Exemplary Assessment Reports – Graduate Programs

**2016/2017 Reports**

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# INTRODUCTION

The following are excerpted components from some 2016/2017 Assessment Reports that the Office of Planning and Assessment believes are particularly well-done. Most are copied and pasted exactly as they were presented in the report, though some have been lightly edited. Although in some cases it is the connection between components that provide the good examples, most of the components provide good examples on their own. Highlighted components include:

* program learning objectives (PLOs)
* well-designed or described assessment measures
* performance criteria
* summaries/interpretations of assessment findings
* action plans

Each component is briefly defined and described, and then discussed with respect to what makes a good exemplar. Following the list of exemplar assessment report components are a two complete assessment reports that provide good examples of how the components are linked together.

# PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES (PLOs)

Program learning objectives describe what students are expected to know and be able to do when they graduate from the program. Well-written objectives are student-centered, clear, and measurable. Good objectives also include the disciplinary context. A well-written learning objective makes choosing a measure for assessment an easy task. Graduate program learning objectives must align with the Graduate Council Learning Goals.

1. Graduates will demonstrate breadth and depth in their knowledge of the principles, concepts and methods of the field of Plant Pathology and its related disciplines, and be able to critically evaluate, integrate, and apply that knowledge. *(Plant Pathology, M.S.)*
2. Demonstrate advanced research skills, including posing hypotheses, designing critical experiments, collecting data, evaluating data, and drawing conclusions in the study of biological problems. *(Biology, Ph.D.)*
3. Use professional standards of the field of Biology from evaluation of literature to communication of research findings in written and spoken presentations. *(Biology, Ph.D.)*
4. Use interdisciplinary knowledge and methods of IST to plan and conduct a research thesis or scholarly paper. *(Information Sciences and Technology, M.S.)*
5. Graduates will demonstrate the ability to organize disciplinary knowledge through the creation of syllabi, by discussing and thinking about their teaching in ways that reflect current pedagogical practice and theory, and, as feasible, by teaching introductory and advanced concepts and topics appropriate to their field.” (Comparative Literature, Ph.D.)

# ASSESSMENT MEASURES

A good assessment measure is aligned closely with the learning objective being assessed. For graduate programs there are obvious assessment measures built into the program that provide opportunities for assessment, such as candidacy exams, theses and defenses. The measure below provides an example of an alternative type of assessment.

### World Literature Syllabus

Every PhD student must take the 3-credit CMLIT Pedagogy Seminar. One major assignment for that seminar is creating a world literature syllabus that reflects a focus on student learning and strategies for achieving the graduate student’s own pedagogical aims, within institutional expectations. *(Comparative Literatures, Ph.D.)*

# PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

A performance criterion provides a benchmark against which assessment results are compared. A good criterion makes it easy to tell whether or not students have met the learning objective.

1. 80% of IST 504 students will score at least 2/4 (basic) on topic and literature review categories (rows 1 and 2) on the IST 504 assignment rubric.

80% of IST 505 students will score at least 3/4 (proficient) on topic and literature review categories (rows 1 and 2) on the IST 505 assignment rubric.

80% of students who choose the research thesis option will score at least 4/4 (distinguished) on the research thesis rubric.

80% of students who choose the scholarly paper option will score at least 4/4 (distinguished) on the scholarly paper rubric. *(Information Sciences and Technology, Ph.D.)*

*\*the rubric is included at the end of this document*

1. We expect that at least 90% of our students will demonstrate the minimal competence expressed on the Check Sheet. *(Comparative Literature, Ph.D.)*
2. Each Thesis Committee member will rate the breadth and depth of knowledge demonstrated as it relates to the thesis topic on the following scale: 1) insufficient; 2) minimally competent; 3) highly competent; 4) superior. Ninety percent of theses will score 3 or 4. *(Plant Pathology, M.S.)*

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The best summaries of findings are complete but concise. Including the number of students assessed is helpful.

1. For the 2016-17 academic year two Master’s theses were evaluated. One thesis was rated as an average of the reviewers as 3.25, the other was rated at 2. *(Plant Pathology, M.S.)*
2. In the academic year 2016-2017 the candidacy committee examined nine graduate students representing seven research labs in the Biology Department. Three students took the exam in the Fall semester, and six students in the Spring semester. Of the nine students, three failed to pass the exam in the Spring examination, giving an annual approval of 66.7%. Specific written improvement recommendations were made to each of the three students that failed the test, and all were scheduled to retake the test during the 2017-2018 academic year. *(Biology, Ph.D.)*
3. 15 students completed IST 504. The assessment plan and associated rubric was not available early enough to administer this course-based plan (IST 504 is always taught in the Fall semester). 11 students completed IST 505. At the end of class, the IST 505 instructor rated each student on the first two rows of the MS Course Paper Rubric (attached). 9 of the 11 achieved 3 of a possible 4 in this evaluation, indicating that 82% performed at the level of “Proficient”. This result meets the performance criterion we had set, which was for 80% to be scored a 3 out of 4 on the rubric, i.e. “Proficient”. *(Information Sciences and Technology, M.S.)*

# INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS/ ACTION PLANS

*Interpreting findings involves describing possible reasons that the results turned out as they did. Possibilities include the assessment itself, the rubric, the curriculum, pedagogy, or student preparation. Good action plans are aligned closely with the interpretations.*

### Interpretation

This assessment shows that students are meeting the performance target. Nevertheless, a range of qualitative levels was evident. The target requires performance at a minimum level of competence; while all students met that criterion, nearly all performed at a significantly higher level. One student’s performance was truly outstanding.

### Action Plan

Since our numbers were very small this first year, we plan to assess this learning objective again, using the 3-credit Pedagogy course (and the same assessment mechanism) again in the Fall semester of 2017. The course itself will be slightly adjusted based on student feedback from the Fall 2016 version (for example, some readings will be updated), but there will be substantial continuity and thus we should be able to compile a larger overall dataset for understanding our graduate students’ achievement of this learning objective. *(Comparative Literature, Ph.D.)*

### Interpretation

The majority of the content of the written candidacy exam is based on content from the two core courses our doctoral students take during their first year of study. The >80% passing rate indicates that these courses are effective in teaching this content. The remaining portion of the exam is on general biology and plant biology, topics we expect our students to have background in. These results indicate that students entering our PhD program come with the appropriate background to pursue studies in Plant Pathology.

### Action Plan

We see no need for action at this time. *(Plant Pathology, M.S.)*

# COMPLETE ASSESSMENT REPORTS

*The following are nearly complete assessment reports (some components are not included). They provide examples of the alignment between the components – the measures reflect the learning objectives, the action plans follow directly from the interpretation of results.*

## Plant Pathology, Ph.D.

**Program learning objective:** Graduates will demonstrate breadth and depth in their knowledge of the principles, concepts and methods of the field of Plant Pathology and its related disciplines, and be able to critically evaluate, integrate, and apply that knowledge.

**Assessment measure**: Written Candidacy Exam

**Performance criterion:** Each Thesis Committee member will rate the breadth and depth of knowledge demonstrated as it relates to the thesis topic on the following scale: 1) insufficient; 2) minimally competent; 3) highly competent; 4) superior. Ninety percent of theses will score 3 or 4.

**Summary of assessment findings**: For the 2016-17 academic year two Master’s theses were evaluated. One thesis was rated as an average of the reviewers as 3.25, the other was rated at 2.

**Interpretation of findings**: With a sample size of two it is difficult to make meaningful interpretations.

**Action plan:** No actions are recommended as we do not wish to over interpret a small data set.

## Comparative Literature, Ph.D.

**Program learning objective:** Graduates will demonstrate the ability to organize disciplinary knowledge through the creation of syllabi, by discussing and thinking about their teaching in ways that reflect current pedagogical practice and theory, and, as feasible, by teaching introductory and advanced concepts and topics appropriate to their field.

**Assessment measure**: Every PhD student must take the 3-credit CMLIT Pedagogy Seminar. One major assignment for that seminar is creating a world literature syllabus that reflects a focus on student learning and strategies for achieving the graduate student’s own pedagogical aims, within institutional expectations. (Check Sheet attached.)

**Performance criterion:** We expect that at least 90% of our students will demonstrate the minimal competence expressed on the Check Sheet.

**Interpretation of assessment findings**: This assessment shows that students are meeting the performance target. Nevertheless, a range of qualitative levels was evident. The target requires performance at a minimum level of competence; while all students met that criterion, nearly all performed at a significantly higher level. One student’s performance was truly outstanding.

**Action Plan:** Since our numbers were very small this first year, we plan to assess this learning objective again, using the 3-credit Pedagogy course (and the same assessment mechanism) again in the Fall semester of 2017. The course itself will be slightly adjusted based on student feedback from the Fall 2016 version (for example, some readings will be updated), but there will be substantial continuity and thus we should be able to compile a larger overall dataset for understanding our graduate students’ achievement of this learning objective.

## Communication Sciences and Disorders, M.S.

**Program learning objective:** KNOW. Graduates will be able to demonstrate applied clinical principles and practices required to provide competent clinical services.

**Assessment measure**: Faculty assessment of Master’s course assignments (e.g., CSD 546 video analysis activity; CSD 548 practical skills lab) for translation and application of clinical principles and practices. Faculty for courses with assessments aligned with this PLO (CSD 546, CSD 547, CSD 548, CSD 597E) will review student performance on stated assignments for demonstration of application of clinical principles and practices and provide data on the number of students who are Exceptional (score of >90%), Proficient (score of 80-89%), or Below Standards (score of <80%).

