

**STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**  
**SUMMARY FORM AY 2019-2020**

Degree and Program Name:

M.A. in Communication Studies

Submitted By:

Angela Jacobs

**PART ONE**

What are the learning objectives?	How, where, and when are they assessed?	What are the expectations?	What are the results?	Committee/ person responsible? How are results shared?
<p>1. Students will demonstrate strong disciplinary knowledge of communication.</p>	<p>Disciplinary knowledge is assessed three ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Throughout student coursework with the Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric (Element 1- using theory to answer questions).</li> <li>2) Throughout student coursework with the Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (Element 3 - literature review) which are both utilized in graduate courses.</li> <li>3) At the end of the program after the completion of their capstone project using the literature review subscale of the Academic Thesis or Creative Thesis rubrics, or using the</li> </ol>	<p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Understanding of scholarship</li> <li>-Correct interpretation of scholarship</li> <li>-Correct application of scholarship</li> <li>-Ability to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant scholarship</li> </ul> <p>For the Graduate Student Critical Thinking and the Graduate Research Paper Writing rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student falls at the high end (greater than 6) of the competent range (4-7)</li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric (Element 1):</p> <p><u>On-campus Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 7.17</li> <li>• 92.68% of rubrics were rated as at least competent</li> <li>• 51.22% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p><u>Online Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 8.18</li> <li>• 95.95% of rubrics were rated as at least competent</li> <li>• 77.03% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>Overall, we met or exceeded our goals in this area for both the on-campus and online programs. In the on-campus program, students in their final semester demonstrate significantly higher scores (average</p>	<p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric – graduate faculty teaching courses score rubrics for their classes.</p> <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric – graduate faculty teaching courses score rubrics for their classes.</p> <p>Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics – evaluated by individual thesis committees.</p> <p>Comprehensive Exam Rubrics – evaluated by individual faculty evaluators.</p>

