

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM

Program Name:

Dept:

College:

Submitted by:

Part 1:

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| <p>CGS Learning Goal #1 A depth of content knowledge</p> | <p>Program Learning Goal(s): Students will demonstrate strong disciplinary knowledge of communication.</p> |
| <p>How are learners assessed?</p> | <p>Disciplinary knowledge is assessed three ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric (Element 1- using theory to answer questions). 2) Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (Element 3 - literature review) 3) Academic Thesis or Creative Thesis rubrics, or using the scholarship subscale of the comprehensive exam rubric. |
| <p>What are the expectations for the students?</p> | <p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Understanding of scholarship 2) Correct interpretation of scholarship 3) Correct application of scholarship 4) An ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant scholarship |
| <p>What are the expectations for the program?</p> | <p>For the Graduate Student Critical Thinking and the Graduate Research Paper Writing rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student falls at the high end (greater than 6) of the competent range (4-7) 2) 90% of all students will be rated as competent 3) 33% of all students will be rated as highly competent <p>For the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student achieves competent (greater than 2.5) on the scale 2) 100% of students rated as competent 3) 75% of students rated as highly competent <p>For the Comprehensive Exam rubric we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student falls at the high end (greater than 13) of the competent range (10-14) on the scale 2) 90% of students rated as competent 3) 50% of students rated as highly competent |
| <p>What were the results?</p> | <p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric (Element 1):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average rubric score: 6.52 (on-campus) 8.4 (online) 2) 90% on-campus and online students rated as competent 3) 30% on-campus and 50% online students rated as highly competent <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (Element 3):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average rubric score: 6.45 (on-campus) 7.95 (online) 2) 80% on-campus and 95% online students rated as competent 3) 35% on-campus and 55% online students rated as highly competent <p>Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics Literature Review Subscale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We only had one student complete a creative thesis during the current evaluation. 2) Average student score: 3.8 3) Student was rated as competent in creative thesis writing <p>Comprehensive Exam Scholarship Subscale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student score: 13.2 2) 100% of students were rated as competent in both core and concentration comp exams 3) 50% of students were rated as highly competent in both core and concentration comp exams |

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| <p>How are the results shared? How will these results be used?</p> | <p>The assessment report is an agenda item for graduate faculty meetings at the beginning of each term. Our graduate faculty discuss results and explore ways we can make improvements. One area we will continue to explore is why our online students tend to out-perform our on-campus students. One primary reason for this is simply because we have more online students and more online classes and thus, more assessment data for this group of students. This likely skews the data in favor of our online students. Our online program is also less research-focused than our on-campus program which also may influence assessments, where our on-campus students may be assessed somewhat harder (or more rigorously) on research papers and thesis/creative projects.</p> |
| <p>CGS Learning Goal #2: Critical thinking and problem-solving skills</p> | <p>Program Learning Goal(s): Students will demonstrate effective critical thinking skills.</p> |
| <p>How are learners assessed?</p> | <p>Effective critical thinking is assessed three ways throughout the graduate program: 1) The Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric 2) The Findings/Conclusions subscales of the Academic and Creative Thesis rubrics 3) Element 3 (analysis/synthesis) of the Comprehensive Exam Rubric</p> |
| <p>What are the expectations for the students?</p> | <p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ability to generate original insights 2) Ability to develop and design new research 3) Sensitivity to multiple perspectives 4) Ability to assess reasoning 5) Ability to assess arguments 6) Ability to identify assumptions |
| <p>What are the expectations for the program?</p> | <p>For the Graduate Student Critical Thinking rubric we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student scores 60 (out of 80) 2) 90% of students rated as competent 3) 50% of students rated as highly competent |

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| | <p>For the Findings/Conclusions subscales of the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 3.75 out of 5 for the academic thesis 2) 3.75 out of 5 for the creative thesis <p>For the Comprehensive Exam Rubric (Element 3) we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student score of a 12 (out of 20) |
| What were the results? | <p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking rubric:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average rubric score: 52.19 (on-campus) and 65.76 (online) 2) 62% on-campus and 95% online students rated as competent 3) 15% on-campus and 66% online students rated as highly competent <p>Creative thesis rubrics Conclusions subscale:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Creative: score of 3.8 <p>Comprehensive Exam rubric (Element 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis/synthesis score: 13.2 |
| How are the results shared? How will these results be used? | <p>The assessment report is an agenda item for graduate faculty meetings at the beginning of each term. Our graduate faculty discuss results and explore ways we can make improvements. The biggest need in this area is to explore ways we can help our on-campus students improve their critical thinking skills; they did fall short of our goals in this area. One of the ways we have addressed this in the past is through our writing groups and our peer-to-peer mentoring program. Students who participated in these opportunities reported feeling more confident in their critical thinking and writing skills.</p> |
| CGS Learning Goal #3: Effective oral and written communication skills | <p>Program Learning Goal(s): Students are able to communicate effectively in written and spoken form.</p> |
| How are learners assessed? | <p>Effective written communication is assessed three ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (utilized in graduate courses). |

