

Program Assessment Report and Plan
HESC Master's Program
University of Arkansas
2023-2024

1. Department Name & Contact Information

School of Human Environmental Sciences

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2. Department Mission

The School will inspire people and organizations to reach their full potential through the delivery of innovative research, education, and service focused on individuals, families, communities, and their environments.

3. Program Goals

- **Goal 1:** Students can evaluate the depth and limitations of the current knowledge in human environmental sciences and its related disciplines;
- **Goal 2:** Students develop an attitude of inquiry and independent thinking by promoting analytic study, integration, and application of information and concepts derived from research in the various areas of human environmental sciences;
- **Goal 3:** Students understand the need for research in human environmental sciences and related disciplines and the role of research in the continual growth of knowledge and in the viability of academic disciplines; and
- **Goal 4:** Students learn to communicate accurately and effectively.

4. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- **SLO 1:** Students will master evidence-based knowledge appropriate to their area of concentration. (*assessed in 2023-2024*)
- **SLO 2:** Students will demonstrate the ability to identify and address complex problems in their area of concentration by forming solutions that are contextually appropriate, feasible, and relevant to public policy. (*assessed in 2022-2023*)
- **SLO 3:** Students will be able to critically analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information, ideas, and beliefs in the process of forming conclusions and solutions to complex issues and problems appropriate to their area of concentration. (*assessed in 2022-2023*)
- **SLO 4:** Students will demonstrate proficient communication skills. (*assessed in 2023-2024*)
 - be able to demonstrate appropriate interpersonal and oral communication skills to a variety of audiences.
- **SLO 5:** Thesis students will demonstrate the ability to design, implement and analyze research appropriate to their area of concentration; non-thesis master students will demonstrate an understanding of research methods and design appropriate to their area of concentration. (*assessed annually*)

5. Assessment Reports for Student Learning Outcomes 1, 4, and 5

A. Student Learning Outcome 1. Students will master evidence-based knowledge appropriate to their area of concentration.

- a. Apparel Merchandising and Product Development: understanding of the complex nature of the textiles and apparel industries, including how products are developed, produced, marketed and sold;
- b. Human Development and Family Sciences: the ability to apply and understand different theoretical and research-based issues in human development and family systems; including being knowledgeable, sensitive, and accepting of the diversity in the lived experiences of individuals and families;
- c. Human Nutrition: display knowledge in the areas of scientific evidence-based human nutrition and dietetics
- d. Hospitality Management: display knowledge in the areas of food and beverage, lodging and tourism, events and management.

Assessment Measure

1. **Direct measures:**
 - i. Thesis Track: Assessment of written and oral thesis defense
 - ii. Non-Thesis Track: Assessment of written and oral comprehensive exam
2. **Key personnel:** Academic and/or thesis committee graduate faculty members for each student

Acceptable and Ideal Targets (*not required for indirect measures*):

Rubric Categories (Written):

- Thesis-Track:
 - Mastery of theories and concepts in the field demonstrated in problem statement and literature review (item 1 on written assessment rubric)
 - Rating scale: 1 = does not meet expectation; 2 = meets expectation; 3 = exceeds expectation
 - It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 3 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.
- Non-Thesis-Track:
 - Identification of main issues in area of focus (item 3 on written assessment rubric)
 - Rating scale: 0-15 where 0 = insufficient attempt, 7.5 = emerging, and 15 = competence/mastery
 - It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 7.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 7.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 15 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.

Rubric Categories (Oral):

- Thesis-Track and Non-Thesis Track:
 - Mastery of the subject (item 4 on oral assessment rubric)
 - Rating scale: 0 - 5 where 0 = does not meet expectation, 2.5 = meets expectation, and 5 = exceeds expectation
 - It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 5 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.

Findings

1. Thesis Track: 100% of students defending their thesis projects during Spring 2024 exceeded expectations on the written assessment rubric (≥ 2) and the oral assessment rubric (≥ 2.5) (n=1).
2. Non-Thesis Track: 100% of students presenting their comprehensive exams during Spring 2024 exceeded expectations on the written assessment rubric (≥ 7.5) and the oral assessment rubric (≥ 2.5) (n=3).

- A. Student Learning Outcome 4.** Students will demonstrate proficient communication.
- a. Be able to demonstrate appropriate interpersonal and oral communication skills to a variety of audiences.

Assessment Measure

1. **Direct measures:**
 - i. For thesis students, assessment of oral thesis defense
 - ii. For non-thesis students, assessment of oral comprehensive exam
2. **Key personnel:** Academic and/or thesis committee graduate faculty members for each student

Acceptable and Ideal Targets (*not required for indirect measures*):

Rubric Categories (Oral):

- Language skills (item 2 on oral assessment rubric)
- Rating scale: 0 - 5 where 0 = does not meet expectation, 2.5 = meets expectation, and 5 = exceeds expectation
- It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the oral rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 5 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.

Findings

1. Thesis Track: 100% of students defending their thesis projects during Spring 2024 met or exceeded expectations on the oral assessment rubric (≥ 2) (n=1).
2. Non-Thesis Track: 100% of students presenting their comprehensive exam during Spring 2024 exceeded expectations on the oral assessment rubric (≥ 2.5) (n=3).

B. Student Learning Outcome 5. Thesis students will demonstrate the ability to design, implement and analyze research appropriate to their area of concentration; non-thesis master students will demonstrate an understanding of research methods and design appropriate to their area of concentration.

Assessment Measure

1. **Direct measures:**
 - i. For thesis students, assessment of written thesis defense
 - ii. For non-thesis students, assessment of written comprehensive exam
2. **Key personnel:** Academic and/or thesis committee graduate faculty members for each student

Acceptable and Ideal Targets (*not required for indirect measures*):

Rubric Categories (Written):

- Thesis-Track:
 - Mastery of methods of inquiry (item 2 on written assessment rubric)
 - Rating scale: 1 = does not meet expectation; 2 = meets expectation; 3 = exceeds expectation
 - It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2) or higher level in the subject area portion of the written rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 2) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 3 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.
- Non-Thesis-Track:
 - Research (item 2 on written assessment rubric)
 - Rating scale: 0-15 where 0 = insufficient attempt, 7.5 = emerging, and 15 = competence/mastery
 - It is **acceptable** that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 7.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric; it is **ideal** that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory (≥ 7.5) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is 15 in the mastery of the assessment criterion.

Findings

1. Thesis Track: 100% of students defending their thesis projects during Spring 2024 met or exceeded expectations on the written assessment rubric (≥ 2) (n=1).

2. Non-Thesis Track: 100% of students submitting their comprehensive exam during Spring 2024 exceeded expectations on the written assessment rubric (≥ 7.5) (n=3).

6. Summary of Findings

- One graduate student on the thesis track and three on the non-thesis-track achieved learning outcomes 1, 4, and 5. Students demonstrated their comprehensive understanding of theoretical approaches and various research methods in their work. Writing and oral presentations exhibited knowledge on specific issues and potential solutions in the field of study.
- While students appear to be successfully advancing through the program, there seems to be some misalignment, overlap, and inconsistencies in program goals, student learning outcomes, and assessment measures/timeline, which is likely due to multiple transitions in program coordination and leadership over the past 6 years.

7. Recommendations (not required for indirect measures)

- It is required that graduate students on the thesis-track present research posters at the annual graduate student research symposium in the spring semester. This supports their success in project planning and oral communication leading up to the assessment measures. This activity with full participation should be continued.
- It is recommended that students attend a professional conference in their discipline during the degree program, ideally as a presenter.
- It is suggested that students complete their thesis proposals by the beginning of the third semester and defend their theses in the fourth semester to complete degree requirements in a timely manner. Approval of the research proposal, or at the very least, a pre-proposal should occur before data collection begins for original research or before data analysis commences when using existing data.
- It is also recommended that better student tracking and communication mechanisms be established so that graduate students are better able to progress through the program and student learning outcomes can be more easily monitored over time.
- It is recommended that the Graduate Coordinator review and revise the student learning assessment metrics and schedule, so they are more comprehensive of the program, yet also mutually exclusive for assessment measurement.

8. Action Plan

- Following a comprehensive program review in 2023/2024, the graduate coordinator has feedback and input across reviewer, faculty, student, and administrative stakeholders that will be applied to assessment revisions in summer 2024 to be active in fall 2024.

Rubrics:

[Thesis-Track Written Rubric](#)

[Non-Thesis-Track Written Rubric](#)

[Thesis- and Non-Thesis-Track Oral Rubric](#)