

Yearly Assessment Report of the Communication Studies Graduate Program

I. Assessment Activities:

A. Program Goals:

The MA Communication Studies program provides an opportunity for students to develop individual programs of theory, research, and application among the areas of interpersonal, organizational, educational and public communication. The program is designed for students who seek careers as communication professionals or who intend to pursue further graduate study in the field.

The program has not revised its goals during the previous academic year.

B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection:

Comprehensive exams students completed in the Spring 2007 were used as sources for analyzing outcomes of our program objectives. In addition, grades students earned for assignments in CMM 601 (Problems and Methods in Communication Research) and CMM 501(Organizational Communication) provided additional data for analyzing related objectives and outcomes.

Five students completed the comprehensive exam for Spring 2007. Broadly speaking, outcomes were positive for Communication Studies Program Objectives 2-9 (see attached matrix. All students passed. Four students passed without additional work being required. One passed with contingency, meaning that the student satisfactorily completed additional work on problematic answers to be judged passing. Though the numbers are too small to make definitive conclusions, cumulatively since these reports have been tallied by the Graduate Studies Coordinator, the results have been strikingly positive. Four have passed with excellence, 18 have passed, three have passed with contingency, and one failed but passed on the retest.

The exam administered by Communication Studies is partially standardized and partially adapted to each student's individual areas of emphasis. What follows is an analysis of outcomes for objectives analyzing individual comprehensive exams (n = 5) and grades for CMM601 (n=11) and CMM 501 (n=11). Comparisons with previous reports and cumulative totals also are included.

Objective 1. Distinguish among the major theoretical approaches to communication. For the 2007 comprehensive exam, students received an alternate question to the theoretical paradigm comparison and contrast question. Cumulatively, for two previous years, all students asked to compare/contrast theoretical paradigms were able to do so.

Objective 2. Achieve mastery knowledge of a theory or program of research.

Outcomes. Two comprehensive exam questions elicit mastery knowledge of a theory for each student tested. Analysis of student answers (n=10) show 90% of answers exhibited a mastery level of knowledge at a level appropriate for test conditions. In 2006, 90% of answers (18 of 20) also achieved a mastery level. For 2005, the figure was 75% (12 of 16). Cumulatively (n =46), 85% (n=39) of answers exhibited a mastery level of knowledge. In CMM 501, students completed a term paper which explored, in depth, a particular theory within the field. Of the 10 students who completed the term paper, 7 (70%) earned A or B, one student (10%) earned C, one (10%) earned D, and one failed (10%). Results are supportive of students achieving this objective.

Objective 3. Describe major theories/research programs in a communication field (e.g., interpersonal, organizational, public).

Outcomes: reaction papers in CMM 501 relate to this objective in that the required reaction paper assignments engage different chapters in the text, largely organized by type of theory or context. 11 reaction papers were submitted, and 73% (n = 8) received B or A, 18% received C (n = 2) and 9% received a failing grade (n = 1). These grades provide evidence students in CMM 501 achieved this objective. Cumulatively, using reaction papers of similar design graded by the same instructor covering three reporting years (n=99), 79% (n=78) received A or B, 18% (n=18) received C, 2% (n=2) received a D, and 1% (n=1) received a failing grade. The cumulative evidence is that students are satisfactorily achieving this objective.

Objective 4. Apply theoretical knowledge of communication to a particular context or situation. Outcome. In this regard, the comprehensive exam engages student knowledge of theory in context. Students were effective at a conceptual level in applying knowledge in a particular context. As observed for objective 2, 90% of the 10 area of emphasis answers examined by committee members were judged as passing answers. Cumulatively, over the past three years, 39 out of 46 area of emphasis answers were satisfactory (85%).