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| | <p>2) The Writing subscales on both the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics. 3) Elements 4 (organization/development) and 5 (style and mechanics) of the Comprehensive Exam Rubric.</p> <p>Effective spoken communication is assessed through the Graduate Speech Evaluation rubric.</p> |
| <p>What are the expectations for the students?</p> | <p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on their writing and speaking quality, including but not limited to, the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organization 2) Complexity of sentence structure 3) Effective use of language 4) Ability to communicate an argument/main idea to an audience 5) Ability to synthesize numerous concepts into a coherent argument 6) Competent delivery 7) Audience analysis |
| <p>What are the expectations for the program?</p> | <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student scores 75 (out of 100) 2) 90% of students rated as competent 3) 50% of students rated as highly competent <p>Writing subscales of the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student achieves a subscale score of highly competent (3.75 out of 5) <p>Comprehensive Exam Rubric expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Average student score of a 7 (out of 10) across all rubrics for the selected subscales <p>Speaking expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student score is highly competent (3.5 out of 4) |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) 100% of rubrics rated as competent (2.5 out of 4) 3) 75% of rubrics rated as highly competent (3.5 on a 4 point scale) |
| <p>What were the results?</p> | <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student score: 66.79 (on-campus) and 82.38 (online) 2) 90% of on-campus and 95% online students were rated as competent 3) 25% of on-campus and 75% of online students were rated as highly competent <p>Creative thesis rubrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Creative score: 3.75 <p>Comprehensive Exam rubrics (organization/development; Style & mechanics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Organization/Development score: 7.5 2) Style and Mechanics: 8.0 <p>Speaking rubric:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average score from the speech evaluation is 3.47 2) 100% of students rated as competent 3) 66.67% of students rated highly competent |
| <p>How are the results shared? How will these results be used?</p> | <p>The assessment report is an agenda item for graduate faculty meetings at the beginning of each term. Our graduate faculty discuss results and explore ways we can make improvements. For the most part, our online students are meeting (or exceeding) our goals in this area, while we are seeing a slight decline in our on-campus student performance. One way we have tried to improve students' writing skills is through writing groups and peer-to-peer mentoring. We have also referred students to the writing center for assistance, but the writing center seems more geared towards undergraduate students. We will continue to explore the possible causes for this; however, I would like to note that the sharp decrease in our on-campus students' performance in this area is likely caused by the fact that our on-campus students were forced into online classes at</p> |

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| | the beginning of the pandemic. They were asked to learn in a new environment, which likely decreased their overall class performance. |
| CGS Learning Goal #4: Evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity. | Program Learning Goal(s): Students will be able to understand, critique, and apply appropriate research methods in a broad range of situations and contexts. |
| How are learners assessed? | <p>Research knowledge is assessed directly two ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Students are assessed using the Academic Thesis or Creative Thesis rubric after they have completed their required thesis capstone project at the end of the program. 2) Elements 4 (research methodology) and 5 (analysis) of the Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (utilized in graduate courses). <p>In support of this goal we also measure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Number of original research presentations by students 2) Number of blind reviewed original research presentations by students at conferences |
| What are the expectations for the students? | <p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Understanding of various methodologies 2) Correct application of methods 3) Ability to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate claims based upon a chosen methodology |
| What are the expectations for the program? | <p>For the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student achieves a score relative to 80% or a... 2) 116 on the creative thesis rubric 3) 112 on the academic thesis rubric) <p>For the Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric (elements 4 and 5) we have the following expectations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average student falls at the high end (greater than 6) of the competent range (4-7) 2) 90% of students rated as competent |

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| | <p>3)50% of students rated as highly competent</p> <p>Student Presentations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 50% of students will participate in original research presentations 2) 10% of students will present at local, regional, or national conferences |
| <p>What were the results?</p> | <p>Creative thesis rubrics: Creative: score of 108.33 (74.71%)</p> <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric (elements 4- research methodology)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average score of 7.38 (on-campus) and 8.33 (online) 2) 100% on-campus and online students rated competent 3) 40% on-campus and 78% online students rated as highly competent <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric (elements 5- analysis)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Average score of 5.73 (on-campus) and 7.90 (online) 2) 75% on-campus and online students rated competent 3) 30% on-campus and 71% online students rated as highly competent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We had 1 student complete a thesis during the current evaluation period • 0% of students presented at conferences (we attribute this to the pandemic year) |
| <p>How are the results shared? How will these results be used?</p> | <p>The assessment report is an agenda item for graduate faculty meetings at the beginning of each term. Our graduate faculty discuss results and explore ways we can make improvements. We only had one student complete a thesis during this past year. Our graduate faculty are engaged in ongoing conversations about how to increase student research both in- and outside the classroom. A large majority of our graduate students, however, are enrolled in our online program which does not require a thesis option, so we do not expect to have large numbers of students participating in thesis or creative thesis work. We would like to increase the number of on-campus students who</p> |