	<p>scholarship subscale of the comprehensive exam rubric.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 33% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>For the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student achieves competent (greater than 2.5) on the scale</li> <li>• 100% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 75% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>For the Comprehensive Exam rubric we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student falls at the high end (greater than 13) of the competent range (10-14) on the scale</li> <li>• 90% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 50% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul>	<p>score of 8.3) than those in their first semester (average score of 4.38). This suggests the content of the program increases our student's ability to use theory to answer communication questions. There was only small improvement from 1<sup>st</sup> semester online students (average 7.90) to final semester online students (average 8.11).</p> <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (Element 3):</p> <p><u>On-campus Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 6.65</li> <li>• 88.24% of rubrics were rated as competent</li> <li>• 47.06% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p><u>Online Program</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 8.39</li> <li>• 96.61% of rubrics were rated as competent</li> <li>• 81.36% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>We met all of our goals in this area with the exception of reaching 90% competency on element 3 (literature review) for our on-campus students. During the evaluation period, only 88.24% rated at least competent. Similar to the Critical Thinking Rubric, students in their final semester demonstrate significantly higher scores (average score of 8.31) than those in their first semester (average score of 5.33) in terms of graduate research writing. This again</p>	<p>All results are compiled by the Graduate Coordinator then assessed by the Graduate Committee before being shared with the entire graduate faculty during the semester following the assessment report due date.</p>
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			<p>suggests the content of the program increases our student's ability to use theory to answer communication questions. There was only small improvement from 1<sup>st</sup> semester online students (average 8.25) to final semester online students (average 8.47).</p> <p>Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics Literature Review Subscale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average student score: 4.32</li><li>• 100% of students were rated as competent in both creative and academic thesis writing</li><li>• 75% of students were rated as highly competent in <b>academic thesis writing</b></li><li>• 100% of students were rated as highly competent in <b>creative thesis writing</b></li></ul> <p>Comprehensive Exam Scholarship Subscale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Average student score: 12.50</li><li>• 100% of students were rated as competent in both core and concentration comp exams</li><li>• 50% of students were rated as highly competent in both core and concentration comp exams</li></ul> <p>Overall, students' disciplinary knowledge met our expectations in every area with the following exceptions: a slightly lower competency rate (88.24%) for our on-campus students on the</p>	
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			<p>literature review subscale for Graduate Research Paper Writing. Our goal was 90% competency rate. We also fell slightly short of our goal for the average student to score at the high end (greater than 13) of the competent range (10-14) on the Comprehensive Exam scholarship scale. Our students average a 12.5 on the scale.</p>	
<p>2. Students will be able to understand, critique, and apply appropriate research methods in a broad range of situations and contexts.</p>	<p>Research knowledge is assessed directly two ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <p>1) Students are assessed using the Academic Thesis or Creative Thesis rubric after they have completed their required thesis capstone project at the end of the program. Each project requires students to understand and apply research methods either by conducting an academic or creative thesis project.</p> <p>2) Students also utilize, critique, and apply research methodologies throughout their graduate classes. We assess this learning goal through elements 4 (research methodology) and 5 (analysis) of the Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (utilized in graduate courses).</p> <p>In support of this goal we also measure:</p>	<p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on:</p> <p>-Understanding of various methodologies -Correct application of methods -Ability to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate claims based upon a chosen methodology</p> <p>For the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Average student achieves a score relative to 80% (116 on the creative thesis rubric and 112 on the academic thesis rubric)</li> </ul> <p>For the Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric (elements 4 and 5) we have the following expectations:</p>	<p>Academic and Creative thesis rubrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creative: score of 129.22 (89.12%)</li> <li>Academic: score of 132.11 (94.37%)</li> </ul> <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric:</p> <p><u>On-campus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Element 4: Average score of 6.65 (out of 41 rubrics assessed)</li> <li>Element 4: 88.24% of rubrics rated as at least competent</li> <li>Element 4: 47.06% of rubrics rated as highly competent</li> <li>Element 5: Average score of 6.76 (out of 41 rubrics assessed)</li> <li>Element 5: 88.24% of rubrics rated as at least competent</li> <li>Element 5: 52.94% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>This year we had 11 original research presentations by students.</p>	<p>Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric – graduate faculty teaching courses score rubrics for their classes.</p> <p>Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics – evaluated by individual thesis committees.</p> <p>All results are compiled by the Graduate Coordinator then assessed by the Graduate Committee before being shared with the entire graduate faculty during the semester following the assessment report due date.</p>

	<p>1) Number of original research presentations by students  2) Number of blind reviewed original research presentations by students at conferences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student falls at the high end (greater than 6) of the competent range (4-7)</li> <li>• 90% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 50% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul>	<p><u>Online</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Element 4: Average score of 7.92 (out of 74 rubrics assessed)</li> <li>• Element 4: 94.45% of rubrics rated as at least competent</li> <li>• Element 4: 71.21% of rubrics rated as highly competent</li> <li>• Element 5: Average score of 8.15 (out of 74 rubrics assessed)</li> <li>• Element 5: 95.95% of rubrics rated as at least competent</li> <li>• Element 5: 68.92% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>This year we had 7 original research presentations by students.</p> <p>The academic theses were excellent and the rubric scores demonstrate that.</p> <p>We met all our goals for the graduate research paper rubrics with the exception of having 90% of the students rated as <b>at least competent</b> on elements 4 and 5 for our on-campus. Online students, however, exceeded our expectations in these areas.</p> <p>We also fell short of our goal of having 50% of the students rated as <b>highly competent</b> on Element 4 for our on-campus students. Again, our online students exceeded our expectations in this area.</p> <p>Our numbers indicate we are near this goal, but fell just shy with</p>	
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			<p>88.24% of online students rated at least competent and 47.06% rated as highly competent on element 4, and 88.24% rated at least competent on element 5.</p> <p>It's important to note that we did have slightly more 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> semester student rubrics than final semester students, which may account for the lower numbers in these areas. Fewer 4<sup>th</sup> semester rubrics is due in part because our students take fewer classes in their final semester and thus, are not rated as often as 1<sup>st</sup> &amp; 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students. A second part is due to some rubrics not being returned during the assessment process.</p> <p>On a positive note, however, there is a significant increase from a score of 4.33 to a score of 8.5 on Element 4 from first to final semester, and an increase from a 4.66 to an 8.25 on Element 5 from 1<sup>st</sup> to final semester. This tells us that students are experiencing significant growth in their writing and research skills over the course of the program.</p> <p>The number of students presenting their research on and off campus demonstrates a program-wide commitment to student research. We will continue to encourage students to turn their projects into conference presentations.</p>	
3. Students are able to communicate effectively in written form.	Effective writing communication is assessed	For this learning objective, students are evaluated on their writing quality,	Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric:	Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics –

