

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)

Key Findings



UAMS turned to ExamSoft for help collecting data to show proof of accreditation



In addition, ExamSoft helped the University with electronic testing, data collection, and proof of learning



Now, UAMS has been able to use the data collected from ExamSoft to improve instruction and student remediation

As pharmacy accreditation standards became more stringent, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences adopted ExamSoft to collect and analyze data on student outcomes. ExamSoft delivered on the data and so much more. The insights ExamSoft provides are helping the faculty continuously evolve and improve instruction, exams, and student outcomes.

ExamSoft was adopted to help:

- ✔ Meet accreditation standards
- ✔ Improve instruction
- ✔ Improve student outcomes

Overview

University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) is one of two pharmacy schools in Arkansas. Based in Little Rock, UAMS is an academic medical center, focused on health-related programs. The College of Pharmacy is home to approximately 300 students and 70 faculty, about two-thirds of whom teach, with the remainder dedicated to research.

The Issue

UAMS's need for ExamSoft was revealed during an accreditation visit. Accreditation standards for pharmacy programs are quite specific and require a great deal of data to demonstrate continuous improvement and delivery of positive student outcomes.

Before ExamSoft, UAMS was primarily using paper-based testing where exams were delivered via Scantron, bubble-sheets, or were hand-written. Data was scattered. Linking data to specific learning outcomes was challenging to say the least. It was hard to demonstrate to accreditors how the school was continually evolving its curriculum in response to students' needs and ultimately meeting course and program objectives.

What were the driving factors behind the ExamSoft adoption?



High level of data



Meet accreditation standards



The need for electronic testing



Ability to link data to learning outcomes



The need for organized data



Proof of evolving curriculum

Implementation

At the start, to resolve its need to strengthen reporting capabilities and deliver hard data to accreditors, UAMS leveraged its assessment committee to address what key metrics it wanted to measure through assessments. This group set out to define categories for tagging questions in ExamSoft to the most important outcomes for measurement. UAMS launched ExamSoft with the following categories:

- Faculty members' name
- Disease state
- Key competencies or education outcomes
- Didactic topics
- Bloom's Taxonomy (an abbreviated version focused on three levels)

All exam questions are tagged to these categories. In addition, faculty can create course-specific categories to ensure students are meeting learning objectives for that course. For example, in the pharmacology

course series, the coordinators have chosen to tag questions based on pharmacologic class; for example, sulfonyleureas, thiazolidinediones, dipeptidyl peptidase-IV inhibitors, etc. The syllabus also list key competencies for the respective course.

To ensure uniformity and adherence to category tagging, UAMS has an ed tech support staff for ExamSoft management. With a large faculty, tech staff serve as facilitators, ensuring consistency in question tagging, exam structure, and exam delivery. While some faculty are deeply involved in ExamSoft reporting, most rely on support staff to run reports and provide strengths and opportunities to students.

Results

Since rolling out ExamSoft in fall 2013, UAMS has gathered a trove of data to provide accreditors for its upcoming site visit in 2021. This data clearly demonstrates the specific ways UAMS has strengthened its program to produce well-qualified pharmacists. UAMS has evolved the way it views and uses ExamSoft data over the years and has created multiple avenues for strengthening the program and student outcomes.

