Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term
Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

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<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>M.A.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Journalism and Media Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Greenspun College of Urban Affairs</td>
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<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Lawrence Mullen</td>
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<td>Assessment Coordinator</td>
<td>Stephen Bates</td>
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<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>Dec. 16, 2015</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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<th>Name</th>
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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
Student Learning Outcomes

In the master’s program in journalism and media studies, students are expected to

1. Develop a grounding in mass communication theory.

2. Achieve competencies in research methodologies relevant to the field.

3. Develop critical thinking necessary for careers in higher education or management in the media industries.

4. Balance the discipline’s varied traditions in theoretical, historical, and applied research, with particular attention to the shifting media landscape.

The four outcomes align with UNLV’s three graduate-level requirements as follows:

1. Develop a grounding in mass communication theory.
   
   the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.

2. Achieve competencies in research methodologies relevant to the field.
   
   student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.

3. Develop critical thinking necessary for careers in higher education or management in the media industries.
   
   activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.

4. Balance the discipline’s varied traditions in theoretical, historical, and applied research, with particular attention to the shifting media landscape.
   
   student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.

   the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.

Learning Outcomes Assessed in 2015

Because the learning outcomes are intertwined, we assess all four annually.
Assessment Method

We evaluate each thesis in terms of the four learning outcomes:

1. Develop a grounding in mass communication theory.
2. Achieve competencies in research methodologies relevant to the field.
3. Develop critical thinking necessary for careers in higher education or management in the media industries.
4. Balance the discipline’s varied traditions in theoretical, historical, and applied research, with particular attention to the shifting media landscape.

We use a variety of measures as well, which vary from year to year. They include the following:

- graduation rates
- graduates’ acceptances into leading doctoral programs
- graduates’ employment
- presentations at academic conferences
- prizes
- tests
- grading rubrics
- focus group data
- surveys of self-reported knowledge
- students’ reflections on their learning
- exit surveys

Because our program is small—generally 20 to 30 students—any measures of learning outcomes are likely to fluctuate from year to year.

Results and Program Response

Thesis Results: Each student’s thesis must meet all four benchmarks. The student works closely with the thesis chair on refining the topic and preparing the prospectus. The thesis committee evaluates the prospectus, which serves as a mid-program review for the student. The student then works closely with the chair while writing the thesis, which frequently requires multiple drafts. The chair distributes the draft thesis to the rest of the committee and schedules a defense only when he or she believes that the draft satisfies all four criteria. If others on the committee disagree, the student must revise the draft before final acceptance. Accordingly, all graduate students satisfy the four learning outcomes by the time they complete their degrees.

Graduation Rate: Students who enroll in our M.A. program generally graduate on time. The JMS Graduate Student Handbook stipulates a degree program of two full calendar years. Over 90 percent of JMS graduate students have met that goal in the past three years.
Acceptances into Doctoral Programs: In 2015, graduates of our M.A. program enrolled in two prestigious doctoral programs: Cornell University (Jason Holley) and the University of Maryland (Denitsa Yotova).

Employment: One of our graduates, Matthew Ward, joined the faculty of Texas A&M, Kingsville, in 2015. Several others accepted excellent positions in the communications field, including Sullivan Charles as marketing director at a Las Vegas advertising agency and Sara Montes de Oca as producer for a cable talk show in San Diego. Among other recent graduates, Lindsey Jo Hand is a full-time professor at American Military University/American Public University; Jennifer Liese works in government affairs at an energy company in Washington, DC; and Valeria Gurr is an assistant research analyst at the Nevada Institute for Children’s Research and Policy.

Presentations at Academic Conferences: Two students presented papers at the Far West Popular Culture Conference in February 2015, Jason Thompson and Jennifer Lui.

Prizes: In spring 2015, Jason Holley won first place at the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs Graduate Research Symposium. In addition, Honors College thesis student Katie Cannata, mentored by JMS graduate faculty at the graduate student level, received the Calvert Undergraduate Research Award for her thesis.

Tests: For students admitted and attending between 2012 and 2014, mean GRE scores were 150.2 verbal, 146.3 quantitative, and 3.7 analytical. According to the Educational Testing Service, those scores put our students at about average for verbal and analytical, but in the bottom quarter for quantitative. To complete the M.A. program, students must master quantitative reasoning, particularly in the course on research methods. In light of the relatively low quantitative GRE scores, our high graduation rate indicates effective learning.

Other: Downloads of graduate students’ research from Digital Scholarship@UNLV provide another indication of learning effectiveness. For the Greenspun College of Urban Affairs in November 2015, the three most-downloaded papers were written or co-written by JMS graduate students.

Program Response: JMS has recently hired two tenure-track faculty members, one in her second year and one in his first year, who are actively engaged in advising graduate students and directing theses. These additional faculty resources will help us expand and enhance the JMS M.A. program. In addition, we are exploring options for collaborating with other units on a Ph.D. program.

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