

**Program Assessment Report
HESC Master's Program
University of Arkansas
2021-2022**

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

- Students can evaluate the depth and limitations of the current knowledge in human environmental sciences and its related disciplines;
- 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;
- 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
- Students learn to communicate accurately and effectively.

4-1. Student Learning Outcome 1. HESC MS students will be able to master accurate, evidence-based knowledge appropriate to their area of concentration.

Items A-D apply to each learning outcome measured.

A. Assessment Measure 1.

a. **Direct measures:**

- i. For thesis students, assessment of written and oral thesis defense (see attached rubric)
- ii. For non-thesis students, assessment of written and oral comprehensive exam (see attached rubric)

b. **Key personnel:** Graduate studies committee members; committee members for each student; committees are comprised of graduate faculty

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets (not required for indirect measures).

- a. It is acceptable that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory (>4) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric; it is ideal that 95% of all students perform at

a satisfactory (>4) or higher level in the subject area portion of the rubric. The highest achievable score is five in the mastery of the subject criterion.

- b. One thesis-track students exceeded expectations at written and oral thesis defense. The other thesis-track met expectations at written and oral thesis defense. Seven non-thesis students met expectations at comprehensive exam. Four non-thesis students graduated in December 2021. Two thesis-track and three non-thesis track students graduated in May 2022.

4-2. Student Learning Outcome 4. Students will demonstrate proficient communication skills.

Items A-D apply to each learning outcome measured.

A. Assessment Measure 1.

A-1. Effective interpersonal and oral communication

a. **Direct measures:**

- i. For thesis students, assessment of oral presentation at the annual graduate student research symposium (see attached rubric)
- ii. For non-thesis students, assessment of oral comprehensive exams (see attached rubric)

- b. **Key personnel:** Graduate studies committee members; committee members for each student; committees are comprised of graduate faculty; additional faculty members attended the annual graduate student research symposium

A-2. Effective written communication

a. **Direct measures:**

- i. For thesis students, assessment of written thesis defense (see attached rubrics)
- ii. For non-thesis students, assessment of written comprehensive exams (see attached rubric)

- b. **Key personnel:** Graduate studies committee members; committee members for each student; committees are comprised of graduate faculty

B. Acceptable and Ideal Targets (not required for indirect measures).

Oral communication:

- a. It is acceptable that 75% of all students perform at a satisfactory or higher level in oral and written communication; it is ideal that 95% of all students perform at a satisfactory or higher level in oral and written communication.

- i. All of the students (four first year and two second year students) on the thesis-track either met or exceeded expectations who presented research posters at the annual graduate student research symposium on April 22nd. Five students exceeded expectations and one student met expectations according to rubrics completed by faculty members who attended the symposium.
- ii. Five students on the non-thesis track met expectations at the oral comprehensive exam. Two students on the non-thesis track performed at a higher level in oral communication.

Written communication:

- b. One second year student on the thesis-track exceeded expectations at written communication. One student on the thesis-track and five students on the non-thesis track met expectations at written communication. Two other students on the non-thesis track performed at a higher level in written communication.

C. Summary of Findings

- Two graduate students on the thesis track and seven graduate students on the non-thesis track successfully achieved the learning outcome 1. The two thesis track students showed their comprehensive understanding of theoretical approaches and various research methods in their theses. The students' theses demonstrated their knowledge on specific issues and potential solutions in the field of study.
- Two graduate students on the thesis track and seven students on the non-thesis track successfully achieved the learning outcome 4. The nine graduate students completed degree requirements successfully.
- The school produced nine graduate students who earned a master's degree within two years.

D. Recommendations (not required for indirect measures)

- It is recommended that take best practices in graduate student recruitment such as search engine optimization, social media marketing, and information session for increasing graduate student enrollment.
- It is required that graduate students on the thesis-track present research posters at the annual graduate student research symposium in the spring semester.
- 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 in the beginning of the third semester and defend their theses in the fourth semester to complete degree requirements in a timely manner.

5. Overall Recommendations

- It continues to be recommended that students complete their thesis proposal meeting during their third semester and defend their theses in the fourth semester. 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 a better communication mechanism be established so that graduate students and advisors submit all forms required by the school and graduate school in a timely manner.

6. Action Plan

- A check-list will be disseminated to students and their advisors to keep track of deadlines for forms, dates for thesis proposal, defense, comprehensive exams, and conference attendance.

7. Supporting Attachments

- Attached are oral and written communication rubrics

Note: Five Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will master accurate and evidence-based knowledge appropriate to their area of concentration.
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.
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.
4. Students will demonstrate proficient communication skills
5. Thesis master students will demonstrate 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.