Objective 5. Demonstrate critical thinking/listening skills. Outcomes. Analysis and application of concepts are components of the reaction papers reported for objective 3. A measure of listening skill is the accurate assimilation and appropriate application of course

content and is evidenced on course tests. Students in Organizational Communication performed well on the midterm (82% received A or B (n=9), 18% made C (n=2). In CMM 601, covering what students consider to be the most difficult content in the MA curriculum 64% made A or B (n=7), 18% made C (n=2), and 18% failed (n=2). This compares with 2005 CMM 601 results, in which 60% made A or B on the midterm, 30% made C, 5% made D, and 5% failed. It must be noted that the sample size for 2005 was 20, and in raw numbers just as many students made D or F in 2005 as made F for the current report.

Objective 6. Communicate effectively applying standards of the communication discipline. Outcome. CMM 501 has two kinds of measures of standards application. One kind of measure is a presentation grade, which involves standards for developing content, delivery, and for group presentations, integration of individual parts to form an integrated, cohesive whole. The second kind of standards application involves writing skill and American Psychological Association standards on reaction papers and term papers. Analysis of oral case study reports and group presentation grades shows all group grades were A or B (n=22). For written work (reaction papers and term papers), 15 of 21 papers received A or B (71%), 3 received C (14%), 1 received D (5%) and 2 failed (10%). All papers C and below evidenced significant writing problems. Overall, students demonstrated a satisfactory ability to apply the standards of the discipline. For CMM 601, a summary assignment and term paper (n=20) shows 60% of students earning A or B, 30% earning C, and 10% failing. Given the more technical nature of CMM 601, results do tend to trail results in other courses in our graduate curriculum.

Objective 7. Explain major communication methodologies. Given the quantitative focus of CMM 601, the varieties of research methods taught in the course (experimental and nonexperimental methods, and different methods for obtaining data) fall within the sociopsychological and scientific framework. Within the limits of this framework, student ability to differentiate among methodologies is assessed on the midterm. As noted in objective 5, 64% made A or B, 18% made C, and 18% failed, compared to 60% A or B, 30% C, and 10% failing. Overall, results have remained about the same.

Objective 8. Describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology. Outcome. Students on the comprehensive exam did well in accurately describing validity and its characteristics with 80% (n=4) passing and 20% (n=1) having significant problems. This compares with 2006 results 70% (n = 7) of comprehensive exam answers receiving a passing grade or excellent. Thirty percent (n = 3) had significant problems. In one instance, developing unnecessary content about threats to validity contributed to problems in undeveloped detail on more crucial answer elements. In 2005, 8 out of 11 students (about 73%) answered satisfactorily. Cumulative results show that 19 out of 26 (73%) described validity elements satisfactorily.

Objective 9. Analyze/apply a communication research methodology in a particular communication field (e.g., interpersonal, organizational, public) and situations. Outcome. This objective is most fully realized in the term paper for CMM 601, which asks students to use acceptable communication research methods in mounting a proposal. Of ten term papers submitted, 5 (50%) received A or B, 3 (30%) received C, and 2 (20%) failed. This compares with 13 (68%) receiving A or B in the most previous CMM 601, 5 (26%) earning C, and 1 (6%) failing. The results for the current CMM 601 are well below those of the 2005 report. The population sizes, however, are too small to reach any definitive conclusions. Cumulative totals: 18 (62%) A or B, 8 (28%) C, and 3 (10%) fail.

C. Results :

1. Overall, the department's objectives are being successfully implemented in our graduate program, as evidenced by comprehensive exams and CMM 501. CMM 601 for this reporting period is more problematical for applying research methodology in term papers. It is true the population was approximately half the population for the 2005 report, and not too much should be read into the results. My belief is that outcomes for students on the comprehensive exam can generally be predicted from their achievements in coursework--good or excellent students tend to do well on the comprehensive exams, weak students tend to have more problems.

2. For future assessments, courses can be examined focusing on other individual contexts, such to enhance assessment of Objectives 2-6. Assessment can also continue to be repeated for CMM 601 (Problems and Methods in Communication Research) and CMM 606 (Communication Theory) to increase overall population size in making inference and drawing conclusions about objectives being met.