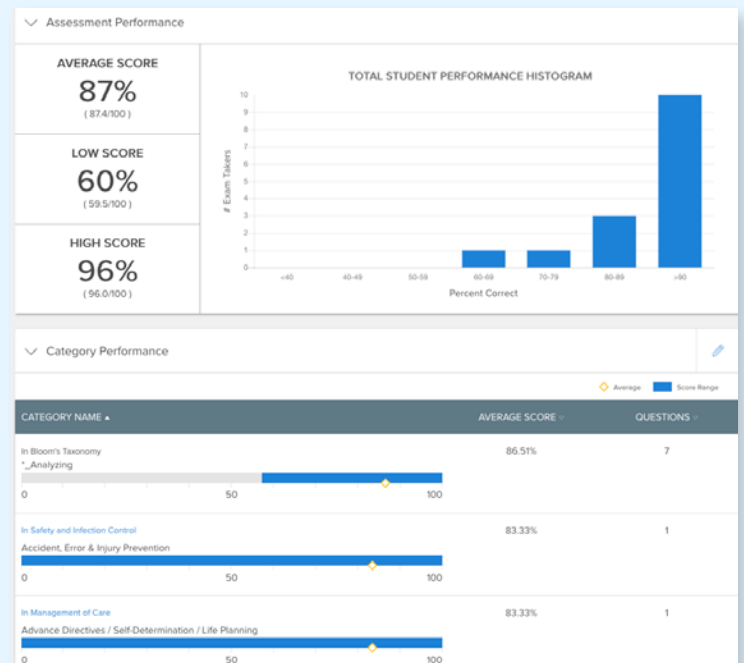
From the start, UAMS faculty went deep on item analysis to discover which questions were particularly challenging for the students and why. In response, faculty modified how they deliver the material or created additional opportunities for students to engage with the content before being tested on it. With each iteration of the course, faculty is evolving instruction to support student success.

More recently, with the data provided by ExamSoft, UAMS faculty has been able to create functional curriculum maps that make it possible to clearly identify students' successes or shortcomings across content areas. This allows faculty to discover what topics need more attention or, conversely, what is well understood.

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The ExamSoft dashboard makes clear:

- 1 How well the students are performing against objectives.
- 2 Opportunities to improve instruction around specific categories.
- 3 Opportunities to revise the class syllabus to ensure instructors are covering the right content.
- 4 Opportunities to improve assessments.



Another dashboard UAMS uses surveys students' scores across all courses they're taking as part of an early intervention program to prevent attrition. With ExamSoft, faculty can see performance over time and across the course to see if intervention is necessary. That assistance may be for a single topic or concept, it may be about study habits, or if they're struggling across the board in multiple courses and on multiple tests, the culprit may be something outside of the classroom. Faculty at UAMS have become accustomed to identifying themes, like struggles with memorization (lower level Bloom's) or the application of concepts. Faculty meet with students to point them to resources or study methodologies that will lead to better mastery of the material.

Early intervention and remediation support progression through the program and long-term student retention.

“There are so many ways to use the data. It gives us incredibly rich insights into students' struggles so that we can help them get back on track when needed.”

David Caldwell
Associate Professor, University
of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
College of Pharmacy

Going Forward

Moving forward, UAMS is looking into other opportunities to improve the pharmacy program by blueprinting exams, leveraging ExamSoft category mapping into an exam guide that shows how well the exam covers key categories. Ultimately, UAMS is striving to correlate performance-based assessments or OSCEs with classroom learning to discover opportunities to improve course-based instruction in support of future patient or physician interactions.

UAMS faculty and administrators feel confident about their upcoming accreditation visit. Preparation will be an entirely new and much easier endeavor. The UAMS team will be able to demonstrate clearly and with confidence that they're providing a quality education that is continually evolving to serve student needs.

On the Horizon



Blueprint Exams

Leverage ExamSoft category mapping into an exam guide that shows how well the exam covers key categories.



Prepare Future Physicians

Correlate performance-based assessments with classroom learning to discover opportunities to improve course-based instruction.

“I would 100% recommend ExamSoft to other schools. It’s intuitive and super easy to use and teach. It offers reports that are useful and useable. The data creates rich opportunities for improvement, both for the school and the students.”

David Caldwell, Associate Professor, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Pharmacy



ExamSoft is the digital assessment platform that helps institutions achieve higher levels of course, program, and student success. With an intuitive testing application, ExamSoft makes it simple to create, administer, and grade exams, and generate detailed performance reports from the results — all to provide educators with a complete and accurate view of student learning.

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