

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:

Students commented that consumer data analysis should be conducted in AA407 Product Development II, in which customer focus groups, interviews or surveys are necessary to identify consumer needs regarding apparel.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:

More consumer data analysis should be implemented in AA407 Product Development II, where a consumer market is consulted for needs and preferences before students design an apparel product.

ADDED COMMENTS – SENIOR FOCUS GROUPS

Open-ended comments:

1. Students ask for more information on fashion merchandising careers later in the curriculum than AA274 Fashion Industry and It Promotion.
2. Students ask for the course elective in styling; consider adding it as a required course.
3. Students are not learning about costing and supply chain development in AA307 Product Development I.
4. Students picked Marymount’s Fashion Merchandising curriculum for its breadth.
5. Students should learn Excel before they take AA382 Merchandise Planning and Analysis. They suggest the learning take place in AA405 Fashion in the Global Marketplace.
6. Fashion merchandising students do not think they learn enough about “fabricating” in AA407 Product Development II.

7. They think the department should add more faculty.
8. They want to obtain academic advising from fashion department faculty.
9. The department atmosphere needs a facelift. They ask for computers stocked with Adobe Suite on the fashion floor. They want new paint, bulletin boards and a television monitor in the hallway.

TABLE FOR PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS:

1. Implement a search for a new faculty member in fashion merchandising. (Fall 2017-Spring 2018).
2. Add new paint, bulletin boards, and television monitor to fashion floor in Gailhac Hall (Summer 2017-Fall 2017).
3. Conduct Fashion Merchandising assessment with internship site supervisors. (Fall 2017).
4. Rewrite program outcome related to product development and implement related assessment. (Spring 2018-Fall 2018).
5. Implement assessment measure related to buying. (Spring 2018-Fall 2018).
6. Consider changes to the curriculum that may result from the change in consumer purchasing from brick and mortar stores to e-commerce. (Fall 2017).
7. Bring computers stocked with Adobe Suite on to fashion floor in Gailhac Hall. (Fall 2017).

Appendices

Curriculum Map

These will be sent for review and feedback to the Liberal Arts Core Committee.

UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM MAP

Degree Program: Fashion Merchandising

Year: 2016-17

Program Outcomes:

Program Outcome	Critical Thinking	Inquiry	Information Literacy	Written Communication
Identify and foster salable apparel based on quality, appropriateness, price, target market and aesthetic appearance for the purpose of retail buying.	X	X	X	X
Promote apparel effectively through visual merchandising, writing and media, public relations and fashion events (as demonstrated through Marymount's prestigious fashion show).	X	X	X	X
Apply the processes of product development, including consumer and trend research, forecasting, fabricating, garment styling and line development, technical design, pricing, sourcing and retail distribution.	X	X	X	X
Conduct merchandising research, consumer and data analysis, and apply findings to merchandising problems.	X	X	X	X

Curriculum Map:

For each course, indicate which competencies are included using the following key. Please refer to the director of assessment in Planning and Institutional Effectiveness if you need more detailed explanation of the four core competencies.

Level of instruction: I – Introduced, R-reinforced and opportunity to practice, M-mastery at the senior or exit level

Assessment: PR-project, P-paper, E-exam, O-oral presentation, I-internship, OT-other (explain briefly)

Required Course	Critical Thinking		Inquiry		Information Literacy		Written Communication	
	Level	Assess	Level	Assess	Level	Assess	Level	Assess
AA151	1	PR/E			1	PR/E	1	PR/E
AA250	1	PR/E						
AA273	R	PR/E	R	PR	R	PR/E	1	PR/E

AA274	1	PR/E			1	PR	1	PR
AA281	R	PR/E			R	PR/E		
AA307	R	PR/E			R	PR/E	R	PR
AA320	R	PR	R	PR	R	PR/E	R	PR/WI
AA361	R	PR/E			R	PR/E	R	PR/E
AA381	R	PR/E			R	PR		
AA382	R	PR/E			R	PR/E		
AA395	R	PR			R	PR		
AA405	R	PR/E			R	PR/E		
AA407	M	PR	M	PR	M	PR	M	PR
AA414	M	PR/O/OT*fashion show			M	PR	M	PR
AA422	M	PR/O	M	PR/O	M	PR/O	M	PR/O