3. Practical realities constrain other revisions. For example, on examples related to methodology, only quantitative methods are taught in CMM 601. However, broadening the scope of the course is not feasible, given that the course must include 6-8 weeks' focus on using statistics in research. Adding a course in qualitative research is not feasible, given the 36 hour expectation for earning a degree is not likely to change.

II. BOT Initiative 3 Compliance: Not applicable to graduate programs.

- III. Plans for the current year:** The program will be collecting evidence from other graduate courses during the fall and spring semesters. The GRE test has been reinstated to provide some basis for assessing fundamental writing skills of graduate program applicants. In addition, a Scholarly Literacy course has been offered and will be offered in the Spring 2008 semester to offer assistance to students for whom processing scholarly texts and writing scholarly papers are problems.
- IV. Assistance Needed:** None at the moment.
- V. What one most important thing has the department/program learned through this process?** For improvement of student outcomes, more attention needs to be given in CMM 601 to argumentation underlying research studies justifying the research, and reporting research methods.

Component / Course / Program Level

Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
1. Distinguish among the major theoretical approaches to communication		NA for 2007— Alternative question used for comprehensive exam		”	
2. Achieve mastery knowledge of a theory or program of research	Ed Woods	Comprehensive Examination	All students pass both area of emphasis questions	N=5 Four students passed both answers. One student passed one. This translates to 9 answers that achieved mastery knowledge in their answers appropriate to test conditions. In 2006, 90% of answers passed (18/20). In 2005, 75% (12/16). Cumulatively, 85% of answers passed (39/46)	At this time, the data reveal that there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes at the present. Data indicated that in the two most recent years the percentage of passing answers increased beyond the 2005 year. The percent passing for the past two years exceeds the cumulative percent.
	Ed Woods	CMM501 term paper	80% of students receive an “A” or “B” on the Term Paper	N=10 70% received and “A” or “B”; 10% received “C”; 10% received D, and 10% failed	At this time, For CMM 501, the data reveal that there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes at the present

Component / Course / Program Level

Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
3. Describe the major theories/research programs in a communication field.	Ed Woods	Reaction Papers CMM 501	80 % of students receive an "A" or "B" on the reaction papers	N=11 reaction papers received; 73% (n=8) received and "A" or "B"; 18% (n=2) received a "C" and 9% (n=1) <u>received an "F"</u> Cumulative totals of same instructor N=99; 79% received A or B (n=78); 18% (n=18) received a C, 2% (n=2) received a D, and 1% (n=1) failed.	Combined two previous years' results, the total of 99 reaction papers reveal this objective is being achieved.
4. Apply theoretical knowledge of communication to a particular context or situation	Ed Woods	Comprehensive Examination	80% of students pass area of emphasis questions.	N=10 questions; 90% of the answers examined were judged as evidencing mastery appropriate to the test <u>conditions.</u> In 2006, 90% of answers passed (18/20). In 2005, 75% (12/16). Cumulatively, 85% of answers passed (39/46) Cumulative totals: 39 out of 46 answers passed (85%)	Data indicated that in the two most recent years the percentage of passing answers increased beyond the 2005 year. The percent passing for the past two years exceeds the cumulative percent.

