**Report on Graduate Core Competency**

**Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Evaluation**

**Graduate Core Competency Assessment, AY 2020-21**

Reported by **Graduate Core Competency Chair, Dr. Jessica Hannigan and**

**University Faculty Director of Assessment, Dr. Douglas Fraleigh**

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FRESNO

**August 2021**

Fresno State Logo

**Report on the Assessment of**

**Graduate Programs Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Evaluation**

**California State University, Fresno**

**August 19th, 2021**

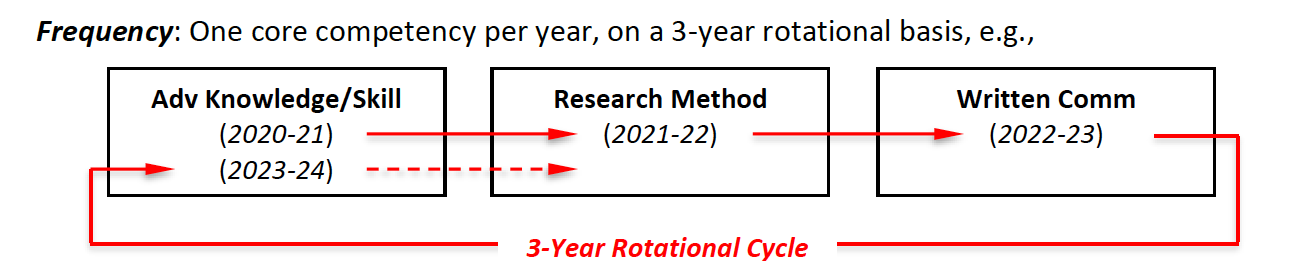
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Background**

WSCUC Standard of Accreditation 4.1 requires that “the institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including … assessment of student learning.” At the undergraduate level, WSCUC Criteria for Review 2.2a requires that “programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking.” At the graduate level, the WSCUC *2013 Handbook of Accreditation* provides that “graduate programs and graduate-only institutions are expected to define and assess the generic intellectual competencies that are foundational in their field. WSCUC Criteria for Review 2.2b provides that programs must “establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms ... student learning outcomes.”

At a graduate faculty meeting in fall of 2016, University Director of Assessment, Dr. Melissa Jordine, discussed this issue thoroughly with the faculty who attended. A majority of those faculty members agreed to provide feedback on potential graduate core competencies to be assessed University-wide. A Qualtrics survey based upon this discussion was created and sent to all faculty members, including those who had not attended the graduate meeting. The responses indicated a clear consensus. Nearly all respondents, with two exceptions, recommended adopting three core competencies--written communication, advanced disciplinary knowledge or skill, and research/discipline-specific methodology.

At a March 4, 2020 Graduate Coordinators’ meeting, a plan for graduate core competency assessment was established. The plan included a rotation through three graduate core competencies 1) Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill, 2) Research Method, and 3) Written Communication. In 2019, a pilot assessment of written communication was conducted and feedback was attained to ensure the graduate core competencies captured a wide spread of disciplines and their culminating exercises across the university. In 2020, Advanced Knowledge/Skill graduate core competency was implemented and the findings are shared in this report. In 2021-2022, the core competency Research Methods will be implemented and the rotation will continue. Each of the three graduate core competencies will be assessed on a rotating basis:



Specifically, in each rotation:

* Graduate students’ culminating experiences will be evaluated for the corresponding core competency being assessed.
* If a graduate program had less than ten students graduate in a given year (summer, fall, and spring), then all culminating experiences will be assessed. If a program has ten or more students graduate, then ten culminating experiences will be randomly selected for assessment.
* A common rubric will be utilized for each core competency and used to assess students’ performance. Each graduate core competency rubric was developed based on graduate coordinators’ feedback and finalized by the university College Coordinators Assessment Committee.
* A reporting form will be provided to each graduate coordinator. After faculty score the students’ work and provide comments, the form will be returned to the Core Competency Assessment Chair and University Director of Assessment.

**Graduate Programs Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Evaluation Process**

For AY 2020-21, Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge or Skill was assessed. The assessment was overseen by the Director of Assessment, Dr. Douglas Fraleigh, and chaired by one College Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Jessica Hannigan. Students’ culminating experiences were assessed using a rubric developed collectively by the graduate coordinators (see Appendix).

