

# The ETS® Major Field Tests

Assessing Learning.  
Demonstrating Effectiveness.



**James C. Williams,**  
Professor Emeritus of Business,  
Franklin College

James C. Williams, Professor Emeritus of Business, Franklin College, served as Professor of Business for 35 years. He was drawn to this work so he could help students avoid the career mistakes he made due to lack of guidance in college.

## Challenges in assessing student learning outcomes and program effectiveness

As Williams observes, “Students seem to enter college with less quantitative proficiency every year. We try to remedy that situation, and the feedback shows we have accomplished that goal.” He continues, “We solicit regular feedback from alums and business leaders as to what we need to do to make our graduates succeed at finding and keeping jobs. Additionally, we are all practitioners with very varied backgrounds, and we know what it takes to succeed in different aspects of business.”

## Using test results to improve curricula

The Business Department uses the ETS® Major Field Test (MFT) for Business as the principal means of external assessment. Williams says, “The test has become part of the department’s culture and actually helps students to retain and integrate what they learn in our classes over time.

“We are constantly making major and minor adjustments based on feedback from MFT . . . We have added additional intro-level courses and established alliances with other departments such as journalism to work on other holes in our curriculum. We want to ensure our curriculum is up to date academically and professionally.”

*The ETS Major Field Test “has proven over time to measure student learning with validity and reliability.”*

# How Major Field Tests help students and institutions succeed

Williams highlights some of the reasons the Business Department chose the Major Field Test for Business and how they support student and institutional success:

“We were familiar, of course, with ETS’s reputation. When we looked at the business test, we found that it would accurately reflect our students’ learning over their stay at the college,” he explains.

“First of all, we do NO coaching or priming whatsoever for the MFT ... Students take the exam as one input that constitutes around 20% of the grade for their senior capstone course. Whatever students do, they do by themselves.”

Regarding score reports, Williams says, “Students appreciate knowing where they stand among the many business majors across the country. Faculty appreciate the breakdown of scores by subject area. Of course, the group scores are valuable so we can see how our seniors compare to national norms.”

He emphasizes, “Students, faculty and administrators REALLY appreciate the instant feedback from the online exam.”

Customer service from the ETS team is “always excellent, even when I had a rather odd request,” according to Williams.

The impact of the Major Field Test goes beyond the Business Department at Franklin College. Data is shared with other faculty, college administrators, college trustees and alumni. Williams adds, “To honor students whose individual scores are excellent, we place news items in their hometown papers.”

Demonstrate the effectiveness of your program and evaluate students’ mastery of their major field of study.

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