



Program Assessment Report (PAR)

Humanities (HUM) Masters Degree

REPORT PREPARED by: Stoker, Valerie L.

ACADEMIC YEAR COVERED BY THIS REPORT: [AcademicYear]

I. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Graduates of the Program will have effective research and writing skills 2. Graduates of the program will know how to study subjects from an interdisciplinary humanities perspective 3. Graduates of the program will be able to make a persuasive argument using evidence 4. Graduates of the program will have created a body of work in a diverse range of humanities-related fields, such as expository and/or creative writing, art, and music

II. PROCEDURES USED FOR ASSESSMENT

A. Direct Assessment

Learning outcomes numbers 1, 2, and 3 ("students in the program develop effective research and writing skills", "graduates of the program will know how to study subjects from an interdisciplinary humanities perspective", "graduates of the program will be able to make a persuasive argument using evidence") are assessed when students in the program complete a prospectus defense for a thesis or a project before an interdisciplinary MHUM committee. Faculty on the committee fill out an assessment sheet for each defense. Two of these prospectus defenses were held for AY 2019-2020, 1 on Dec. 2nd, 2019 and the other on January 27, 2020. Students also receive an evaluation form after the defense to assess the extent to which they feel they were well prepared in these areas by the program. They typically submit these later to the department administrative specialist.

B. Scoring of Student Work

For the prospectus defenses, an assessment questionnaire was distributed to the Master of Humanities committee which is a committee of graduate Liberal Arts faculty from a variety of disciplines including History, Religion, Philosophy, Sociology, Art History, and Modern Languages. The assessment questionnaire asks these faculty members to evaluate the prospectus based on 5 questions by rating the student's work on a scale from 1 to 5. Collectively, the 5 questions assess learning outcomes 1, 2, and 3.

C. Indirect Assessment

Students who defend a prospectus are given a form to fill out asking whether the program equipped them with the tools to achieve the learning outcomes. It consists of the following three questions: 1. Has completing your thesis helped you become an effective research writer? 2. As a student in the Humanities Program have you learned how to study subjects from an interdisciplinary humanities perspective? 3. How does your project/thesis reflect your mastery of a subject from an interdisciplinary humanities perspective?

III. ASSESSMENT RESULTS/INFORMATION:

The Master of Humanities Assessment Questionnaire for the 2 prospectus defenses held in AY 2019-2020 indicated that the MHUM committee found students in the program to have achieved learning outcomes #1-3. Here are the average scores for each question, on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being a negative answer and 5 being a positive answer: 1. Does the prospectus demonstrate that the student properly uses MLA (or equivalent) style to document sources? 4.875 2. Does the prospectus have a clearly stated thesis? 4.375 2. Has the student clearly described how this thesis will be developed in the project? 4.75 3. Does the topic of the proposed project reflect an interdisciplinary humanities perspective? 4.75 4. Does the source material reflect an interdisciplinary humanities perspective? 4.875 Student self-assessment also indicated this; the questions on their form are not numeric and instead require qualitative responses to questions about how the program prepared them to do interdisciplinary graduate work. These responses were positive. One student wrote, in response to the question "Has completing your thesis helped you become an effective research writer?", the following "Completing my thesis has allowed me to actively engage with the broader conversation in queer theory and learn to ask questions within that conversation that will strengthen the vision of my work." They also wrote, in response to the question, "As a student in the Humanities Program have you learned how to study subjects from an interdisciplinary humanities perspective?" "Engaging with sociology, philosophy, queer studies, and history--I feel as though the humanities program has offered a unique window into my personal and academic life." The other student who defended a prospectus did not submit her form but she did talk to the program director and responded positively to these questions, claiming that the program had equipped her to pursue a PhD in her field.

Based on the assessment questionnaire for student prospectuses, students in the Master of Humanities acquire the learning outcomes sought by the program, especially the ability to research, write, and argue persuasively using evidence within an interdisciplinary humanities perspective. Faculty from different disciplines in CoLA found this to be the case, as do the students in the program.

Learning outcomes 1-3 of the program are ably assessed using this method. Additional methods will be deployed for AY 2020-21 so as to assess a greater cross-section of the MHUM student population.

IV. ACTIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

The Master of Humanities Program shares the assessment findings with the program committee at the student's defense, after the student has left the room. In fact, a lengthy conversation usually takes place about the questionnaires and how people have scored the student's performance. Because the program has recently added a new coursework-intensive track that replaces the thesis/project with more courses and a capstone paper, next year's assessment will involve examining the quality of the capstone papers in terms of how they reflect the program's learning outcomes. A new questionnaire for this will be generated. The fourth learning outcome of the program ("graduates of the program will have created a body of work in a diverse range of humanities-related fields, such as expository and/or creative writing, art, and music") is a bit of given because of the program's innately inter-disciplinary structure but the program might consider implementing a portfolio collection of student papers in order to assess this outcome more formally.

V. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Additional documentation, when provided, is stored in the internal Academic Program Assessment of Student Learning SharePoint site.