Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet (MA/PhD Anthropology)

Program Information:

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<td>Date Submitted</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
MA/PhD Learning Outcomes

1. Develop a substantive knowledge of anthropological theory and information, including a thorough understanding a particular theoretical, topical and regional subject. Obtain mastery of a specific subject area.
2. Be able to critically evaluate anthropological theories and arguments, and be able to construct sound anthropological interpretations.
3. Be able to conceive of, implement, and complete original anthropological research that makes a substantive contribution to the discipline.
4. Be able to excel in written and oral communication. Be able to make presentations to professional audiences, and understand how to successfully write grants and publish in the academic community.
5. Obtain experience in the application of anthropological theory and methods, and gain leadership skills in carrying out anthropological projects independently.
6. Become knowledgeable of the ethical standards involved in conducting anthropological research, and develop a substantive understanding of the social, political, and ethical issues related to the practice of the discipline.

ANTHRO 703 (CORE, required)
Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2 & 4

1) Assessment ANTH 703: Graduate Learning Outcomes #2 and #4

‘PechaKucha’ Style Presentations.
Student learning was assessed on a student-by-student basis four times over the course of the semester. In each seminar meeting, two to three students provided brief ‘PechaKucha’ style PowerPoint presentations on that week’s readings that served as a succinct and focused point of departure for seminar discussion and debate. The presentation format was highly structured and brief by design; 4 PowerPoint slides, with a total presentation time of 5 minutes maximum (one minute for the first 3 slides; up to 2 minutes for the 4th and final slide). Like formal PechKucha presentations, these were timed (by the professors), and students were docked points on their presentations if they went over the time limit. Students were graded on a 50 point scale for each of their four presentations during the semester. Assessment outcome measures: Four of the eight graduate students in the seminar demonstrated improved evaluative/interpretive and oral/written communication skills (via their ‘PechaKucha’ style presentations) over the course of the semester. (Three students neither improved nor declined in performance, and one student showed a slightly declining performance.) Of the four students who did better, the mean average improvement (as a percentage of a grade on a 25 point scale) from the first half (presentations 1 and 2), to the second half (presentations 5 and 6) was approximately 10.5% or one approximately letter grade (range of 4% - 16%).

2) Assessment ANTH 703: Graduate Learning Outcome #1, #2, and #4.

Weekly summary/analysis writing assignment:
Each week, students turned in a brief (typically one single-spaced typewritten page) meta-
analysis of that week’s assigned readings regarding the major intellectual paradigms found in anthropology. The bibliography for the course was extensive, and included approximately 50 articles and book chapters. Students were provided with extensive written feedback from both professors on their written meta-analysis each and every week. Feedback could then be used to improve the following week’s summary/analysis. The readings for the seminar were divided into nine graded essays. Each student’s iterative essays were graded by both professors and the two grades averaged.

Assessment outcome measures: The mean average graded score for the first graded written critical summary/analysis of assigned readings was 21.25 (out of 25 possible points). The mean average graded score for the ninth and final written critical summary/analysis of assigned readings was 46.8, an average improvement of nearly 10% (a full letter grade). All eight students improved their essay score from the first to the final essay. This overall improvement reveals an in-depth understanding of anthropological paradigmatic frameworks and improved evaluative/interpretive written communication skills.

3) Assessment ANTH 703: Graduate Learning Outcomes #1 and #2.

Pre and post seminar questions regarding the three elements of philosophical paradigms used to guide scholarly inquiry. The first day of the seminar, students were asked to briefly define and characterize, in writing, three foundational paradigmatic concepts (ontology, epistemology, and methodology) commonly identified by philosophers of science which orient and guide scholarly inquiry. At the conclusion of the seminar, students were asked to revisit these concepts relay their post-seminar understanding of these foundational concepts, based on seminar readings, discussions, and their written analyses over the course of the semester.

Assessment outcome measures: All eight students showed dramatic improvement in their understanding of these foundational paradigmatic concepts. This was the major aim of the graduate seminar. Results of the ‘pre-test’ on day 1 of the seminar revealed that response spaces for 8 of the 24 items (or 33%) were left blank by students. Of the remaining 16 written responses, 4 (17%) were entirely misidentified as concepts. Thus, students, on average, had no understanding – or a fundamental misunderstanding – of half of the orienting concepts for the seminar at its outset. By the end of the seminar, given the same set of questions, all eight students properly identified and discussed the orienting paradigmatic concepts of ontology, epistemology, and methodology, in the context of philosophical paradigmatic frameworks in anthropology.