	<p>three ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <p>1) The Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric (utilized in graduate courses).</p> <p>2) The Writing subscales on both the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics, which are assessed after the completion of the capstone project at the end of the program.</p> <p>3) Elements 4 (organization/development) and 5 (style and mechanics) of the Comprehensive Exam Rubric as evaluated by qualified graduate faculty</p>	<p>including but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Logical organization of writing</li> <li>-Complexity of sentence structure</li> <li>-Effective use of language</li> <li>-Mechanical errors</li> <li>-Ability to communicate an argument/main idea to the reader</li> <li>-Ability to synthesize numerous concepts into a coherent argument</li> </ul> <p>For the Graduate Research Paper Writing rubric we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student scores 75 (out of 100)</li> <li>• 90% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 50% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>For the Writing subscales of the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student achieves a subscale score of highly competent (3.75 out of 5)</li> </ul>	<p><u>On-campus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student score: 73.69</li> <li>• 96.55% of students were rated as competent</li> <li>• 48.28% of students were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p><u>Online</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student score: 83.96</li> <li>• 95.95% of students were rated as competent</li> <li>• 78.38% of students were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>Academic and Creative thesis rubrics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative score: 4.54</li> <li>• Academic score: 4.63</li> </ul> <p>Comprehensive Exam rubrics (organization/development; Style &amp; mechanics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization/Development score: 7.00</li> <li>• Style and Mechanics: 7.50</li> </ul> <p>While we exceeded our goal of 90% of students being rated as <b>at least competent</b> for both our on-campus and online students, we did not meet our goal for the average student score of 75 or above, or having 50% of students rate highly competent for our on-campus students. However, the average student score this year was 73.69 (which is an increase from our last assessment report, where the average score was 70.87), and 48.28% rated highly competent (up</p>	<p>evaluated by individual thesis committees.</p> <p>Graduate Research Paper Writing Rubric – graduate faculty teaching courses score rubrics for their classes.</p> <p>Comprehensive Exam Rubrics – evaluated by individual faculty evaluators.</p> <p>All results are compiled by the Graduate Coordinator then assessed by the Graduate Committee before being shared with the entire graduate faculty during the semester following the assessment report due date.</p>
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		<p>For the Comprehensive Exam Rubric we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student score of a 7 (out of 10) across all rubrics for the selected subscales, which would represent a solid competent score (competent range of 6-8)</li> </ul>	<p>from 39.68% during our last assessment).</p> <p>Again, our on-campus results may be due in part to the large number of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester students compared to our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester students.</p> <p>We've also had an increase in our overall student population this last assessment period, creating larger class sizes. This may have contributed to fewer writing opportunities in the classroom, as larger class sizes necessitate fewer writing assignments across all classes.</p> <p>Results from our exit survey, however, indicate graduating students believe the program greatly improved their writing quality (mean = 4.33 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being strongly agree).</p> <p>I would also like to note that we have spent significant time over the last three years working to increase the quality of our student's writing; yet, the results demonstrate we need to work on this area more, especially with our new student and international student population. We also need to find ways to continue offering writing opportunities in the classroom while adapting to larger class sizes.</p>	
<p>4. Students are able to communicate effectively in spoken form.</p>	<p>Effective spoken communication is assessed through the Graduate Speech</p>	<p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Organization</li> <li>-Use of language</li> </ul>	<p>Results from the Graduate Speech Evaluation rubric (total of 20 rubrics):</p>	<p>The Graduate Speech Evaluation rubric is used by all graduate faculty to evaluate final</p>