**Performance criterion:** Student performance on each assessment and assignment will be at Proficient or better.

**Summary of assessment findings:**

Fall 2016

CSD 546 Adult Language Disorders: Video analysis activity

**17/18 Exceptional, 1/18 Proficient**

CSD 547 Child Language Disorders: Projects 3, 4, 5

**Project 3 - 27/28 Exceptional, 1/28 Proficient**

**Project 4 - 27/28 Exceptional, 1/28 Proficient**

**Project 5 – 22/28 Exceptional, 6/28 Proficient**

Spring 2017

CSD 548 Dyphagia: Practical skills lab

**18/18 Exceptional (competence based—students repeated exercises until mastered)**

CSD 597E Cleft palate: Final paper (SNAP report)

**18/18 Exceptional (group assignment, teams of 3)**

**Interpretation of assessment findings**: Students’ performance met criteria. The large proportion of students achieving at the Exceptional level is not surprising, given that the students were admitted to a highly competitive master’s degree program, and have strong skills and abilities and high motivation.

**Action Plan:** No deficiencies were identified regarding the PLO. We will continue to monitor student performance.

# MS Course Paper Rubric (Information Sciences and Technology)

1. ***Indicate names of student and evaluator***

***Student’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

***Evaluator’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_***

1. ***Check the appropriate course***

* IST 504
* IST 505

1. **Place an X in the appropriate boxes to indicate the level of performance the student reached, like so:**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Attribute** |  |  | **UNSATISFACTORY (1)** |  |  | **BASIC (2)** |  |  | **PROFICIENT (3)** |  | |  | **DISTINGUISHED (4)** | |
| **Introduction / Thesis Statement** |  |  | Weak introduction of topic, thesis,  & subtopics; thesis is weak and lacks an arguable position. |  |  | Adequate introduction that states topic, thesis, and some of the subtopics; thesis is somewhat clear and arguable. |  |  | Proficient introduction that states background information, provocative question, topic, thesis, and all subtopics in proper order; thesis is a clear and arguable statement of position. |  | |  | Exceptional introduction that grabs interest of reader and states background information, provocative question, topic, thesis, and all subtopics in proper order; thesis exceptionally clear, arguable, well developed, and a definitive statement. | |
| **Quality of Information / Evidence** |  |  | Limited information on topic with lack of research, details, or historically accurate evidence. |  |  | Some aspects of paper are researched with some accurate evidence from peer-reviewed papers and also industry, Internet, and white paper sources, but may rely too heavily on non-peer-reviewed papers. |  |  | Well researched with accurate & critical evidence from a variety of sources—primarily research papers, but also including more informal papers from industry, Internet, and white paper sources, where appropriate. |  | |  | Exceptionally researched with extreme detail, historically accurate with critical evidence from a wide variety of sources—primarily research papers, but also including more informal papers from industry, Internet, and white paper sources, where appropriate. | |
| **Support of Ideas / Analysis** |  |  | Limited connections made among analysis of evidence, subtopics, counterarguments, & thesis / topic; complete lack of or inappropriate or greatly limited conclusions. |  |  | Some connections made among analysis of evidence, subtopics, arguments, & thesis / topic; somewhat limited or somewhat inappropriate conclusions. |  |  | Consistent connections made among analysis of evidence, subtopics, arguments, & thesis  / topic; good and generally appropriate conclusions. |  | |  | Exceptionally critical, relevant, consistent connections among arguments, analysis, subtopics, & thesis/topic; excellent, appropriate conclusions. | |
| **Organization / Development of Ideas** |  |  | Lacks clear and logical presentation and development of ideas; weak transition b/w ideas and paragraphs. |  |  | Somewhat clear and logical presentation and development of ideas; adequate transitions b/w paragraphs. | Clear and logical presentation and development of ideas that support thesis; good transitions b/w paragraphs. | | |  | Exceptionally clear, logical, mature, thorough presentation and development of ideas that support thesis; excellent transition between paragraphs. | | |
| **Language Conventions** |  |  | Inconsistent grammar, spelling, and paragraphing throughout paper. |  |  | Periodic errors in grammar, spelling, and paragraphing, but basically understandable. | Clear, with minimal errors in grammar, spelling, and paragraphing. | | |  | Very concise, clear, with consistently proper grammar, spelling, and paragraphing. | | |
| **Documentation** |  |  | Very inconsistent or incorrect use of citations in both text and Works Cited section. |  |  | Sometimes inconsistent or incorrect use of citations in both text and Works Cited. | Consistent and mostly correct format in both text and Works Cited section. | | |  | Proper detailed format always used consistently and correctly in both text and Works Cited. | | |