

Assessment Cycle: 2019 Reporting

Overall Review: Report Approved

COMPLIANT

## Mission Statement

Anthropology is the comparative and global study of humanity. It is a holistic discipline comprising the sub-fields of cultural, biological, medical, archaeological, and linguistic anthropology. Contemporary anthropology is concerned with the generation of basic knowledge and the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems. The department particularly emphasizes application, while recognizing that basic and applied research are inextricably linked. The M.A. program trains students in the application of all fields of anthropological scholarship to human problems, leading to careers in practice and/or preparing them for further study. It stresses rigorous education in theory and practice, and the development of applied research skills.

## Goal 1: Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills: M.A. students will be able to demonstrate mastery of key theoretical concepts and methods as well as design and carry out thesis research and write-up.

### 1a. Student Learning Outcome Statement

Audit Review: AC

All M.A. students will write a thesis that is 1) clearly written, 2) based on a relevant body of theory, 3) uses an appropriate and rigorous methodology, and 4) reports on defensible conclusions drawn from original research.

### 1b. Method of Assessment

Audit Review: AC

The final, written thesis will be assessed by the full committee (minimum three members), using a rubric developed by the Assessment Coordinator and approved by the Graduate Assessment Committee. The rubric defines five performance levels (5 = Exemplary, 4 = Strong, 3 = Competent, 2 = Marginal, 1 = Unacceptable) for each of the four criteria: 1) clearly written, 2) based on a relevant body of theory, 3) uses an appropriate and rigorous methodology, and 4) reports on defensible conclusions drawn from original research. At least three faculty members will rate each thesis on the four criteria listed above. The independent scores of the faculty raters will be reported as a mean for each of the four criteria. We will specify the degree of disagreement between raters that would cause us to reexamine and re-calibrate our rubric.

### 1c. Performance Targets

Audit Review: AC

The minimum successful score will be "Competent" or better from a majority of the Committee, with no score being "Unacceptable." 100% of theses submitted for graduation will meet satisfactory standards, ie. minimum "competent" on all criteria, and at least 60% will meet "strong" or above.

### 1d. Assessment Results

Audit Review: AC

During the 2019 assessment cycle, 7 students completed their MA theses. 100% of theses submitted met performance targets of a minimum successful score of "Competent" or better from the majority of the Committee, with no score being "Unacceptable." During 2019, all of the students achieved overall scores of "Competent" or better, with half of the students (4/7) achieving "Strong" or better across all categories. Three students had average thesis scores in the "Competent" range. So, final theses for the MA program exceeded the performance targets for all students. Average scores across theses were as follows: Clearly Written 4/5; Based on Relevant Body of Theory 4.1/5; Uses an appropriate and rigorous methodology 4/5; and Reports on defensible conclusions drawn from original research 4/5.

Individual average scores include with two scoring close to "Exemplary" (4.8 average), two scoring "Strong" (4.4) and three scoring "Competent" (3.1-3.4).

### 1e. Use of Assessment Results

Audit Review: AC

The assessment cycle metrics for 2019 represent slightly lower average quality of theses compared to prior years, with three students scoring in the "competent" range versus one student in 2018. Based on the overall average scores, the department is revisiting factors that may have impacted the overall quality of the theses produced by our students, with the aim of improving thesis quality overall.

For this year's assessment cycle, in keeping with the trend of improving scores, we changed the assessment plan to include a new performance goal of 60% of students meeting the category of "Strong" or above. Despite some lower average scores for 2019, this performance goal was met, with 4 out of 7 students achieving a "Strong" (4) or above.

The average scores for all categories are assessed as "strong", with no average score in the "Competent" range. These trends from year 1 to year 2 assessment period indicates quality has remained relatively steady, and we will use this information to continue the current efforts since they have proven results.

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**Plan Review Comments**

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**Report Review Comments**

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**2a. Student Learning Outcome Statement***Audit Review: AC*

M.A. students will be able to present original research findings in a public forum concisely and clearly, applying relevant anthropological theory and methodology.

**2b. Method of Assessment***Audit Review: AC*

All M.A. students must present the findings of their thesis research at the department's annual Graduate Colloquium. A faculty committee assesses their presentations, using a rubric developed by the Assessment Coordinator and approved by the Graduate Assessment Committee, which addresses the following three criteria: 1) effective communication, 2) application of relevant theory and methodology, and 3) clear, well-supported conclusions. The rubric defines five performance levels (5 = Exemplary, 4 = Strong, 3 = Competent, 2 = Marginal, 1 = Unacceptable) for each of the three criteria. At least three faculty members will rate each presentation on the three criteria listed above. The independent scores of the faculty raters will be reported as a mean for each of the three criteria. We will specify the degree of disagreement between raters that would cause us to reexamine and recalibrate our rubric.

**2c. Performance Targets***Audit Review: AC*

The minimum successful score will be "Competent" or better from a majority of the Committee, with no score being "Unacceptable." 80% of students presenting at the colloquium should meet satisfactory standards, i.e., minimum "competent" on all criteria.

**2d. Assessment Results***Audit Review: AC*

During the assessment period, the performance target was met by all students assessed with the Department Colloquium rubric. These were administered by three faculty during student presentations at the Spring 2019 event. Scores indicate that 100% of students presenting at the Colloquium met satisfactory standards, i.e., minimum competent on all criteria (3 out of 5 or above). This is an increase in overall effectiveness of learning outcomes over the previous year; in 2018 this was 80% of students presenting. All scores were 3/Competent or above on any of the five performance levels. The mean scores for the criteria, across all student presentations, were as follows:

effective communication: 4.5

application of relevant methodology 4.2

clear, well-supported conclusions 4.3

application of relevant theory: 4.3

These mean scores on the rubric indicate an overall improvement in the ways students applied relevant methodology, theory, and effectively communicated their research. Students all scored 4 ("strong"), well exceeding the criteria of 95% of students scoring 3 ("competent") or above.

**2e. Use of Assessment Results***Audit Review: AC*

Scores indicate that greater attention was paid to methodology training and presenting clear conclusions. The Department Graduate Committee hosted four workshops in 2019 that may have had a positive impact on the presentation scores.

Last year's assessment (2018, year one) indicated that an additional colloquium (2 per year instead of one) might result in higher scores on the metric for conclusions from thesis research. This was to be tracked in the 2019 assessment cycle, the first year with two Colloquia instead of one. However, in late spring 2019, it was decided, due to the small number of students presenting at the twice per year colloquium, and reasons outlined below, (first held in Fall 2018 and Spring 2019) that it made sense to return to an annual schedule for the departmental colloquium for MA students.

Many students are still working on thesis conclusions at the time they present, but being able to present their research in Spring semester, versus only Fall semester, may have allowed additional time to prepare and present due to timing of thesis research and writing. This timing may allow for more thorough presentations of more complete thesis results. It may also improve the assessment so that it captures the most relevant skills. With all of this

mind, starting in the Spring 2019 semester, the department decided to move to a spring-only colloquium. Thus, only one colloquium was used for this assessment. The next colloquium is being held in March 2020.

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### Plan Review Comments

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### Report Review Comments

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#### 3a. Student Learning Outcome Statement

*Audit Review: AC*

Students completing the M.A. program in Applied Anthropology will demonstrate mastery of the key theoretical concepts undergirding the major sub-fields of the discipline, and their relevance to applied anthropology.

#### 3b. Method of Assessment

*Audit Review: AC*

In the M.A. program, the comprehensive exam requirement is met through the required class ANG 6931, Foundations of Applied Anthropology. The instructor(s) assesses the students' performance on essay examinations in this class, based on 1) their knowledge of the appropriate theoretical concepts and 2) their ability to demonstrate the relevance of these concepts to the development of Applied Anthropology, and 3) their ability to demonstrate connections among the sub-fields of anthropology. The final class essay is evaluated using a rubric developed by the Assessment Coordinator and approved by the Graduate Assessment Committee. At least two faculty members will rate each student on the three criteria listed above. The independent scores of the faculty raters will be reported as a mean for each of the three criteria. We will specify the degree of disagreement between raters that would cause us to reexamine and re-calibrate our rubric.

#### 3c. Performance Targets

*Audit Review: AC*

The minimum successful score will be "Strong" across the criteria, with no score being "marginal" or below. 85% of M.A. students demonstrate their competence by achieving a level of "strong" across the key areas. At least 10% of students will achieve an average score of Exemplary.

#### 3d. Assessment Results

*Audit Review: AC*

For 17 students taking this course for Fall 2019, Foundations of Applied Anthropology students submitted an essay which was assessed on the criteria described above by two instructors. The students are expected to achieve a score of "strong" (4) across the criteria on the 5 point scale. The mean for students completing this assessment was 4.16/5, which exceeds the performance target. No scores were marginal or below. During the assessment period, 100% of students achieved the level of strong for their average score across both instructors on the essay. The essay for 2019 focuses on the present state of anthropological theory in historical context.

Four students (20%) obtained a score of exemplary, while the remainder (80%) received scores of Strong. Specifically, the following were the scores for each of the three criteria measured: 1) knowledge of appropriate theoretical concepts, average score for the entire class was 4.4 (Strong); 2) ability to demonstrate the relevance of these concepts to the development of Applied Anthropology: Average for the class 4.3 (Strong); and 3) ability to demonstrate connections among the sub-fields of anthropology, average score 3.1 (Competent).

#### 3e. Use of Assessment Results

*Audit Review: AC*

At this time, students appear to be performing in the course at a level consistent with previous assessment periods and inter-rater reliability does not appear to be an issue. The course also appears to be largely achieving the learning outcomes as indicated by performance targets. However, the last metric of ability to make connections among subfields appears to have been a lower score than in 2018. Instructors explained this was not emphasized in that particular assignment. Given trends of consistency across assessment periods, for 2019 a new performance target was added that indicates at least 10% of students achieve an average score of Exemplary. The rubric scores indicate that this performance target was met.

For the 2020 assessment, new instructors will be teaching this required course and will be better integrating the four-field focus into the course. This will be assessed with a rating of a minimum of strong (4) across 80% of student performance scores for that specific criterion.

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### Plan Review Comments

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### Report Review Comments

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**Assessment Methods**

**Course Related Assessments**

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Written Report or Essay

**Cumulative Assessments**

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Faculty Committee Evaluation of Dissertation, Thesis or Treatise

**Performance Related Assessments**

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Professional Judged Performance or Demonstration of Ability in Context

**External-course Assessments**

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**Standard Assessments**

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