**Major Assessment Report Template**

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| **Department and Degree: Communication MA**  **Assessment Coordinator: Dr. Douglas Fraleigh**  **1. What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?** List all program outcomes you assessed (if you assessed an outcome not listed on your department SOAP please indicate explain). Do not describe the measures or benchmarks in this section Also please only describe major assessment activities in this report. No GE assessment was required for the 2016-2017 academic year.  SLO: Learning Outcome 2.2: Students will apply at least one critical/theoretical perspective or method to systematically analyze and assess a rhetorical and/or communication phenomenon. |
| **2. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment?** If the assignment (activity, survey, etc.) does not correspond to the activities indicated in the timeline on the SOAP, please indicate why. Please clearly indicate how the assignment/survey is able to measure a specific outcome. If after evaluating the assessment you concluded that the measure was not clearly aligned or did not adequately measure the outcome please discuss this in your report. Please include the benchmark or standard for student performance in your assessment report (if it is stated in your SOAP then this information can just be copied into the report). An example of an expectation or standard would be “On outcome 2.3 we expected at least 80% of students to achieve a score of 3 or above on the rubric.”  Seventeen graduate students’ Graduate Writing Requirement submissions were assessed. All graduate students are required to submit a paper from one of their graduate seminars in order to pass this requirement. These papers provide evidence of the ability of graduate students to apply theoretical perspectives to analyze rhetorical or communication perspectives across a variety of graduate seminars.  The department’s rubric for graduate student writing (attached) was used to evaluate the papers.  A 5-point scale was used to assess each student’s overall performance and their performance on each subcategory of the assessment.    5-- Exemplary  4—Accomplished  3—Satisfactory  2—Developing  1—Beginning  Students were evaluated in four areas: style and format, mechanics, content, and organization.  It was expected that 80% of students would achieve a passing score of 3 or higher (satisfactory) on each of the four subcategories. |
| **3. What did you discover from the data?** Discuss the student performance in relation to your standards or expectations. Be sure to clearly indicate how many students did (or did not) meet the standard for each outcome measured. Where possible, indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses in student performance on the outcome(s).  After applying the rubric to the speeches, these were the results:  Students scoring 3 or higher on each rubric category: 15 (88.2%)  Students scoring below 3 on at least one rubric category 2 (11.8%)  Consequently, the goal of 80% of the students achieving a passing score of three or higher on all four subcategories was met.  Breaking the results down by each scoring level, these were the results:  4.5 to 5.0 2  4.0 to 4.49 6  3.5 to 3.99 5  3.0 to 3.49 2  2.5 to 2.99 1  2.0 to 2.49 0  1.5 to 1.99 1  This data indicates that eight students scored very high, averaging a “4” (accomplished or better) on each category. Five additional students averaged in the high “3” (satisfactory) range. One student scored high in the “2” (developing) range. This student achieved a passing score on two of the four rubric categories. One student scored in the low developing range. The comparison of higher and lower scoring papers below provides some insights on how students who are experiencing challenges with graduate-level writing can be mentored and helped to improve their writing.    With respect to the subcategories, the mean student scores were:  Style and Format 3.83  Mechanics 3.82  Content 3.58  Organization 3.59  The data indicate that for each of the subcategories, the average performance was in the high satisfactory range. The highest score was for style and format and the lowest was for content, although the scores for all four categories was in a relatively narrow range. By analyzing the comments that were provided along with the scores, the reasons for student success (and areas for improvement) can be noted in each category.   * **Style and Format.** Papers that were rated accomplished or exemplary explained their perspective or method in a clear and detailed manner. They discussed classical and/or foundational scholarly works and expanded on their literature review with relevant contemporary scholarship. Research sources were thoroughly documented and APA (or another appropriate style manual) citation format was consistently followed. A strong rationale for their analysis was developed and the paper was situated well in the literature.   Reviewers also had a number of constructive suggestions that students writing at the accomplished level could implement to make their writing even stronger. These included selecting a single style manual and implementing that manual correctly throughout their paper; working on developing their academic voice; and paraphrasing long block quotations.  Papers that were rated below 3 did not provide a sufficient review of relevant literature. Important sources were not included and the most current scholarship in their area was not sufficiently discussed. These papers had a substantial number of citation errors and did not consistently follow a manual of style.   * **Mechanics.** Papers that were rated accomplished or exemplary wrote in a manner that was clear and easy to follow. These papers were often characterized as “a good read.” The author’s tone was scholarly. The papers contained few, if any, writing errors.   Constructive suggestions for accomplished writers included greater care to avoid long,  verbose sentences and long paragraphs, greater use of parallelism in sentence structure, and even more careful proofreading (although reviewers noted that these papers were well written in general).  Papers that were rated below 3 included a substantial number of writing errors. These errors indicated that the author had conducted minimal, if any, proofreading before submission. Abstract terms were used without sufficient explanation or definition and students made excessive use of broad, general claims that were not warranted by the support provided.   * **Content.** Papers that were rated accomplished or exemplary had a strong literature review of their critical or theoretical perspective. The authors used the literature effectively to support points they were making. They provided the reader with a good understanding of their topic. The writers effectively applied their theoretical perspective or method to the communication phenomenon being studied. The authors went beyond a restatement of the literature and provided their own original analysis. The authors’ analysis constituted a significant proportion of the papers’ content.   Constructive suggestions for improvement on papers rated accomplished included greater emphasis on interpretation and analysis (rather than describing the artifact or phenomenon being studied), developing stronger links between supporting arguments and the claim, looking for the most current and relevant literature in the area being studies, and emphasizing communication discipline publications when selecting literature.  Papers that were rated below 3 needed a stronger link between their literature review and the phenomenon being studied. It was not always clear how the authors’ analysis was warranted by the literature they presented. The papers focused on reporting the literature than on developing original analysis. One paper demonstrated significant problems in paraphrasing scholarly material or using quotation marks when primarily restating the author’s words.   * **Organization.** Papers that were rated accomplished or exemplary had a clear structure. The thesis was indicated in the introduction, along with a preview of the main ideas to be covered. The authors used appropriate headings to divide the paper topically and make main ideas clear. Major sections of the paper were appropriate for a scholarly analysis. Transitions and other organizing strategies made the paper easy to follow.   Constructive suggestions for improvement on papers rated accomplished included the use of appropriate level-1 headings for scholarly argument and making sure to use good, descriptive headings *and* transitions between major parts of the scholarly argument.  Papers that were rated below 3 tended to lack a clearly stated thesis in the introduction. Main points were not previewed or the main sections of the papers did not correlate with the structure that was previewed. Some sections of the papers did not clearly link to the author’s thesis or scholarly argument. There were few if any headings to guide the reader through the author’s argument. In one case, the conclusion developed new ideas, rather than summarizing the author’s analysis. |
| **4. What changes did you make as a result of the data?** Describe how the information from the assessment activity was reviewed and what action was taken based on the analysis of the assessment data.  The graduate faculty has been engaged in an ongoing discussion of the quality of MA student writing and teaching strategies to enhance that writing. The results of this assessment will be shared with the graduate coordinator and graduate faculty and incorporated into this ongoing discussion. One outcome of that discussion has been (beginning in spring 2018) the appointment of committees of three faculty members to evaluate each student’s writing submission, provide written feedback based on the rubric provided below, and then meet with the student and advisor. A second change already been implemented as a result of these discussions is the implementation of an Introduction to Graduate Studies course that is required for all first-semester students. Graduate-level writing is one of the points of emphasis in this course. |
| **5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2017-2018 AY?** List the outcomes and measures or assessment activities you will use to evaluate them. These activities should be the same as those indicated on your current SOAP timeline; if they are not please explain.  The department completed a program review and received final recommendations in Spring 2018. The review team commended the department’s annual assessments. The university committee recommended that the graduate faculty revise and update our graduate learning outcomes after deliberating and reaching consensus on our strategic vision and curriculum revisions. The department is engaged in regular meetings to make these changes in light of the program review and learning outcomes will be reframed to match curricular changes. The department will assess the first learning outcome that is established through this process in 2018-19. |
