

Degree/Certificate: MSC

Major/Option:

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Date: 1-19-2017

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2015-2016

Part I – for the 2015-16 academic year: Because Deans have been asked to create College-Level Summary Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

Student Learning Outcome: The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

Analyze various cultural products through the application of contemporary communication theories and methods.

Overall evaluation of progress on outcome: Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

____ SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;

___X___ SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;

____ SLO met without change required

1. **Strategies, methods, observations, analysis:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

Since the focus of the selected SLO (above) focused on theory and method, I discuss CMST 501, *Advanced Communication Theory*, CMST 521, *Research Design & Analysis I* (Quantitative Methods), and CMST 522, *Research Design & Analysis II* (Qualitative Methods).

CMST 501:

Last year it was noted that our assessment of this class suggested certain changes needed to be made to the materials covered in class: "Specifically, an introduction to feminist and post-colonial theories and readings with more focus on contemporary theoretical developments while maintaining some areas of traditional communication theories as a background."

One rationale for the changes had to do with the significant contingent of Saudi students that made up our student body. The problem is that no new Saudi students enrolled in

the MSC program in 2015-16 (this is also the case for 2016-17). Events in Saudi Arabia have blocked the flow of these students.

Dr. Krug did introduce the materials noted in last year's report (C. Wright Mills' *The Sociological Imagination* and Geertz's "Deep Play") into CMST 501 (and CMST 520). He reports: Due to the inclusion of these and other texts, "Students have shown increased understanding of ideas and of the social contexts from which theories emerge and evolve. Once students understand the common problematics within various theoretical approaches, they move more easily to understand the related theories (e.g., symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, and English and Chicago Studies or Cultural Studies). Both discussion and writing assignments show greater depth of thought and comprehension with this methodology, though results must be replicated across time to ascertain if other factors account for the improvements."

CMST 521:

As reported last year, Dr. Stafford created several step-by-step videos for students as a means of enhancing the experience and success of students in CMST 521. These videos were produced in response to Dr. Stafford's assessment that knowledge of SPSS would increase student success in completing class assignments (e.g., the tutorial videos demonstrate the creation of descriptive statistics, mean comparisons, ANOVAs and factor analysis, etc).

The success of this approach has caused its own problem. Dr. Stafford notes: "The videos were created and were well received. In fact, so much that students felt that this was all they were learning. I need to create more materials for them to read and assignments to insure they are doing so. I also need to make the 'do, then explain, critique, then redo and improve' process more rigorous. I thought there was value in having them work together. However, it seems that some, not all, but too many students are letting others do the work."

Unlike the year before, Dr. Stafford was unclear if there were students capable of being peer mentors. This conclusion raises questions about the quality of our incoming students (see below).

CMST 522:

Last year it was noted that Dr. Stearns had made significant adjustments to this class because of the significant number of Saudi students enrolled in the MSC program (e.g., the emphasis on writing; working individually and intensively with each student).

Again, the fact that Saudi students stopped attending undermined the assessment and curriculum revision strategy being followed in the class. As Dr. Stearns reports: "The only changes I have initiated are to move back to the way it was taught before the international students came as a cohort for those two years, since the previous changes are no longer needed."

Having said this, Dr. Stearns has identified some significant issues with our student body: She notes that a number of our students need to “up their game” considerably. Specifically, she notes a reluctance among these students to read in-depth and in a critical fashion (as opposed to glancing over or simply scanning the literature). Consequently, these students are in a poor position to seriously assess and challenge the assumptions and claims in the literature. There appears to be a pattern – these issues tend to be occurring with students who are moving directly from our undergraduate program to our graduate program. This requires further examination and may lead to changes at the graduate and undergraduate levels. It may also require reforming the graduate student application/intake process.

Addressing this issue needs to be prioritized. Among other things, Dr. Stearns finds that those students who are not reading at the appropriate level are bringing down the overall level of discourse and analysis in the class.

2. What program changes will be made based on the assessment results? ‘

Last year, the report outlined changes that we planned to implement. Generally speaking, these changes were not made in the way that we wanted because of very significant demographic changes in our student body (changes that were outside of our control, as note above). What was achieved in particular classes is reported in the section above.

In Fall and Winter of 2016, the Director of the MSC program held exit interviews with the Saudi students. A variety of issues were discussed: the orientation process for international students; the content of classes; the relation with non-international students; the extent to which the program creates an inclusive climate; the value of the comprehensive exam option (all had taken this option). The feedback was very positive for the most part. The students identified two areas of improvement: (i) there needs to be better coordination between Admissions and the MSC program when it comes to the orientation process. Specifically, the MSC program should be involved from the first day students arrive on campus; (ii) while the program does include non-western perspectives in coursework, this could be enhanced.

If and when the flow of international students begins again (i) will be addressed by the Director of the MSC program increasing coordination with Admissions. As reported last year, changes in the curriculum were underway to address (ii).

In last year’s report, it was mentioned that the Graduate Advisory Committee planned to discuss curriculum revision in Spring of 2016. These discussions focused on the inadequacy of the program’s SLOs (as listed in the current catalog – there are only two. It was agreed that one of these is anachronistic: “deploy various written, oral and electronic media in creating and presenting original work.” Work began on reformulating the SLOs for the MSC program. Work on this is almost complete (see below).

The Advisory Committee (based on Dr. Stearn's comments) has also begun to rethink the admission criteria for the MSC program. This discussion will continue. One issue that is being debated is whether we should continue to require the GRE. The Committee also discussed how the comprehensive exam (written and oral) can be used for assessment purposes. Discussions are still ongoing.

Part II – Closing the Loop

This is addressed in the sections above.

What **further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery**, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?

As noted above, demographic shifts within our student body knocked off kilter our assessment work. As the MSC program reorients the priority is now to develop a set of program SLOs (in common with all other undergraduate and graduate programs at EWU). We have made a good start on this. Below is the draft of the new program SLOs that have been agreed upon by the Graduate Advisory Committee (expanding from 2 to 7 SLOs). The next steps are: (i) have the graduate faculty vote on the draft SLOs; (ii) map individual course SLOs to the agreed on program SLOs; (iii) insure the graduate faculty design and implement procedures to assess their class SLOs. The expectation is that (i) and (ii) will be completed by the end of Winter quarter 2017. The assessment of the new SLOs will proceed thereafter.

1. Students will communicate competently.
2. Students will communicate competently the philosophical underpinnings of a variety of theories and methods relevant to the analysis of communication phenomena.
3. Students will integrate and apply communication theories in practice.
4. Students will demonstrate competence in explicating and applying a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods.
5. Students will critically analyze.
6. Students will communicate ethically, responsibly, and effectively as citizens and leaders.

7. Students will competently communicate breadth and depth of knowledge in an emphasis area of their choosing (organizational, instructional, technological, cultural).