

ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR Group 2: Cycle 1 - Fall 2017 - Fall 2019

Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Sociology is to develop and promote superior understanding of sociological approaches to the study of humans and their groups. We are committed to achieving and maintaining excellence in all of our teaching, research and service endeavors. In graduate instruction, we seek to (1) to offer courses of the highest possible quality, emphasizing training in research methods and the acquisition of a broad understanding of sociological theory, (2) provide individualized mentoring, (3) help students develop the scholarly talents necessary for building a strong curriculum vitae, gaining employment in the profession, and subsequently having a successful career, and (4) maintain positive ties with students beyond their graduation. With respect to the PhD program the Graduate Director and the graduate committee meet frequently to assess that students are making timely progress in their work and to confirm adequate mentoring of students. The department works to insure students have opportunity and incentive to present papers at either regional or national conferences and many of them have multiple publications by the time they graduate. According to the National Research rankings our student S rankings are tied for third in the country reflecting the timeliness of graduation, publications by graduate students, etc.. We place about two thirds in academic positions and this is high for our profession which also attracts government employees. It appears the placement in tenure track academic positions has steadily increased in recent years. At the end of their training in the sociology department we anticipate that all students will be able to conduct research in at least one of the three primary research fields of faculty expertise (Stratification and Inequality, Population and Health, or Social Psychology), teach classes and be fine citizens in their respective positions.

Goal 1.

PhD students should understand major theories of the discipline and scientific research methods.

Curriculum

Annual assessment. Students successfully complete four courses in the areas of theory (SOCY 710 plus 3 additional theory courses) and four courses in the area of research methods (SOCY 730 plus 3 additional methods/statistics courses) in a timely fashion.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students will recognize and be knowledgeable of the major theories and theoretical approaches of the discipline.

Measures and Criteria

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required theory courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured as at least 95 percent of students completing required theory courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically theoretical respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating theoretical performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

Methods

PhD students will complete an annual review of activities and submit this report to the Graduate Program Director. This annual report will be used for assessment of all learning outcomes. The Graduate Program Director will prepare a summary of the annual reports for the Chair and will share results with the faculty during discussion of the graduate program.

Data from the annual review will be used to assess timely completion of required courses for this learning outcome.

Committees will be provided with instruction to judge assessment learning outcomes at from exams and dissertations as 'outstanding' according to criteria established by the graduate studies committee. The graduate director will evaluate research publications and products in this respect.

The assessment of theoretical knowledge and practice will be used in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

Results

100 percent of students completed theory training in a 3 year window following the MA and over a three year running average 57% of papers, specialty exams, prospectus defenses and dissertations were judged outstanding in theoretical respects using criteria provided to faculty committees.

Use of Results

Assessment results were provided to the graduate program director and the graduate studies committee for use in their annual review of the graduate program and graduate students.

Learning Outcome 2.

Students will demonstrate an understanding and ability to use advanced statistical tools, and a range of research methods including but not limited to advanced causal modeling techniques, survey research, experimental methods, qualitative methods.

Measures and Criteria

Success in this goal is indicated by a passing level of performance in required methods and statistics courses in a timely fashion. Success will be measured by at least 95 percent of students completing required statistics and methods courses within the minimum time frame given course offerings.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the combined percentage of research productions, comprehensive examinations, prospectus defenses and dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in specifically methodological respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating methodological performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

Methods

Data from the annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess course completion progress for this learning outcome.

The specific assessment of methodological knowledge and practice at the time of exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses will be used along with assessment of major professional products (e.g. research papers published) in this learning outcome, measured as the percentage of combined outstanding acknowledgements from the combined number of research products, exams, prospectus and dissertation defenses.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

Results

100 percent of students completed methodological training in a 3 year window following the MA and over a three year running average 28% of papers, specialty exams, prospectus defenses and dissertations were judged outstanding in methodological respects using criteria provided to faculty committees.

Use of Results

Assessment results were provided to the graduate program director and the graduate studies committee for use in their annual review of the graduate program and graduate students. This outcome is below the level we strive for. However, since the graduate methods and stats training has recently been revamped it was considered too soon to reconsider those new measures. It will be at least two years to see this outcome reflect program changes made in the past year.

Goal 2.

Upon graduation with the PhD, students should have developed expertise in a specific field in the discipline of Sociology.

Curriculum

Annual assessment. Students should complete up to eighteen hours of elective course work which informs the student's specialty area and areas closely related to the specialty area in consultation with their examining committee.

Learning Outcome 1.

PhD students should demonstrate a breadth and depth of knowledge in the student's specialty area.

Measures and Criteria

Success in this goal is indicated by successful and timely completion of elective substantive coursework and measured by at least 95 percent of students successfully preparing a committee approved bibliography for their specialty area examination and completing their specialty exam successfully within any contiguous three-year window.