| **6. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?** Please provide a brief description of progress made on each item listed in the action plan. If no progress has been made on an action item, simply state “no progress.”  As noted above, the program review action plan called for the department to deliberate and reach a consensus on a strategic vision for the MA program and subsequent curriculum revisions in light of that vision. This is to be followed by the development of new learning outcomes and a schedule for assessment. The graduate faculty has been meeting regularly to discuss these recommendations and make the appropriate decisions  **Additional Guidelines:** If you have not fully described the assignment then please attach a copy of the questions or assignment guidelines. If you are using a rubric and did not fully describe this rubric (or the criteria being used) than please attach a copy of the rubric. If you administered a survey please consider attaching a copy of the survey so that the Learning Assessment Team (LAT) can review the questions.  **Rubric used to assess graduate level writing, Department of Communication**  (Scale: 5-Exemplary, 4-Accomplished, 3-Satisfactory, 2-Developing, 1-Beginning)  **Style and Format**  5. In addition to meeting the requirements for a 4, the paper consistently models the language and conventions used in the scholarly/professional literature appropriate to the student’s discipline. The manuscript would meet the guidelines for submission for publication in a peer reviewed communication journal in the author’s field of study.  4. While there may be minor errors, conventions for style and format are consistently used throughout the paper. Demonstrates thoroughness and competence in documenting sources; the reader would have little difficulty referring back to cited sources. Style and format contribute to the comprehensibility of the paper. Suitably models the discipline’s overall documentation style.  3. The style and format are broadly followed, but inconsistencies are apparent. There is selection of less suitable sources (non-peer reviewed literature, web information). The style may be difficult to follow to detract from the comprehensibility of the manuscript.  2. While some of the discipline’s conventions are followed, others are not. Paper lacks consistency of style and/or format. It may be unclear which references are direct quotes and which are paraphrased. Based on the information provided, the reader would have some difficulty referring back to cited sources. Significant revisions would contribute to the comprehensibility of the paper.  1. The stylistic conventions of the discipline are not followed. Fails to demonstrate thoroughness and competence in documentation. Inappropriate style and format make reading and comprehensibility problematic.  **Mechanics**  5. In addition to meeting the requirements for a 4, the paper is essentially error free in terms of mechanics. Writing flows smoothly from one idea to another.  4. While there may be minor errors, the paper follows normal conventions of spelling and grammar throughout. Errors do not significantly interfere with comprehensibility. Organizational structures such as subheadings are effectively used which help the reader move from one point to another.  3. Grammatical conventions are generally used, but inconsistency and/or errors result in weak, but still apparent, connections between topics in the formulation of the argument. Effective vocabulary is used.  2. Frequent errors in spelling, grammar (such as subject/verb agreements and tense), sentence structure and/or other writing conventions make reading difficult and interfere with comprehensibility. There is come confusion in the proper use of vocabulary and terms.  1. Paper contains numerous errors in spelling, grammar, and/or sentence structure, which make following the logic of the paper extremely difficult.  **Content**  5. In addition to meeting the requirements for a 4, excels in the organization and representation of ideas related to the topic. Raises important issues or ideas which may not have been represented in the literature cited. Would serve as a good basis for further research on the topic.  4. Summarizes relevant literature. General ideas are expanded upon in a creative and innovative manner thereby extending the significance of the work presented beyond a re-statement of known ideas.  3. Ideas presented closely follow conventional concepts with little expansion and development of new directions. Ideas and concepts are generally satisfactorily presented although lapses in logic are apparent. The reader is suitably introduced to the topic being presented such that the relationship to the student’s area of study is obvious.  2. The paper is thematically coherent, but is lacking in substantial ways. The content may be poorly focused or the scholarly argument weak or poorly conceived. Major ideas related to the content may be ignored or inadequately explored. Overall, the content needs significant revision to represent a critical analysis of the topic.  1. Analysis of existing scholarly/professional literature on the topic is inadequate. Content is poorly focused. The reader is left with little information or understanding regarding the paper’s topic.  **Organization**  5. In addition to meeting the requirements for a 4, excels in the organization of ideas related to the topic. Transitions effectively establish a sound scholarly argument and aid the reader in following the writer’s logic.  4. Topic is carefully focused. Clearly outlines the major points related to the topic, ideas are logically arranged to present a sound scholarly argument.  3. Ideas and concepts are generally satisfactorily presented although lapses in organization are apparent. The main points are mostly clear, but there may be some difficulty recognizing the subpoints to keep the reader on track within the topic.  2. The paper is logically coherent, but is lacking in a number of ways. Appropriate transitions are lacking. The organization needs significant revision to represent a critical understanding of the topic.  1. Paper lacks organization and focus. There is great difficulty in understanding the main points of the paper as well as the subpoints. The ideas are scattered. |