Students were assessed on two criteria, demonstration of advanced disciplinary knowledge and application of disciplinary knowledge. Students received a score of 3 (advanced proficiency), 2 (proficiency), or 1 (partial proficiency). The benchmark was that 90% of students would receive a score of 2 (proficiency) or higher on both criteria.

Graduate coordinators were provided a variety of professional learning opportunities throughout the 2020-2021 academic year to ensure they understood the process for implementing the graduate core competency evaluation. Dr. Fraleigh and Dr. Hannigan presented the information at three separate university level graduate coordinator meetings (provided during the beginning, middle and end) of the academic school year. During these sessions, the why, what and how of the graduate core competency evaluation implementation was covered. In addition, reminder emails with specific instructions and opportunities for additional support were provided each semester to all graduate coordinators. In addition, a special graduate core competency support work session was provided in May 2021 to provide an additional opportunity to learn how to implement the graduate core competency evaluation. One on one coaching opportunities were also provided to graduate coordinators who requested one on one support throughout the academic school year.

**Results of the Graduate Programs Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Evaluation**

As shown in Table 1, the graduate core competency Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Evaluation submissions and results at Fresno State. The benchmark was that 90% of students would receive a score of 2 (proficiency) or higher on both criteria. The sample size of N= 334 submissions was representative of rubric submissions from 41 graduate programs across the university. In all, 334 submissions were evaluated. The results were as follows:

* ***Criteria 1 Proficiency (2 or above)***: 316, 95% of the submissions were worthy of a rating of 2 or better.
* ***Criteria 2 Proficiency (2 or above)***: 307, 92% of the submissions were worthy of a rating of 2 or better.
* ***Overall Proficiency of (2 or above) for both Criteria 1 and Criteria 2***: 91% of the submissions were worthy of a rating of 2 or better on both criteria 1 and criteria 2. .

Based on the benchmark established for proficiency, expectations were met for criteria 1

proficiency, criteria 2 proficiency, and overall criteria 1 and 2 proficiency.

**Table 1.** *Proficiency Scores Main Sample (*N *= 334) (sample size is representative of submissions from 41 graduate programs)*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Sample** |  | **Criteria 1 Proficiency (2 or above)** | **Criteria 2 Proficiency (2 or above)** | **Overall proficiency of 2 or above for both**  **(Criteria 1 & 2)** |
| **All Submissions**  Projects (155)  Thesis (85)  Comprehensive Exams (104) | N = 334 | 316 | 307 | 303 |
| **Proficiency Benchmark is 90% or higher** |  | 95% | 92% | 91% |

Table 2 represents overall advanced disciplinary knowledge/skill graduate core

competency themes and faculty comments. It is important to note that 303 of the

334 submissions fulfilled the expectation of both criteria 1 and criteria 2 being met. There were a

small number of submissions that missed the mark by either scoring lower on criteria 1 and/or

criteria 2. It is also important to note, that submission not meeting criteria 2 (27 submissions)

was slightly higher than submissions not meeting criteria 1(18 submission), demonstrating an

area of need toward helping students with the application of the learned knowledge.

Overall, based on faculty comment input derived from the student rubric submissions, in the area of advanced disciplinary knowledge/skill evaluation, students demonstrated more strengths than areas of needs. Table 2 outlines the themes and corresponding comments.

