

Academic Assessment Report
Department of Philosophy, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas
Master's Degree
June, 2022

Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes – Master's Students

Master's students are regularly assessed on the basis of coursework (short papers, term papers, and essay exams). This coursework assures adequate coverage of historical figures and contemporary issues. In addition, and crucial to the program's goals, each Master's student writes a thesis, which is read and orally examined by a committee of at least three faculty.

I. Assessment by Thesis Advisor of Student Work:

For purposes of assessment and program goals and outcomes, the main thesis advisor, on the basis of the student's thesis and oral examination and in consultation with the thesis committee, evaluates the Master's thesis on the two dimensions of:

1) Significant critical thinking, communication and writing skills, including but not limited to:

- The student writes with clarity and accuracy;
- The student displays care and insight in understanding positions with accuracy and fairness and in presenting his or her own ideas clearly and in ways that are relevant to his or her main points;
- The student shows sophistication and insight in the analysis and evaluation of arguments;
- The student proceeds critically in examining his or her own presuppositions and assumptions.

2) Knowledge and understanding of content, including but not limited to:

- The student's work displays a deep grasp of central concepts and terminology and their importance;
- The student's work shows a mastery of main trends and theories in the areas under consideration;
- The student understands and can effectively explicate historically important positions and figures where relevant;
- The student's thinking on the issues shows significant coherence, breadth and depth.
- The student's thinking is making a solid contribution to the current state of knowledge on the issues under discussion

The advisor assigns a numerical score of 0-3 to each of these two dimensions, using the following scale:

- 0) Does not meet expectations;
- 1) Minimally meets expectations;
- 2) Meets expectations well, with room for improvement;
- 3) Exceeds expectations.

To explain these numerical evaluations, the advisor provides a brief summary of where the

student's thesis shows need for improvement and where it displays positive outcomes. These results are presented to the departmental Assessment Committee.

Reports on Master's theses completed within the time frame of the report (2):

Score on dimension 1 (critical thinking and communication skills): 3

Score on dimension 2 (content): 3

II. Summary Results and Suggestions for Improvement from Assessment Committee:

In consultation with advisors of Master's theses, we have the following observations:

- The completed theses were comprehensive and achieved a high standard of scholarly accomplishment.
- Master's theses have varied widely in scope, length, and quality. Students who excel go beyond mastery of their subject matter to sharper focus on specific positions and arguments and to more imaginative and creative development of their own positions.

We have developed the following suggestions for improvement:

- Students should be given guidance in focusing their theses earlier and more specifically.
- Advisors should encourage students to have "models" in mind – a Master's thesis should have the scope of a long and substantial journal article.
- Students and advisors should work together to develop a timeline. Students should be encouraged to submit work periodically and in small chunks to get feedback and direction.

This input will be delivered to all who are supervising Master's theses.

Academic Assessment Report
Department of Philosophy, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas
Doctoral Degree
June 2022

Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes – Doctoral Students

Doctoral students are regularly assessed on the basis of coursework (short papers, term papers, and essay exams). This coursework assures comprehensive coverage of historical figures and contemporary issues. In addition, as crucial to the program's goals, each doctoral student:

1. Prepares a reading list for his or her area of specialization and takes a comprehensive written examination on the material covered by the reading list;
2. Writes a prospectus detailing his or her dissertation project, complete with comprehensive bibliography, and is examined on this to determine the project's viability;
3. Writes a dissertation and defends it in an oral examination. The dissertation is read and examined by a committee of at least three faculty.

I. Assessment by Dissertation Advisor of Student Work:

For purposes of assessment of program goals and outcomes, the main dissertation advisor, on the basis of the student's dissertation and oral examination and in consultation with the dissertation committee, evaluates the doctoral dissertation on the two dimensions of:

1) Significant critical thinking, communication and writing skills, including but not limited to:

- The student writes with professional levels of clarity, accuracy and rigor;
- The student displays care and insight in understanding positions with accuracy; and fairness and in presenting his or her own ideas clearly and in ways that are relevant to his or her main points;
- The student shows significant sophistication and insight in the analysis and evaluation of arguments;
- The student proceeds critically in examining his or her own presuppositions and assumptions.

2) Knowledge and understanding of content, including but not limited to:

- The student's work displays a deep grasp of central concepts and terminology and their importance;
- The student's work shows expertise in main trends and theories in the areas under consideration;
- The student demonstrates expertise with regard to historically important positions and figures where relevant;
- The student's thinking on the issues shows genuine coherence, breadth and depth.
- The student's thinking is making an original contribution to the current state of knowledge on the issues under discussion

The main dissertation advisor, in consultation with the dissertation committee, assigns a numerical score of 0-3 to each of these two dimensions, using the following scale:

- 0) Does not meet expectations;
- 1) Minimally meets expectations;

- 2) Meets expectations well, with room for improvement;
- 3) Exceeds expectations.

To explain these numerical evaluations, the advisor provides a brief summary of where the student's dissertation shows need for improvement and where it succeeds. These results are presented to the departmental Assessment Committee, which will also have access to the dissertation.

No new dissertation were completed within the time frame of the report and reported on.

Average score on dimension 1 (critical thinking and communication skills):

Average score on dimension 2 (content):

II. Summary Results and Suggestions for Improvement from Assessment Committee:

The following observations still hold:

- Past dissertations, upon completion, have benefitted from close faculty supervision and input.
- On the whole, they have represented solid scholarly contributions.

In consultation with dissertation advisors, we have developed the following suggestions for improvement:

- As with Master's theses, doctoral students and advisors should work together to develop a timeline for completing the dissertation.
- Students should be encouraged to submit work periodically and in small chunks to get feedback and direction.
- Students should be encouraged to present portions of their research to the Department or at conferences in order to gauge their progress and to get better at explaining their projects.

This input will be delivered to all who are supervising doctoral dissertations.

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