	<p>Evaluation rubric, utilized for the final, department-wide oral presentation of the students' capstone projects at the end of their program.</p> <p>We also use students' success in the oral defense of their theses as an indication of effective spoken communication.</p>	<p>-Appropriate use of material -Competent delivery -Audience analysis -Use of voice</p> <p>Since most of our graduate students have a background in communication, we expect scores on the speech evaluation rubric to be high.</p> <p>We expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student score is highly competent (3.5 out of 4)</li> <li>• 100% of rubrics rated as competent (2.5 out of 4)</li> <li>• 75% of rubrics rated as highly competent (3.5 on a 4 point scale)</li> </ul>	<p>The average student score from the speech evaluation rubric is 3.73 (competent). 100% of rubrics rated students as competent and 76.67% of rubrics rated students as highly competent.</p> <p>In this past academic year 100% (7 out of 7) students successfully defended their thesis project orally.</p> <p>Students' ability to communicate effectively in spoken form met our expectations overall. These ratings are consistent with past assessment data regarding our students' abilities to speak effectively.</p>	<p>oral presentations of graduate thesis projects.</p> <p>All results are compiled by the Graduate Coordinator then assessed by the Graduate Committee before being shared with the entire graduate faculty during the semester following the assessment report due date.</p>
<p>5. Students will demonstrate effective critical thinking skills.</p>	<p>Effective critical thinking is assessed three ways throughout the graduate program:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric (utilized in graduate courses)</li> <li>2) The Findings/Conclusions and Results/Conclusions subscales of the Academic and Creative Thesis rubrics, which are assessed after the completion of the capstone project at the end of the program.</li> <li>3) Element 3 (analysis/synthesis) of the</li> </ol>	<p>For this learning objective, students are evaluated on their ability to analyze, including but not limited to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Ability to generate original insights</li> <li>-Ability to develop and design new research</li> <li>-Sensitivity to multiple perspectives</li> <li>-Ability to assess reasoning</li> <li>-Ability to assess arguments</li> <li>-Identifying assumptions</li> </ul> <p>For the Graduate Student Critical Thinking rubric we</p>	<p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking rubric:</p> <p><u>On-campus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 71.62</li> <li>• 95.12% of rubrics were rated as competent</li> <li>• 48.78% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p><u>Online</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average rubric score: 80</li> <li>• 95.95% of rubrics were rated as competent</li> <li>• 63.51% of rubrics were rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>Academic and Creative thesis rubrics Conclusions subscale:</p>	<p>Academic and Creative Thesis Rubrics – evaluated by individual thesis committees.</p> <p>Graduate Student Critical Thinking Rubric – graduate faculty teaching courses score rubrics for their classes.</p> <p>Comprehensive Exam Rubrics – evaluated by individual faculty evaluators</p> <p>All results are compiled by the</p>

