**Annual Assessment Report for 2018-2019 AY**

Reports completed on assessment activities carried out during the 2018-2019 AY will be due September 30th 2019 and must be e-mailed to the Director of Assessment, Dr. Melissa Jordine (mjordine@mail.fresnostate.edu).

Provide detailed responses for each of the following questions within this word document. Please do NOT insert an index or add formatting. Furthermore, only report on two or three student learning outcomes even if your external accreditor requires you to evaluate four or more outcomes each year. Also be sure to explain or omit specialized or discipline-specific terms.

Department/Program: **Communication** Degree: **MA**

Assessment Coordinator: **Dr. Douglas Fraleigh**

1. Please list the learning outcomes you assessed this year.

Learning Outcome 2.4: Students will utilize appropriate language choice, sentence structure, grammatical and punctuation conventions and follow appropriate research style conventions (e.g. APA, MLA, or Chicago).

1. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment? **Please describe the assignment and the criteria or rubric used to evaluate the assignment in detail and, if possible, include copies of the assignment and criteria/rubric at the end of this report.**

We used the Graduate Writing Requirement submissions for all sixteen students who made submissions in 2017-18 and 2018-19. These submissions require all students to demonstrate mastery of graduate level writing.

Each paper was assessed by a three person faculty committee, using the department’s rubric for graduate student writing (attached). Faculty members assign a score of 1-5 based on the rubric, which provides criteria for assessing the competencies addressed in learning outcome 2.4. Faculty members also provide written comments. The faculty committee then meets with the student and their adviser to discuss the strengths of the paper and provide constructive suggestions for improvement.

Students are assessed based on their overall performance and on the performance on each of the two subcategories of the assessment (style/format and writing mechanics). The five point scale rates student work as follows:

5--Exemplary

4--Accomplished

3--Satisfactory

2--Developing

1—Beginning

**It was expected that 80% of the students or more would achieve a passing score of three or higher (satisfactory) on the overall assessment and on both of the subcategories.**

1. What did you learn from your analysis of the data? Please include sample size (how many students were evaluated) and indicate how many students (number or percentage instead of a median or mean) were designated as proficient.

After faculty applied the rubric to the writing submissions, these were the results for the overall assessment:

Students scoring higher than 3 on their paper 14 (87.5%)

Students scoring below 3 on their paper 2 (12.5%)

**Therefore, the goal of 80% of the students achieving a passing score of three or higher on the overall assessment was met. The mean score was 3.67.**

Breaking down the faculty assessment by students in each scoring level, these were the results:

4.5 to 5.0 3

4.0 to 4.5 6

3.5 to 4.0 2

3.0 to 3.5 3

2.5 to 3.0 2

Consequently, 9 of 16 students were rated accomplished or higher and an additional five students scored at 3.0 (satisfactory) to 3.9 range. Two students did not meet the 3.0 benchmark and both were rated in the 2.5 to 3.0 range.

On the two subcategories, 15 of 16 students (93.75%) met the 3.0 benchmark in the style and format category, with a mean score of 3.7. 14 out of 16 students (87.5%) met the benchmark in writing mechanics, with a mean score of 3.63. **Therefore, the goal of 80% or more of the students meeting the benchmark in both subcategories was met.**

Several themes were evident across the faculty members’ comments on the students’ work. These will be summarized below.

* **Style and Format.** Papers rated accomplished or exemplary typically utilized a format that was appropriate for the style manual they had selected and their format contributed to the comprehensibility of the paper. They summarized academic literature well and documented research sources effectively. These papers developed a sound rationale for their analysis and stated their thesis clearly. They developed their scholarly argument well, with clear major headings that helped the reader follow the argument. Good paragraph organization enabled the reader to follow the supporting analysis for each main idea.

Papers that scored at a lower level could have been improved by doing the following. First, they could provide a more accurate and precise explanation of core concepts. Second, a single style manual should be consistently followed and there should be a minimum of errors in citing sources and/or documenting them in the works cited section. Third, headings should be used to indicate major sections of the paper. Finally, paragraphs should be kept to a reasonable length and they should begin with clear topic sentences that indicate the point to be made.

* **Writing Mechanics.** Papers rated accomplished or exemplary were praised for a clear and interesting writing style. Faculty used terms such as “a good read” to describe the students’ work. There were few writing errors made in the stronger papers. Faculty members lauded the scholarly tone of highly rated papers and noted their consistent academic voice.

Papers that received lower scores could have been improved as follows. First, these papers would have benefited from careful proofreading. They contained excessive spelling, diction, and grammar errors for graduate level writing. Second, these papers could use shorter sentences and briefer paragraphs. Long sentences and paragraphs made their analysis more difficult to follow. Third, students should adopt a consistent, scholarly voice in their papers.

1. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?

The benchmark (80% of the students will score satisfactory or higher) was exceeded and 9 of 16 students scored accomplished or exemplary, so no major changes are warranted. Only two students did not meet the benchmark and they scored just below the required level (2.5 to 3.0). The results of this assessment will be shared with our graduate faculty. Our graduate faculty have held multiple meetings to discuss how to improve graduate student writing and one of the changes we made was to institute an Introduction to Graduate Studies course for all first-semester students. Graduate-level writing is an emphasis in this class and based on the above data, it appears that this change has facilitated student success on writing assignments.

1. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in last year’s assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year’s report please write N/A as your answer to this question.

The 2017-18 Communication MA assessment report did not recommend changes. The same process for assessing graduate student achievement was employed to address the learning outcomes under study in 2017-18 and the benchmark was met. We made significant changes in our graduate program to address writing concerns in 2016-17 and the SOAP data indicates that these changes have helped students succeed.

1. What assessment activities will you be conducting during the next academic year?

Our department and graduate faculty have been meeting regularly to discuss changes in our curriculum and corresponding learning outcomes in response to our program review. These discussions will culminate in new learning outcomes and a new SOAP plan. The department will conduct the assessment activities that are stipulated in this new plan.

1. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?

(1)Graduate Writing Requirement Policy. The department has adopted a new graduate writing process (as explained in #2 above) and this process is working well. (2)Academic Integrity. The department developed and implemented a new Introduction to Graduate Studies course and graduate-level writing and academic integrity are points of emphasis in this class. The graduate faculty also held a plagiarism workshop with Dr. Ida Jones. (3)Curricular Revisions. The graduate faculty has been holding regular meetings to discuss and reach a consensus on curricular revisions. (4)SOAP revisions. The graduate SOAP will be revised, based on the decisions made with respect to curricular revisions. (5)Graduate Handbook Updates. The graduate handbook has been updated to reflect policy changes. (6) Revised curriculum approved by 2021. The department has been meeting regularly to discuss curriculum and is on track to complete the process by 2021.

**APPENDIX**

**Rubric Used to Assess Graduate Level Writing**

(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.