Three Representative Student Examples

1) One student wrote “How.” in the pre-test space provided to define and discuss methodology with respect to paradigmatic frameworks. Their post-test answer was as follows: “The forms of analysis that can be employed to improve the understanding of the object of study. These can be manipulative, observational, or reflexive, but are dependent on the epistemological assumptions of the investigator.”
2) Another student left the ontology space blank on the pre-test, but on the post-test wrote of ontology: “The belief/assumptions regarding the nature of the world/reality. Ontological frameworks provide a foundation for shaping assumptions about how ‘knowable’ reality is (how ‘objective’ external environments are presumed to be).

3) A final student also left the pre-test epistemology space blank. On the post-test, the same student wrote of epistemology: “Why one can know something. The theoretical understanding of how it is that the knowable comes to be elucidated; that is, how it may be demonstrated something is known.”

ANTHRO 673 (Elective – 6 graduate students)
Learning Outcomes Assessed: #4 and #5

Assessment and Outcomes (Learning outcome #4 and #5)

Each graduate student chose a topic at the beginning of the semester that they would plan a class around. Students met weekly with the professor to work on their lesson plans, their PPT presentations and their goals for what they wanted the undergrads to learn. The also practiced with each other their presentation, obtaining helpful critical comments about improving their delivery. They were also instructed to include some “active learning” parts to their lesson plan, and also to include an in-class 3 minute writing session on “the clearest and muddiest points” made in the presentation.

Each grad student taught on of the classes in the course of the semester and they were given immediate feedback not only from the professor, but also from their peers in the class. This exercise demonstrated experience in the application of anthropological theory and methods and they gained oral communication skills. They also showed mastery over one of the topics with enough proficiency that they could teach others about the topic.

Analysis of Assessment Data Collected in Spring and Fall 2018

The Department collated data from 2018 on major graduate student degree benchmarks.

Three students graduated this year with their PhD degrees, and five with their MA degrees. Another three students successfully defended their Ph.D. prospectuses and are now ABD. Additionally, three students defended their MA prospectus. We have had a steady increase in the number of candidates applying to our graduate program (from under 50 in 2014, to over 80 in 2017. This has permitted us to be more selective in whom we admit, and to have grad students who are able to complete their various requirements towards the degree in a timely fashion.
Lessons Learned from the Assessment Results

The graduate program is becoming increasingly competitive to get into and there is a decidedly higher quality of grad student matriculating into our program. The graduate students appear to meet our objectives with respect to student learning outcomes. Students showed enhanced understanding of and ability to apply key concepts and examples. The assessment findings from a graduate class relying upon oral and written performance also showed improvements across the course. These findings complement the quantitative data from pre- and post-test assessments.

Graduate assessment is challenging particularly for learning outcomes that don’t lend themselves easily to direct quantitate testing. Thus we have begun to institute more qualitative assessment tools such as working on their prospectuses earlier and with more mentoring and guidance. One qualitative but important indicator of graduate success is that 22 of our graduate students obtained GPSA funding during 2018 to attend regional and national conferences where they presented aspects of their research. Graduate students demonstrated success meeting key benchmarks (e.g., prospectus defenses) in the course of their graduate studies, and are successfully participating in key extracurricular activities (such as presenting conference papers and publishing) and that play an important role in professional development in our field.

Program’s Response to Assessment Results

Findings from the assessment report will be shared at the next annual departmental retreat. The department as a whole will then discuss the implications of the results. If necessary, the department will request the chair to appoint an ad hoc committee to implement proposed curriculum changes. Aspects of the assessment report are involved in continued departmental curriculum discussions, including the aims and concepts featured in ANTH 703 and potentially new graduate-level classes. Graduate committee members have continued to provide guidance and feedback to Ph.D. students throughout the process of developing their topics, particularly their proposals and written versions of the dissertation. The new Graduate College online system will be happily embraced for providing more ready access to summary data on graduate student progression landmarks (e.g., comprehensive exams, dissertation defenses).