Success in this goal will also be measured by the percentage of dissertation defenses acknowledged as outstanding in substantive area of specialization respects. Criteria for outstanding performance have been finalized and distributed to faculty, these criteria will be distributed twice each year by the GPD. Using these high ("professionally publishable") standards, success will be measured as at least 30 percent combined rating substantive performance as outstanding at these junctures in the program. (We will also informally track a desired 60-70 percent outstanding in at least one rubric measure under the notion that all students should have an area of excellence but not be expected to be outstanding in all respects.)

Methods

Data from the annual review will be used to assess successful and timely completion of comprehensive exams for this learning outcome.

Portfolio data for the percentage of exams, prospectus and defense dissertations rated outstanding in substantive regards will be used to assess this learning outcome.

Results of this assessment will be presented to the graduate studies committee for discussion of potential curricular and program modifications.

Results

50 percent of students completed substantive training and comprehensive exams in a 3 year window following the MA and over a three year running average 56% of papers, specialty exams, prospectus defenses and dissertations were judged outstanding in substantive respects using criteria provided to faculty committees.

Use of Results

Assessment results were provided to the graduate program director and the graduate studies committee for use in their annual review of the graduate program and graduate students. The newly implemented graduate working seminar is intended to improve the speed at which students complete these tasks. It is too soon to measure the impact of those recent changes on this outcome.

Goal 3.

To have an established record of acceptance and professional research presentation by the time the PhD is awarded.

Curriculum

Presentation of original research and scholarship at professional meetings and presentations through SOCY 799,

899 and department proseminars.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students will become familiar with aspects of the profession not covered in traditional coursework to prepare them for active professional involvement in the discipline.

Measures and Criteria

Success in this goal is indicated by the level of presentation of PhD students in the aggregate. At least 75% of PhD students should participate in at least one presentation venue annually.

Methods

Annual reviews submitted by students will be used to assess this outcome, measured by the count of PhD students who present original research and scholarship in at least one professional venue annually, expressed as a percentage of the PhD student body exclusive of first year students.

Results

Over 90% percent of students beyond the first year in the program presented professionally or in other accepted venues. A record number of students presented at annual professional conferences.

Use of Results

Assessment results were provided to the graduate program director and the graduate studies committee for use in their annual review of the graduate program and graduate students.

Goal 4.

PhD students should develop research skills sufficient for dissertation level research prior to the defense of the dissertation proposal.

Curriculum

Annual assessment in mentored research meetings with assigned mentors in the years prior to dissertation proposal defense.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students should develop research skills through regular contact hours of research mentorship and collaborative research experience in the years prior to defense of their dissertation proposal.

Measures and Criteria

Success will be indicated by at least 90 percent of students having at least monthly research mentorship contact and ongoing research experiences outside classroom hours during any given year of study prior to defense of the dissertation, as indicated on annual review reports and validated by assigned mentors.

Methods

Data from the annual review submitted by students will be used to assess the annual contact hours of research mentorship and research experience in the years prior to the dissertation. The measurement used to assess this learning outcome will be computed as the percentage of students beyond the first year and prior to dissertation defense who report having at least monthly research mentoring by faculty and/or direct collaborative research experience with faculty.

Results

100 percent of students had monthly research contact faculty during the past year.

Use of Results

This outcome has largely been institutionalized by the regular tracking system of mentorship implemented within the department. Exceptional cases are identified by faculty meetings evaluating students and addressed by the graduate program director.

Goal 5.

PhD students should develop professional teaching skills prior to completion of the PhD.

Curriculum

Completion of Graduate School GTA training, mentored experience as GIA, experience as GTA, and annual assessment and feedback on course evaluations throughout the course of study.

Learning Outcome 1.

Students should have direct teaching mentorship as a course assistant or class instructor in the years

leading to their PhD degree completion.

Measures and Criteria

Success will be indicated by 90 percent of students having received mentorship while assisting or teaching in at least four courses prior to completion of their PhD degree.

Methods

The annual review submitted by graduate students will be used to assess this learning outcome. The outcome is a cumulative measure over years leading to the PhD and will be assessed by (1) the percentage of students who appear on a trajectory to complete this experience prior to completion of the degree and (2) the percentage of those completing the degree who have accumulated the required level of teaching mentorship and experience.

Results

100 percent of graduating PhD students had both graduate school training in teaching, some CTE exposure to teaching skills, and had both served as a GIA and GTA during their graduate student careers prior to graduation. 100 percent of students currently in the program are on track to also meet these goals.

Use of Results

Assessment results were provided to the graduate program director and the graduate studies committee for use in their annual review of the graduate program and graduate students. The department is currently having a discussion of how to expand training in teaching beyond a mentorship model and this criteria may be revised accordingly in the future.