**Table 2.**

*Table of Overall Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge/Skill Graduate Core Competency Themes and Faculty Comments*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Themes** | **Faculty Comments** |
| Quality of Work Product | *Well researched*  *Strong argument to support thesis*  *Demonstrated writing ability*  *Strong critical thinking skills*  *Particularly good literature review*  *Excellent research questions*  *Performance done at a high level of artistic merit (especially given COVID limitations*  *Some students submitted their manuscript to a journal, some submissions have led to refereed publications*  *Most students at a professional level in terms of writing and interpretation* |
| Subject Matter Knowledge | *Advanced knowledge consistent with graduate level work*  *Very good command of GAC process*  *Superior knowledge, strong synthesis of concepts and ideas and good application*  *All had strong arguments and could apply the knowledge to real world experiences*  *Vision, scope, execution* |
| Application of Knowledge | *Students applied knowledge gained in the core curriculum*  *Data analytic methods strong*  *Masterful application of transitional science*  *Able to apply theory to original data*  *Strong connections made between research and application the case study.* |
| Significance of Work, Utility | *Conclusions addressed appropriate recommendations for*  *changing practice*  *Well designed, clearly written method book for elementary*  *orchestra*  *Project has great potential significance in real world settings*  *A needed piece in the topic area*  *Students understand theories and techniques needed to serve*  *students and families in K-12*  *Applied work will benefit industry* |
| Social Justice | *Unique and important research on factors that affect LGBTQ*  *students*  *Artwork conceptually strong, communicated issues of significance*  *Focus of research dealt with linguistically and culturally diverse*  *Central Valley students*  *Projects included a variety of social justice topics* |
| Graduate Writing Skills (needs improvement) | *APA knowledge and formatting*  *Academic writing style*  *Some issues with application of model*  *Very short narrative, did not expand answer*  *Very short narrative, did not expand answer*  *Student could have presented research data better*  *Writing/description relatively week*  *Sentence structure and grammar*  *Add depth* |
|
| Presentation, discussion in relation to context application (needs improvement) | *Presentation of the project would benefit from better organization,*  *addressing accessibility needs*  *Display of results and discussion needed improvement*  *Could have had a deeper level of application.*  *Strong relationship between research and findings.*  *Struggled a bit with application connections.*  *Understood the content but struggled to apply to real life context* |
| Ideas for Enhancing Student Success (needs improvement) | *Students who did not pass reported that they had not studied or practiced*  *Students need more mentoring in choosing correct option and*  *getting started*  *Students may need additional guidelines for program notes that accompany performances*  *Graduate program could do a better job of providing the corpus of necessary knowledge upfront*  *Revision process is helpful in reminding students of exam requirements*  *Additional work on the project manual to clarify synthesis of competencies required by the accrediting agency* |
|  |  |

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the benchmark established for proficiency, expectations were met for criteria 1

proficiency, criteria 2 proficiency, and overall criteria 1 and 2 proficiency. In addition (based on

faculty comments) student strengths emerged in quality of work product, subject matter

knowledge, application of knowledge, significance of work (utility), and social justice focused

products.

Areas where some student work needed improvement included graduate writing skills,

consistent adherence to a style manual, presentation of findings, and application of content to

real-life contexts. Assistance in planning their culminating experience process and mentoring of

students who are struggling could also improve student success. Based on this analysis of

student work, we have met our mark but can always continue to improve.

Some recommendation include but are not limited to the following:

* Student mentoring opportunities
* APA or other professional writing modality support (knowledge and formatting)
* Additional support in learning how to apply the work to a broader context
* Work on depth of analysis
* Graduate level academic writing support (grammar, structure)
* Opportunities to practice presentation, discussion, and/or sharing of findings in a meaningful ways

**Appendix A.**

Advanced Disciplinary Knowledge or Skill Rubric

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | **Advanced proficiency -3** | **Proficiency -2** | **Partial Proficiency -1** |
| **Knowledge** | Demonstrates advanced level of knowledge and additional details/aspects not required for proficiency are evident. | Demonstrates above-average level of knowledge consistent with graduate program level work. Sufficient details/aspects are included and clearly indicate proficiency. | Does not demonstrate adequate level of knowledge. Either details/aspects are missing or information/performance does not clearly demonstrate adequate level of mastery at the graduate program level |
| **Application of knowledge**  By demonstrating ability to interpret evidence OR draw conclusions OR evaluate or diagnose patients OR develop/produce original artwork, choreography, or technological innovations or programs or analysis of scientific theories or results | There is considerable evidence, beyond that required for proficiency, that the student has analyzed and interpreted information and drawn conclusions OR Student is able to apply their knowledge to think critically and evaluate patients and draw conclusions OR the student is able to apply their knowledge of certain artistic or engineering techniques to create artwork or structures or student has analyzed scientific theories or results | There is clear evidence that the student has analyzed and interpreted information and drawn conclusions OR Student is able to apply their knowledge to think critically and evaluate patients and draw conclusions OR the student is able to apply their knowledge of certain artistic or engineering techniques to create artwork or structures or analyzed scientific theories or results | Very little evidence that student is able to apply their knowledge |