

Annual Program Assessment Report

Academic Year Assessed: 2021-2022

College: Letters and Science

Department: American Studies Program

Submitted by: American Studies Assessment Committee and Susan Kollin, AMST

Director

Undergraduate Assessment reports are to be submitted annually by program/s. The report deadline is October 15th.

Graduate Assessment reports are to be submitted annually by program/s. The report deadline is October 15th.

Program(s) Assessed:

MA and Doctoral programs in American Studies

Please note—The AMST program was in flux due to several changes in leadership during 2020-2022 that affected this period of review.

☐ **Have you reviewed the most recent Annual Program Assessment Report submitted and Assessment and Outcomes Committee feedback? (*please contact Assistant Provost Martha Peters if you need a copy of either one*). YES**

The Assessment Report should contain the following elements, which are outlined in this template:

1. Assessment Plan, Schedule, and Sources
2. What was done this assessment cycle – including rubrics, how data was collected, and who analyzed it
3. What was learned – including areas of strength and areas for improvement
4. How we responded
5. Closing the loop

Sample reports and guidance can be found at:

https://www.montana.edu/provost/assessment/program_assessment.html

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1. Assessment Plan, Schedule and Data Source

| AMST MA PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLANNING CHART & DATA SOURCE | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 | <i>Data Source*</i> |
| Learning Outcome #1—Our graduate students will conduct research appropriate to the discipline | | | XX | | Randomly selected student papers |
| Learning Outcome #2—Our graduate students will demonstrate mastery of subject content knowledge and methodologies. | | | XX | | Randomly selected student papers |
| Learning Outcome #3—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective written communication. | XX | | | XX | Written & oral comprehensive exams |
| Learning Outcome #4—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective oral communication. | XX | | | XX | Written & oral comprehensive exams |
| Learning Outcome #5—Our graduate students will demonstrate the ability to conduct scholarly activities in an ethical manner. | | XX | | | Completion of CITI training |

Identified Data Source— No students graduated with the coursework option for the MA degree during 2021-2022. Two graduate students completed the MA degree with the thesis option in 2021-2022. The data source involved their successful completion of the written and oral comprehensive exam. Both of the MA students passed their written and oral comprehensive exams on the first try and graduated in spring 2022.

| AMST DOCTORAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLANNING CHART & DATA SOURCE | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|
| PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME | 2021-2022 | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 | 2024-2025 | <i>Data Source*</i> |
| Learning Outcome #1—Our graduate students will produce and defend an original, significant contribution to knowledge appropriate to the discipline. | | | XX | | Randomly selected student papers |
| Learning Outcome #2—Our graduate students will demonstrate mastery of subject content knowledge and methodologies. | | | XX | | Randomly selected student papers |
| Learning Outcome #3—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective written communication. | XX | | | XX | Dissertation defense |
| Learning Outcome #4—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective oral communication. | XX | | | XX | Written & oral comprehensive exams |
| Learning Outcome #5—Our graduate students will demonstrate the ability to conduct scholarly activities in an ethical manner. | | XX | | | Completion of CITI training |

Identified Data Source— Five doctoral students completed the PhD in 2021-2022. Two graduate students passed their comprehensive exams for the doctoral program in 2021-

2022. The data source involved the pass rate or completion of the written and oral comprehensive exam as well as a review of the comprehensive written exams.

Master's Degree program – coursework option

| Data Source | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Culminating research paper and presentation (AMST 501/502) | X | | X | | |
| Written and oral comprehensive exams | | X | | X | |
| Ethics training in responsible conduct of research (CITI) | | | | | X |

Master's Degree program – thesis option

| Data Source | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Written and oral comprehensive exams | | X | X | X | |
| Thesis defense | X | | X | X | |
| Ethics training in responsible conduct of research (CITI) | | | | | X |

Doctoral program

| | Outcomes | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|---|---|---|
| Data Source | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Dissertation defense | X | | X | | |
| Written and oral comprehensive exams | | X | | X | |
| Ethics training in responsible conduct of research (CITI) | | | | | X |

b) What are the threshold values for which you demonstrate student achievement?

| Threshold Values | | |
|--|--|--|
| PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME | Threshold Value | Data Source |
| <i>Learning Outcome #3—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective written communication.</i> | <i>The threshold value for this outcome is for 90% of graduate students to pass their exams on the first try</i> | <i>Written & oral comprehensive exam</i> |
| <i>Learning Outcome #4—Our graduate students will demonstrate effective oral communication.</i> | <i>The threshold value for this outcome is for 90% of our graduate students to pass their exams on the first try</i> | <i>Written & oral comprehensive exam</i> |

2. What Was Done

a) Was the completed assessment consistent with the program’s assessment plan?

b) If no, please explain why the plan was altered.

YES X NO

c) How were data collected and analyzed? (Please include method of collection and sample size.)