	<p>Comprehensive Exam Rubric as evaluated by qualified graduate faculty.</p>	<p>have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student scores 60 (out of 80)</li> <li>• 90% of students rated as competent</li> <li>• 50% of students rated as highly competent</li> </ul> <p>For the Findings/Conclusions and Results/Conclusions subscales of the Academic Thesis and Creative Thesis rubrics we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student achieves a subscale score of highly competent (3.75 out of 5) for the academic thesis</li> <li>• Average student achieves a subscale score of highly competent (3.75 out of 5) for the creative thesis</li> </ul> <p>For the Comprehensive Exam Rubric (Element 3) we have the following expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average student score of a 12 (out of 20) across all rubrics for the selected subscales, which would represent a solid competent score</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative: score of 4.37</li> <li>• Academic: score of 4.20</li> </ul> <p>Comprehensive Exam rubric (Element 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis/synthesis score: 11.25</li> </ul> <p>Graduating students indicated on the exit survey that they believe the program greatly improved their critical thinking skills (mean = 4.33 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being strongly agree).</p> <p>Overall, we met our goals in this area with two exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-campus student scores fell short of our expectation of at least 50% of students scoring <b>highly competent</b>; however, scores are up significantly from our last evaluation period. Student average rubric scores from our last assessment period were 56.43, and improved to a 71.62; and from 41.27% highly competent up to 48.78% highly competent.</li> <li>• Student scores also fell slightly short of our expectations on the comprehensive exam score. This lower score may be due in large part to only having 2 comprehensive exams scored during this evaluation period. We have also only recently brought back comprehensive</li> </ul>	<p>Graduate Coordinator then assessed by the Graduate Committee before being shared with the entire graduate faculty during the semester following the assessment report due date.</p>
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		(competent range of 10-14)	<p>exams, so some students and faculty may still be adjusting to this as a capstone option.</p> <p>While we have clearly made improvements towards meeting this learning goal, our department needs to continue to improve our ability to move critical thinking skills from competent to highly competent.</p> <p>Ratings for the academic and creative thesis results/conclusions subscale also exceeded our expectations, which again demonstrates that we are successfully teaching our students critical thinking skills within our program.</p>	
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## **PART TWO**

Describe your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the CASA Director's comments on last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

The Communication Studies division continued to collect all of the data outlined on the previous report. We also added additional data for this reporting period. First, we brought back comprehensive exams as a capstone experience, in which students may now choose between writing a traditional/creative thesis or taking comprehensive exams. Assessment data for comprehensive exams is now included in the current report. Second, since our last reporting period in 2018, we have seen significant growth in our online program. While we have collected the same data for both our on-campus and online classes, we have separated out the findings for each program.

Additionally, the small changes we made a few years ago regarding the identification of student's current semester in the program on rubrics has been extraordinarily helpful in demonstrating to faculty (and students) the impact the program has on writing quality and critical thinking. We are consistently seeing that our on-campus students in their 4<sup>th</sup> semester have advanced writing and critical thinking skills compared to those in their 1<sup>st</sup> semester. As we mentioned in our last report, this data has influenced the type of student we are willing to admit to our program. While we still only admit students who we feel can be successful, we now realize there are significant positive jumps made by students between their first and final years in the program in both critical thinking and writing quality. These increases are such that we can take risks on borderline students knowing that we will prepare them to successfully complete their capstone project. Overall, we did see an increase in writing and critical thinking skills this year compared to our last assessment report. I am confident that we will continue to help students grow in their writing and critical thinking skills as they move through our program.

An interesting finding from this report is that our online students outperformed our on-campus students in every area. There are many possible reasons for this: first, we had many more online rubrics returned than we did on-campus rubrics, which may have skewed the numbers in favor of our online classes; second, we have double the enrollment in our online program which increases the likelihood of more positive evaluations in our online program; third, and potentially the biggest reason, is that many of our online students are high school teachers who have enrolled in our MA degree to complete the requirements to teach the dual-credit public speaking course. This is our first year completing an assessment for our online program, thus we can only make reasoned guesses as to why online students outperform on-campus students. We will certainly monitor this trend as we move forward in both our on-campus and online graduate programs.

## **PART THREE**

Summarize changes and improvements in **curriculum, instruction, and learning** that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Our department has seen a positive impact from curriculum changes and pedagogical alterations we've made since our previous report. One issue that arose from our previous assessment data was that too many students were not graduating on time. We discovered the reason for this was because they were not completing their theses in a timely manner (all other graduation requirements were being met). We also discovered that the thesis capstone experience did not match well with many of our graduate students' career goals. Exit survey results tell us that many students felt the thesis option wasn't beneficial to their overall learning and career preparation. Due to this mismatch with the capstone experience, we reinstated the comprehensive exam option. Now our on-campus students can choose between writing a traditional/creative thesis or taking comprehensive exams. This change has resulted in a substantially higher percentage of students completing their program requirements and graduating on time (from 60% in 2018 to 100% in 2020).

Current assessment data indicates that we should continue to increase our on-campus students' writing and critical thinking skills. While the trend appears to be that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students score lower in writing and critical thinking skills than do our 4<sup>th</sup> semester students, we need to find ways to help all of our students develop these skills more quickly. We have begun to do this is through an informal mentoring process where 2<sup>nd</sup> year students are paired with 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Student mentors are selected by the graduate coordinator and paired with 1<sup>st</sup> year students who need help with writing and critical thinking. Mentors meet with the mentees at least once a month. A second way we have addressed this is by providing a weekly writing group for students needing assistance with writing and critical thinking. While covid-19 put a halt to those meetings early in the spring semester, we hope to continue offering this service once we fully return to campus.

We also continue to expanded our course offerings in our online Communication and Leadership program and our Graduate Certificate in Communication Processes program. We added three new course options to our online programs this past year and will continue to monitor how well these curricular changes help students move through the program easily and quickly. Since our last assessment report, we have also created an accelerated graduate program for undergraduate students. We have had 3 students successfully complete the program, and 2 have since enrolled (or are in the process of enrolling) in our graduate program. We have 3 additional accelerated graduate students planning to join us in spring 2021.

**Student Learning Assessment Program  
Response to Summary Form  
Graduate Program 2020  
October 29, 2020**

Department: Communications

Degree and Program Name: M.A. in Communication Studies

Reviewer: Dr. Nikki Hillier, Graduate Assessment Coordinator, Graduate School

<b>Category</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	The objectives for the program encompass all the graduate learning goals established by EIU's Council on Graduate Studies.
<b>How, Where, and When Assessed</b>	Your program has several measurements for assessing learning objectives. Candidates are assessed throughout the program. You seem to have strategically incorporated assessment in a few different rubrics, rubrics are streamlined to be used for both the online and on-campus programs. The assessment plan can be used to show improve in student learning throughout the program.
<b>Expectations</b>	Expectations are appropriate for graduate learning and are clearly defined. You should consider setting expectations for other data collected: exit surveys and presentations/publications.
<b>Results</b>	The measures used seem to demonstrate the great work you are doing with your assessment plan, and also highlight areas where you are just shy of meeting goals for certain measures. Using the same rubrics, but separating the programs based on delivery mode is helpful in highlighting where differences might arise. That student writing and critical thinking skills improve throughout the program really demonstrates the value the program has in helping students master these skills.
<b>How Results Will be Used</b>	It is clear that assessment is an important part of the program efforts, and your program uses the information meaningfully. The process the department uses seems to involve all necessary players: compiled by the coordinator, assessed by the graduate faculty, and presented to the department as a whole. Of note is the way you have used past assessment reports to make important changes in the curriculum that led to student success: seeing that 40% of students were not graduating on time, and then dropping that to 0% (in just 2 years) after adding the option of qualitative exams or theses- excellent decision! Your program uses assessment results to strategize ways to improve critical thinking skills and writing ability in students, not just to determine the success of your program.
<b>Recommendations</b>	The program is doing great work with assessment. For the next report, it would be helpful to include goals for the exit surveys and the number of student presentations in addition to setting goals and reporting findings from the exit surveys. We recommend continuing to use the assessments your program currently employs to demonstrate the value of your program

	and to find and address areas for improvement. We also recommend that you continue to explore and address the differences in outcomes for the online vs. on-campus programs. We hope to see continued improvements to critical thinking and writing ability as you continue to implement innovative programs like the mentoring program and the writing groups.
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The Council on Graduate Studies is evaluating assessment, learning goals, and future reporting schedules during the fall semester 2020.