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| | participate in research related activities and participate in conferences. This will be a heavy focus for us this next year. |
| CGS Learning Goal #5: Ethics and Professional Responsibility | Program Learning Goal(s): Students will demonstrate integrity in their research practices, professional discipline, show respect for diversity and inclusion, and value respectful and inclusive discourse. |
| How are learners assessed? | Ethical and professional responsibility is assessed in two ways throughout the graduate program: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) self-assessment on exit survey 2) written class papers using graduate research paper writing rubric (element 9- references) |
| What are the expectations for the students? | For this learning objective, students are evaluated on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Integrity in scholarship 2) Responsible and informed decision-making 3) Appropriate and effective interactions with diverse others 4) Use of inclusive language 5) |
| What are the expectations for the program? | For the exit interview we have the following expectations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 100% of students report the program prepared them to communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse others 2) 100% of students report they feel equipped to make informed and responsible decisions 3) 100% of students report they use inclusive language For the Graduate Research Paper rubric (element 9- reference) we have the following expectations: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 100% of students rated as competent 2) 50% of students rated as highly competent |

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| <p>What were the results?</p> | <p>Exit interview:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 100% of students report communicating appropriately and effectively with diverse others 2) 100% of students report making informed and responsible decisions 3) 100% of students report use of inclusive language <p>Graduate Research Paper rubric (element 9):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) 100% of on-campus and online students rated as competent 2) 35% of on-campus and 90% of online students rated as highly competent |
| <p>How are the results shared? How will these results be used?</p> | <p>The assessment report is an agenda item for graduate faculty meetings at the beginning of each term. Our graduate faculty discuss results and explore ways we can make improvements. We are continuing to explore ways we can assess ethics and professional responsibility, but we feel this is a good start.</p> |

Part 2

Describe what your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

The Communication Studies division continued to collect all of the data outlined on the previous report. We also added the ethics and professional responsibility goal to our assessment. We did this by utilizing our exit surveys more fully to assess how well students felt our program equipped them to be ethical and informed decision-makers, as well as more equipped to interact appropriately and effectively with diverse others, and use more inclusive language. We also utilized our Graduate Student Paper rubrics to assess student integrity in research and scholarship. We are continuing to explore ways we can better assess the new learning goal. We are also exploring ways to utilize our exit surveys more effectively for assessment purposes.

Since our last reporting period in 2020, we have also seen upward growth in our online program, which means we are collecting more data from our online program than our on-campus program. Similar to last year, we have separated out the findings for each program. We had also hoped to increase our on-campus student engagement with research related activities over this past year.

Unfortunately, a few things prevented us from doing that. First, all of our classes were moved online for the fall 2020 semester, which changed our ability to provide the same type of learning (and research opportunities) as we would have with in-person classes. Second, many students and faculty who had wanted to participate in conferences and other research-related activities were not afforded the opportunity to do so during the pandemic year. Another contributing factor for lower numbers of students doing research is simply because our largest enrollment comes from our online program, which does not have a thesis option. This means that a majority of our students are not required to produce research in the traditional sense. Our graduate faculty are working on ways to be more creative with both our on-campus and our online students to increase student research activities and their research presence on campus and at conferences.

Part 3

Summarize changes and improvements in curriculum, instruction, and learning that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Our department has continued to see a positive impact from curriculum changes and pedagogical alterations we've made since our last two reports. As mentioned in last year's report, we saw a significant increase in our graduation rates once we implemented comprehensive exam options for our on-campus students. This change resulted in a substantially higher percentage of students completing their program requirements and graduating on time--from 60% in 2018 to 100% in 2020. We continued that trend in 2021 with 100% of our on-campus students completing their degree in 2 years.

Our online program continues to grow. In response to this growth, we have undergone some curriculum changes that will help us deliver our online program to a growing student population, while also ensuring that our enrollment numbers in class remain relatively low. Specifically, we added 3 new graduate courses last year to help meet the growing demand in our online program. We are currently in the process of adding even more classes next year. In general, we have learned through our assessment data that our online population is thriving in both of our online programs (Certificate and MA). 100% of our online student population has met or exceeded our expectations on every learning goal. More than 75% of the online students who initially enrolled in our 18-hour Certificate in Communication Processes program went on to complete the full MA degree. These students note in their exit interviews that they liked the program so much that they decided to continue on for the full degree. Another new development this past year is that many of our online students were requesting to complete the degree in less than 2 years (most students take 6 hours [2 classes] per semester for six semesters). This meant that students needed more class options each semester to finish in

time. These needs (both growth and a demand to increase time-to-completion) are driving our current plans to add more online classes next year.

We also had 3 students in our accelerated program last year who went on to join our graduate program this year. We currently do not have any students enrolled in our accelerated program, but will have one enrollment for Spring 2022. Our faculty have been exploring ways to better recruit undergraduate students. One recruitment strategy is to utilize our undergraduate advisors more fully, where they will talk with qualified student advisees about the accelerated program and encourage them to apply.

Current assessment data also indicates that we need continue to increase our on-campus students' writing and critical thinking skills. In the past, we have done this is through an informal mentoring process and by providing a weekly writing group for students needing assistance. Covid-19 put a halt to those meetings last year. We hope to continue offering this service once students and faculty feel more comfortable meeting in larger face-to-face groups.