

Mass Communication and Journalism Department: Master of Arts Program

College of Arts and Humanities

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (SOAP)

[CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

I. Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at California State University, Fresno is to provide quality educational experiences to graduate students that promote critical thinking and scholarly skills based on the theory, methodology, principles and techniques of mass communication. The MCJ graduate program will prepare graduates to pursue doctoral education, achieve advancement in professional fields and/or become educators in the field of mass communication.

II. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

[CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

Learning Goal 1. Graduate students will develop an expanded understanding of selected topics in the field of mass communication.

Student Learning Outcome 1.1: Select specific subject matter areas and demonstrate topical content knowledge in order to enhance their potential for professional development.

Student Learning Outcome 1.2: Describe broad knowledge in disciplines that are related to, or supportive of, thesis research or project requirements.

Learning Goal 2. Graduate students will cultivate analytical skills for acquiring knowledge in and related to the specific disciplines in the field of mass communication.

Student Learning Outcome 2.1: Identify and conduct research appropriate to their selected areas of emphasis.

Student Learning Outcome 2.2: Demonstrate an ability to critically discuss problems related to their selected areas of emphasis.

Learning Goal 3. Graduate students will acquire enhanced communication skills, both written and oral, for purposes of conveying information in their selected disciplines to professionals and scholars in the field as well as to the general public.

Student Learning Outcome 3.1: Communicate the results of quantitative and qualitative research to a scholarly audience.

Student Learning Outcome 3.2: Communicate to professionals in their selected areas of emphasis.

Student Learning Outcome 3.3: Communicate knowledge of the field to the general public.

III. Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)

[CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

	204: Intro to Graduate Studies	205: Mass Communication Theory	206: Quantitative Research Methods	207: Qualitative Research Methods	Capstone: Project or Thesis	Elective Courses
1.1 Select and demonstrate topical knowledge	I	I	R	R	E	R
1.2 Describe broad knowledge related to thesis/project	I	I	R	R	E	R
2.1 Identify/ conduct research	I	I	R	R	E	R
2.2 Demonstrate ability to discuss problems	I	I	R	R	E	R
3.1 Communicate results of quantitative and qualitative research	I	I	R	R	E	R
3.2 Communicate to professionals	I	I	R	R	E	R
3.3 Communicate to general public	I	I	R	R	E	R

IV. Assessment Methods

A. Direct Measures (at least three)

- 1. First-Semester Core Coursework and Satisfaction of Graduate Writing Requirement.**
 Students' final papers in the first two core courses (MCJ 204 and 205, taken in the fall semester when they begin the program) will be assessed using a common rubric. The rubric will address Learning Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, and 3.1. Scores on this rubric will be gathered by the Graduate Assessment Coordinator and analyzed to determine the success of these courses in building students' skills in these areas, as well as to shape the courses' content for future semesters. These two core courses also satisfy the program's Graduate Writing Requirement.

2. **Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods Course Projects.** In each of these courses (MCJ 206 and 207), taken in the second semester of the program, students independently complete a full research project, including all stages of the research process. Students' final research papers will be assessed using a common rubric that addresses Learning Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, and 3.1.
3. **Thesis/Project Assessment.** The thesis/project assessment will occur in two ways. First, the theses and projects from each year's graduating students (2-4/year) will be collected and evaluated using a rubric by a group of MCJ graduate faculty. The assessment of theses and projects will likely demonstrate areas for improvement in the overall MCJ graduate curriculum. The rubric will assess Learning Outcomes 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, and 3.1. Students will also be required to publicly present their thesis/project work upon completion of the program, beginning in fall 2011. This presentation will be assessed by MCJ graduate faculty attendees to examine students' performance on Learning Outcomes 3.2 and 3.3.
4. **Comprehensive Exam.** The MCJ graduate faculty are currently developing a Comprehensive Exam option as a culminating experience for graduate students upon completion of the students' coursework. Once this exam is in place, it will be a useful assessment tool for measuring students' overall acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking skills, and research strategies. Details of the specific assessment criteria will be developed as the exam is designed and implemented. It will include a public oral defense or presentation that will permit greater assessment of students' understanding and communication skills. As a whole, the exam will assess Learning Outcomes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.

B. Indirect Measures (*Alumni Survey is required*)

1. **Alumni Survey.** We will conduct a survey of alumni opinions regarding their experiences and learning in the MCJ graduate program every three years.

V. Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

[CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE](#)

	First-Semester Core Coursework (MCJ 204 and 205)	Quantitative/Qualitative Research Methods Course Projects (MCJ 206 and 207)	Thesis/Project Assessment	Comprehensive Exam
1.1 Select and demonstrate topical knowledge	X	X	X	X
1.2 Describe broad knowledge related to thesis/project			X	
2.1 Identify/conduct research	X	X	X	X
2.2 Demonstrate ability to discuss	X	X	X	X

problems				
3.1 Communicate results of quantitative and qualitative research	X	X	X	X
3.2 Communicate to professionals			X	X
3.3 Communicate to general public			X	X

VI. Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE

Year 2011 to 2017

Method 1. Fall 2012, 2014, 2016: Collect and analyze data for First-Semester Core Coursework (MCJ 204 and 205). (Courses will not be taught fall 2011 because a new cohort of students will not be admitted during 2011-12.)

Method 2. Spring 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017: Collect and analyze data for Research Methods Course Projects (MCJ 206 and 207). (Courses will not be taught spring 2012 because a new cohort of students will not be admitted during 2011-12.)

Method 3. Fall 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017: Collect and analyze data for Thesis/Project Assessment (student presentations assessed as they are scheduled; written component evaluation and presentation data analysis in spring semester).

Method 4. Spring 2012, 2013, 2015, 2017: Collect and analyze data for Comprehensive Exam (or beginning in semester following exam approval and implementation).

Year 2011 to 2017

Method 1. In addition to annual assessment methods, alumni survey will be conducted biannually.

VII. Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting

CTRL + CLICK TO VIEW EXAMPLE

The information gathered from assessment processes will be used to adjust the graduate program curriculum, course content, and instruction. All of this information will be shared with the MCJ graduate faculty and the department for discussion and for improvement of the program.

The results of the First-Semester Core Coursework assessment will be used to determine the appropriate content for those courses and to improve students' introductory experience in the MCJ graduate program. The results of the Research Methods Course Projects assessment will likewise be used to adjust the content of those courses, suggest new instructional methods for addressing students' weaknesses, and better prepare students for undertaking independent research in the thesis/project phase of the program. The Thesis/Project Assessment and the Comprehensive Exam will help determine the program's overall success in preparing students for independent work, guide the adjustment of content in preceding courses, alter the overall course requirements if necessary, and provide for faculty

development as thesis/project advisors. The results of the alumni survey will guide the overall direction of the MCJ graduate program and help ensure that it is meeting current needs of students, employers and the profession.