Component / Course / Program Level

Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
5. Demonstrate critical thinking and listening skills	Ed Woods	CMM 501 Midterm Exam	80 of students receive an "A" or "B" on Midterm exam.	N=11 midterm exams; 82% (n=9) received a grade of "A" or "B", 18% received a "C" (n=2).	At this time, the data reveal that there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes at the present
		CMM 601 midterm exam	80% of students receive "A" or "B" on midterm exam.	N=11 exams; 64% (n=7) received "A" or "B", 18% (n=2) received "C", 18% (n=2) failed. 2005 results 60% made A or B, 30% made C, 5% made C, and 5% failed.	Although there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes, more reinforcement of understanding and applying methods will occur in Spring 2008.
6. Communicate effectively applying standards of the communication discipline	Ed Woods	CMM 501 oral presentations CMM 501 reaction papers and term papers.	80% of oral presentations receive either "A" or "B" 80 % of papers receive an "A" or "B".	N=22 100% of oral assignments received either A or B. N=22 71% (n=15) received either "A" or "B"; 14% (n=3) received C; 5% (n=1) received D; and 10% (n=2) failed.	At this time, the data reveal that there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes at the present.
		CMM 601 summaries and term papers.	80% of summaries and term papers receive either "A" or "B".	N=20 60% (n=12) received either "A" or "B"; 30% (n=6) received "C"; and 10 % (n=2) failed.	Although there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes, more reinforcement of understanding and applying methods will occur in Spring 2008.
7. Explain major communication methodologies.	Ed Woods	CMM 601 midterm exams.	80% of exams receive either "A" or "B".	N=11 exams; 64% (n=7) received "A" or "B", 18% (n=2) received "C", 18% (n=2) failed. 2005 results 60% made A or B, 30% made C, 5% made C, and 5% failed.	Although there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes, more reinforcement of understanding and applying methods will occur in Spring 2008.

Component / Course / Program Level					
Student Outcome: When a student completes the graduate program in Communication Studies, she/he should be able to	Person or Office Responsible	Assessment Tool or Approach	Standards/Benchmark	Results/Analysis	Action Taken
8. Describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology.	Ed Woods	Comprehensive Exam	All students be able to describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology	N=5; 80% were able to describe the validity elements of a major communication methodology. 20% had significant problems. 2006 Results: N=10 70% received a passing grade or excellent, 30% had problems. 2005 Results N=11 73% (n=8) received a passing grade, 27% (n=3) did not. Cumulative results: 19 of 26 (73%) answered the validity question satisfactorily .	At this time, the data reveal that there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes at the present.
9. Analyze/apply a communication research methodology in a particular communication field (e.g. interpersonal, organization, public) and situations.	Ed Woods	CMM 601 Proposal	80% of students make "A" or "B" on proposal.	N=10 50% received "A" or "B"; 30% received "C"; 20% failed. Previous result (2005): N=19 68% (n=13) received "A" or "B", 26% (n=5) received C; and 6% (n=1) failed. Cumulative: N=29 62% (n=18) received "A" or "B"; 28% (n=8) received C, and 10% (n=3) failed.	Although there are too few cases in order to make any substantial changes, more reinforcement of understanding and applying methods will occur in Spring 2008.

Instructions: Under student outcomes (Column I) please list the most current student outcomes/competencies to be demonstrated by your graduates. These should be in your assessment plan.

(Column II) Person/office responsible: If someone specific has been designated to collect the various pieces of evidence, please list their names in this column.

(Column III) Assessment Tool or Approach: Here you will need to designate the assessment measures you are using to assess the particular outcome. Measures/tools may include term papers, parts of essay tests, internship results; class projects; objective tests; standardized/normed or other licensure tests, or a variety of other measures that may indicate competence in a particular objective.

(Column IV) Standards/Benchmark: Here you may indicate a particular set of standards you have set for completion or if you are developing benchmarks, please indicate what those are. If you are using a national test, what are the indicators of competence. This also pertains to BOT Initiative #3 which asks us to measure students against some national standard.

(Column V) Results/Analysis: Indicate what the results were utilizing the assessment tool/measure and applying it against the benchmarks set. Please be fairly specific here, provide relevant data and a brief analysis.

(Column VI) Action Taken: Indicate any action taken based on the results/analysis you have completed.

PLEASE REMEMBER: Not all objectives have to be measured every semester or every year. All of your objectives should be measured in a 2 to 3 year cycle. Sometimes it depends on when particular courses are offered as to when objectives can be measured. A helpful tool may be implementation of the courses/objective matrix. Some programs have completed this some have not. If you are interested in completing one for your program, please let me know and this office will supply you with the forms and assist in completing this document.