

## **Assurance of Student Learning**

### **Graduate Education at Indiana State University**

Student learning and the assurance of student learning are central to the success of any graduate program. As such, the Graduate Council has identified five (5) shared student learning outcomes for all Masters and Doctoral programs that map to the ISU mission and values statements:

- Students demonstrate professional communication proficiencies.
- Students engage in and meaningfully contribute to diverse and complex communities and professional environments.
- Students recognize and act on professional and ethical challenges that arise in their field or discipline.
- Students achieve mastery of the knowledge required in their discipline or profession.
- Students achieve mastery of the skills (including using appropriate tools) required in their discipline or profession.

The objective of this initiative is to enable programs and the broader community of the graduate faculty to reflect on and discuss the overall quality of the student learning experience and to identify strategies (curricular or co-curricular) for program improvement.

#### **PROCESS**

The Graduate Council will require all Masters and Doctoral programs to author a brief report on student learning outcomes every three years. The report will be reviewed by a sub-committee of the Graduate Council and timely feedback will be provided. The reporting out process will rotate between the Colleges in the following fashion: College of Arts & Science (2010); the Colleges of Business and Education (2011); and the Colleges of Technology and Nursing, Health, and Human Services (2012). Ordinarily, the reports will be submitted to the School of Graduate Studies on the first Friday of October.

#### **REPORTS**

All Masters and Doctoral programs will be required to prepare a brief report (4-5 pages plus the learning outcomes matrix (see attached example) and any supplementary information) that demonstrates how their program assures that shared student learning outcomes for graduate education are being met. Program reports will be prepared for overall degree programs—not individual specializations. Hence, a single report would be required for a MA/MS program with multiple tracks or specializations. Further, the report should utilize existing evidence (or data) and—in the case of accredited programs—be based on existing “plans”, “reports”, or “self-study” activities. For this reason, the goals are intentionally broad in order to apply to the diverse range of graduate programs at ISU. It is expected that this report will address the specific School of Graduate Studies learning outcomes. Further, the Graduate Council encourages programs to build on and draw from the full range of assessment resources that exist across the university. When and where appropriate, programs are encouraged to make explicit evidence-based references to distinct ISU initiatives, such as community engagement and/or experiential learning, insofar as these efforts are embedded in the curriculum. Finally, the Graduate Council recognizes and expects that the evidence and program expectations for, and specific student learning outcomes of, Masters and Doctoral level programs will be distinct.

For non-accredited programs, the report should include the following elements in this order:

- brief description of the program curriculum and rationale;
- discussion of how the program curriculum assures each of the five learning goals;
- summary of the efficacy of the current assessment procedures (self identified strengths/weaknesses);
- student learning matrix that reflects the program’s curriculum;
- an overview of recent revisions/future curriculum plans (if any); and
- supplemental materials (if any) that might be of interest to the reviewing sub-committee of the Graduate Council.

The report should provide the sub-committee with an evidence-based overview of the program and should be written using the most efficient style possible.

In the case of accredited programs<sup>1</sup>, the programs should prepare a cover letter indicating how their accreditation activities demonstrate (or more accurately correspond to) the articulated learning outcomes. All accredited programs should include evidence of the most recent accreditation. The report should include the following elements in this order:

- Cover letter detailing how accreditation activities demonstrate the shared learning objectives;
- Copy of the most recent accreditation decision;
- A list of accreditation program standards/elements; and
- supplemental materials (if any) that might be of interest to the reviewing sub-committee of the Graduate Council.

## **EVIDENCE**

Students’ achievement of the learning goals must be evaluated based on evidence. The Graduate Council does not expect the evidence to be uniform or standard. Evidence may include—but is not limited to: summaries of selected student artifacts collected at constant intervals; content/comprehensive examinations; pre-/post-test activities; surveys of employers; alumni surveys; theses/dissertation libraries; and an archive of culminating experiences. Finally, the report should provide an overview of findings based on evidence and not necessarily include the analysis and/or data.

## **FEEDBACK**

A designated sub-committee of the Graduate Council will provide each program with feedback concerning observed strengths and potential areas for improvement. In some cases, programs may be asked to provide supplemental information (including supporting data). Additionally, the committee will identify areas, if any, for improvements relative to evidence. Most importantly, the process is not and should not merely be an exercise. Rather, the objective is to facilitate discussion and reflection on the curriculum and to identify areas for improvement. The Graduate Council believes the assessment of student learning is an inherently iterative process that continues to evolve over time and will vary within and between programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate programs that participate in the “advanced programs” portion of the CoE Assessment Day and/or are included under the umbrella of NCATE accreditation are considered to be accredited. These programs should use the abbreviated format for accredited programs.

*Approved by Graduate Council, September 15, 2009.*