No students completed the Master’s Degree program with the Coursework Option during 2021-2022; therefore, no information was collected for that option. Two students completed the Master’s Degree with the Thesis Option in 2021-2022 (XXXXXXXXXX). The assessment committee confirmed that they passed their comprehensive exams on the first try and graduated in 2022, thereby illustrating that they met Learning Outcomes #3 and #4.

For the doctoral program, the director collected the comprehensive exams from two students who completed them during 2021-2022 (XXXXXXXXXX). The assessment committee read the comprehensive exams and determined that the graduate students displayed a strong level of expertise in their areas of study. Finally, five doctoral students successfully defended their dissertations in 2021-2022 (XXXXXXXXXX).

d). Please provide a rubric that demonstrates how your data was evaluated.

The program is in the process of developing a rubric. A review of the feedback from the previous year’s report indicates that the assessment committee should not rely solely on the rate of successful defenses but will also need to develop an additional mechanism for

determining the elements of success in written communication for Learning Outcome #3 and in oral component for Learning Outcome #4. This will entail meeting next semester to design a survey or worksheet to be completed by the graduate committee chair at the time of the comprehensive exams.

3. What Was Learned

Based on the analysis of the data, and compared to the threshold values established, what was learned from the assessment

Based on the data collected, it appears that the program outcomes are being met. In tallying the results of the completed written and oral comprehensive exams, we determined that our graduate students are well prepared by their coursework. All of our graduate students who attempted the comprehensive exams and dissertation defense during the assessment period successfully passed.

What areas of strength in the program were identified?

The comprehensive written exams assessed this year were exemplary in their mastery of the issues and methods of American Studies scholarship. The exams demonstrated a robust and perceptive understanding of the origins of American Studies scholarship, tracing its genealogy back through such founding scholars as Parrington, Spiller, Meredith, Wise, and so on. At the same time, the students demonstrated not only a broad familiarity, but also a sustained engagement with the most relevant contemporary scholarship in their respective subfields of Hawaiian Studies, rural studies, and museum studies. Students showed a remarkable depth of knowledge of the most prominent and current work in their areas of specialization. They understand the current state of the field and engage it to make their own original arguments. The students are comfortable exploring critical theory but without getting bogged down in excessive jargon. The exams are theoretically informed but also readable and clear. These students show they are able to take complex ideas and present them comfortably in their own words.

In particular, the graduate students established and developed a substantial theoretical framework for their projects, drawing on a range of relevant scholarship to situate their ideas within an ongoing conversation of scholars. They showed that they understand this conversation well and that they are comfortable participating in it. One thing that stands out is that they are also engaging new, emergent areas of study in American Studies. They are on the cutting edge of the discipline and consequently waste little time repeating long established or frequently rehashed ideas. Their insights and arguments are fresh and original, making unique contributions to the on-going production of new knowledge which advances the field of American Studies. Often times, even graduate students struggle with making the transition from being a consumer to being a producer of knowledge, but these students excel at focusing on the development of their own original ideas. The projects explore interesting new ideas in a thoughtful and engaging manner. Moreover, their ideas

matter, and they engage significant issues. These are impactful projects that have much to contribute to our understanding of the important issues they raise.

a) What areas were identified that need improvement?

Because American Studies is a widely divergent and interdisciplinary field, many students are working on narrowly constructed projects that would benefit from a broader engagement with the concerns of the field writ large. To aid in this goal, it would be useful for faculty and the program chair to create a core list of foundational American Studies texts for all students to add to their own individually-designed reading lists before their written exam. This list will not only help students as they develop their lists and prepare for their written exams, but would provide all students in the program with a clearer understanding of the most urgent concerns of American Studies and how their work addresses those concerns.

4. How we responded

a) Describe how “What Was Learned” was communicated to the department, or program faculty.

The three-member assessment team for AMST met on December 12 and discussed the outcomes of our findings. The meeting was productive in that members addressed the successes of the graduate program and were able to also “assess our assessment.”

b) How are the results of this assessment informing changes to enhance student learning in the program?

AMST plans to continue discussing our findings about the major in future meetings with core faculty affiliated with the program. During our meeting, committee members discussed ways of streamlining the process of compiling a book list for the preliminary exams. The plan is to help graduate students lessen the time to completion for their degree.

c) If information outside of this assessment is informing programmatic change, please describe that.

N/A

5. Closing the Loop

a) In reviewing last year’s report, what changes proposed were implemented and will be measured in future assessment reports?

A review of the feedback from the previous year's report indicates that the assessment committee should not rely solely on the rate of successful defense of the comprehensive exam or the dissertation but should also develop an additional mechanism for determining success. This will entail meeting next semester to design a rubric for assessing the learning outcomes as well as a survey or worksheet to be completed by the graduate committee chair at the time of the comprehensive exams and the dissertation defense.

b) Have you seen a change in student learning based on other program adjustments made in the past? Please describe the adjustments made and subsequent changes in student learning.

N/A. The directorship of the AMST program was in transition during the latest assessment period. These conversations will need to take place at a future time.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu