
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 doctoral program in Applied Anthropology trains students in the application of all fields of anthropological scholarship to human problems, leading to careers in practice or academia. It stresses rigorous education in theory and methods, development of an individualized research program, and opportunities to teach and participate in professional activities.

Goal 1: Discipline-Specific Knowledge

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills: Students completing the Ph.D. program will demonstrate anthropological knowledge through qualifying exams and the ability to design and carry out dissertation research that meets student learning outcomes.

1a. Student Learning Outcome Statement

Audit Review: AC

Students completing the Ph.D. program in Applied Anthropology demonstrate mastery of literature, theory, and methodology required to carry out an extended, original piece of research that will make a contribution to their field and which shows evidence of interdisciplinary understanding. All PhD students will write qualifying exams that 1) address the key literature relevant to the research topic, 2) address the appropriate theory and 3) use the appropriate methodology required to carry out the proposed research.

1b. Method of Assessment

Audit Review: AC

Before beginning research, students write substantial qualifying examination questions in preparation for a research proposal. They must complete these in 10 weeks, with one further 4-week opportunity to revise any portions considered lacking. They must not exceed 75 pages (plus references). The questions are set by a five-person faculty committee, which must include 2 members from outside the Department. At least five faculty raters will assess all papers on their level of mastery of the three core dimensions using a 1 to 5 scale (5 = Exemplary, 4 = Strong, 3 = Competent, 2 = Marginal, 1 = Unacceptable). 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.

1c. Performance Targets

Audit Review: AC

80% of Ph.D. students should demonstrate full mastery at the first attempt. 95% will have achieved mastery after the revision opportunity. At least 50% of students will obtain an average score of "Competent" or better.

1d. Assessment Results

Audit Review: AC

During the 2019 assessment year, 6 students took their qualifying exams. One student received a score very close to exemplary (4.9/5 average), while another student also received a very high score (4.8/5 average). The remaining 4 students obtained a score of 4 or better (Strong). This is a significant increase in overall quality of qualifying exams for 2019 over 2018, when half of the average scores were only in the competent (3) range. For the specific criteria measured, the overall group scores were as follows: 1) address the key literature relevant to the research topic: 4.8; 2) address the appropriate theory, 4.7; and 3) use the appropriate methodology required to carry out the proposed research, 4.6.

1e. Use of Assessment Results

Audit Review: AC

These average scores for 2019 represent quite an improvement across each of the categories from previous assessment years, indicating discussion with faculty of the assessment report has had an impact on where they direct their attention with regards to student outcomes.

The Department recognizes the range of competence reflected in this assessment, and continues to seek a consistent level of competence at the qualifying exam stage. We will continue to strive for a shared sense of criteria among faculty members as to the amount of detail that needs to be included in the actual construction of the questions to be distributed to the student. This will allow us to better communicate expectations for students taking the exams. In keeping with trends over the last several assessment cycles, a performance target was added for 2019, indicating that at least 50% of students will obtain an average score of 3 or better. This performance target was met, and a new performance target is set for 2020: At least 25% of students will obtain an average score of 4 or better, and 75% of students will obtain a score of 3 or better.

Plan Review Comments

Report Review Comments

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

All Ph.D. students write a dissertation that is 1) based on a relevant body of theory, 3) uses an appropriate and rigorous methodology, 3) reports on defensible conclusions drawn from original research, 4) makes a clear, original contribution to knowledge, with the potential for publication in the form of journal articles or monographs, and 5) clearly articulates applied and applied dimension of the original research

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

The department uses an iterative process, offering multiple perspectives to assess progress. The dissertation research plan must be formally reviewed and approved by the 5-person committee referenced in 1 (above). The major professor reviews drafts of the dissertation; the student revises it, and it is presented to the full committee. The final, written thesis will be assessed by the full committee (minimum five 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 five faculty raters will assess each dissertation 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.

2c. Performance Targets*Audit Review: AC*

The minimum successful score on any criterion will be "Competent" or better from a majority of the Committee, with no score being "marginal" or below. 100% of dissertations submitted for graduation will meet satisfactory standards on these criteria, obtaining an overall score of 3 (Competent) or better. 60% of these should meet the criteria of "Strong" (4) or better.

2d. Assessment Results*Audit Review: AC*

There were 7 students who successfully defended their dissertations during the 2019 assessment period. All of the individual students met the satisfactory standards (score of 3 or above), with two students achieving a scores of 3.4-3.8 (Competent) and the remaining six students achieving scores of 4 (Strong) or better. For the specific criteria measured, the overall group scores were all in the "Strong" range (4) as follows: 1) based on a relevant body of theory, 4.3; 2) uses an appropriate and rigorous methodology, 4.3; 3) reports on defensible conclusions drawn from original research, 4.3; 4) makes clear original contributions to knowledge, 4.5; clearly articulates application, 4.6. Each of these group scores were up .10 of a point from 2018.

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

The overall scores (overall average is 4.4/5) indicate a very good quality of the dissertations produced by our PhD students, and continues the trend of improvement over previous year's results, with an increase of .10 a point over 2018. As a department, we will continue to train students to better articulate how their dissertation research and findings 1) clearly relate to relevant bodies of theory, 3) use appropriate and rigorous methodology, 3) report on defensible conclusions, 4) makes a clear, original contribution to knowledge, and 5) articulates applied and applied dimension of the original research.

In assessment years 2016-2018, the relevant theory criteria were one of the areas where students needed to improve. It is clear that these scores have improved, moving from competent to strong (4.3). In addition, average scores across all categories are similar, which shows the impact of increased attention to mentoring and professionalization workshops that were implemented.

As a department, we will continue to train students to better articulate how their dissertation research and findings 1) clearly relate to relevant bodies of theory, 3) use appropriate and rigorous methodology, 3) report on defensible conclusions, 4) makes a clear, original contribution to knowledge, and 5) articulates applied and applied dimension of the original research. Recognizing that, over the years, most PhD dissertations have meet the minimum requirement of "competent" or better, we revised this year's plan to reflect a goal of having 60% or more in the "Strong" category or higher, up from the 50% used for the last assessment. The department met this performance goal, with 5/8 students scoring in the "Strong" category (71%).

Plan Review Comments

Report Review Comments

Assessment Methods

Course Related Assessments

Cumulative Assessments

Comprehensive Exam
Faculty Committee Evaluation of Dissertation, Thesis or Treatise

Performance Related Assessments

Professional Judged Performance or Demonstration of Ability in Context

External-course Assessments

Standard Assessments
