

Arctic and Northern Studies - Master of Arts - Full Review & SLOA

Current Compliance Year: 2022-2023

Recent Recommendations

Feedback will include recommendations from the last Expedited Review or from your most recent review by your school or college. You may not see any feedback or recommendations until you have completed your first full or mid-cycle review.

Response to Previous Recommendations (if any):

The Arctic and Northern Studies B.A. and M.A. programs underwent expedited review in AY 2020. The Chancellor recommended that the B.A. continue and the M.A. continue with an improvement plan. We received a report for the M.A. program, requesting follow-up items on February 2, 2022. We responded to this report on April 19, 2022 with ways we have addressed the recommended courses of action. Please note that we will update our SLOA and embed our communication outcomes plan for the next program review.

Student Learning Outcomes

The previous Student Learning Outcomes Assessment has been submitted as its own report. Going forward you will use the following prompts to discuss the success of your most recent SLOA plan and address your assessment activities since your last SLOA report (typically the past two years or since your last program review).

Learning outcomes feedback from last review:

Feedback will be provided once you have completed a full or mid-cycle review.

Discuss your SLOA findings, changes you are making and what you hope to see as a result:

To assess our student learning outcomes for the M.A. degree, we use a number of methods. Two important tools are 1) an exit survey administered to graduates and 2) the chair's evaluation of the student's thesis or project. For this review, we have surveys from five M.A. graduates. We also include the chair's review of the thesis or project for four of the five students. One outcome is that student's learn about the region's peoples and myriad characteristics (politics, economics, etc.). We ask students to self-identify their knowledge. All respondents self-reported significant growth in their knowledge of the North as a region. As one example, one student wrote, "Having lived in Alaska during my studies and then worked more broadly in the state after completion of my classes, I can say that my knowledge and understanding of Alaska and the Arctic has grown massively through academic and personal experiences." Another outcome is that students improve their research, theoretical, methodological, and writing skills. All students reported growth in the development of these skills. Another outcome is that students produce and defend an MA thesis or project. To assess the quality of the thesis or project, we include the chair's total score for each student, based on a rubric that captures 1) quality of writing, fluency, and mechanics; 2) analysis; 3) research skills; and 4) contribution. These scores are 88, 95, 95, and 95, for an average of 93.25. Given the student feedback and professor evaluations, we believe we have achieved our outcomes, although student feedback also provides a foundation on how to improve the program (e.g., reducing time to completion, communicating deadlines, expanding methods

offerings, increasing resources, etc.). Professors [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] contributed to this evaluation.

Discuss the curricular changes made based on assessing your SLO. If you haven't made any curricular changes, please explain why not and address what you did notice in the review, including strengths of your curriculum through the assessment of your outcomes:

We updated our SLOAs for both the B.A. and M.A. degrees in AY 2021. The M.A. degree remains strong, with climbing enrollment owing to increasing attention to the Arctic from Alaska, the United States, and the world and the launch of the online degree in AY 2020. The ACNS M.A. program is the highest enrolled graduate program in CLA. Recent curricular changes include collapsing the Environmental Politics Concentration into the Arctic Politics and Policy Concentration and adding a Thesis Writing Workshop to the core requirements.

Are communication outcomes embedded in the SLOA Plan?

As of 2017 all Baccalaureate programs were required to embed the communication outcomes within their SLOA Plans, this is optional for non-Baccalaureate programs.

Not Embedded

Student Success

To access the Student Success Dashboard please sign into a UA computer with VPN connection (if not on campus). You will need your UA credentials and it is best accessed with the most updated version of Chrome, Edge, Firefox or Safari browsers; Internet Explorer is not supported. You will need to filter the data to see your programs. If you need assistance in finding the data for your programs, please contact your data liaison or [Julia Manfredini](#) in the PAIR office.

Data Liaisons

Each school or college has a team of Data Liaisons to help you analyze the data provided in the portal and may be able to help you see your data in multiple contexts. You can find a list of data liaisons on the resources page for Program Review.

The college or school level committee will also have access to this data with the goal that by providing these visualizations data availability will be increased.

Data supplied within the dashboard linked below is intended for Academic Program Review and not for any other purpose.

[Student Success Data Dashboard](#)

Previous Feedback

Feedback will be provided once you have completed a full or mid-cycle review.

Student Success Data Trends:

Decline in majors, Decline in degrees awarded, Increase in SCH, Increase in persistence, Decrease in pass rates

If equity gaps were found in any of your disaggregated student success data, please explain how you plan to address those gaps. Please contact your data liaison or make an appointment with [Julia Manfredini](#) to learn more about analyzing your data.

After carefully evaluating the data, we do not find any equity gaps. Pass rates have remained relatively stable for all demographic groups. The [REDACTED] category has increased, while the [REDACTED] category has slightly decreased. The [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] groups are very stable. A drop in [REDACTED] year-olds (100 to 88.9 percent) is coupled with an increase in [REDACTED] (81 to 83.7 percent). Rates for [REDACTED] are stable (50 percent) and for [REDACTED] have increased (84.62 to 89.53 percent).

Optional Data Explanation

Feel free to share more of your thoughts on the data provided.

The M.A. degree indicators are relatively stable over the time period, with slight increases in some cases and slight decreases in others. SCH and the pass rate have marginally increased over the time period, while the number of majors, degrees awarded, and persistence have slightly decreased. As we have seen an influx of M.A. students since 2020, we expect the degrees awarded to increase in the near future. The M.A. remains the highest enrolled graduate program in CLA, and we are proud to see more students – in both the M.A. and INDS Ph.D. degrees – enroll after the COVID-related slump.

High Impact Practices

According to the AAC&U, High-Impact Educational Practices “have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial to college students from many backgrounds.” UAF is particularly interested in Undergraduate Research and/or Scholarly Activity because it is one of our mission fulfillment indicators, but all of these researched High-Impact Educational Practices should be reflected in your program’s student learning outcomes and curriculum.

Previous Feedback

Feedback will be provided once you have completed a full or mid-cycle review.

High-Impact Practices Used in this Program

Please use the following fields to discuss how your program is using the high-impact practices, successes and known issues and solutions, or ways you are considering incorporating them in the future. If you are not using any of the high-impact practices listed, please use the “Other or None of These,” field to share what your program is doing to help students be successful.

High Impact Practices that currently apply to your program:

Diversity/Global Learning, Writing-Intensive Courses

Collaborative Assignments & Projects

Undergraduate Research

Diversity/Global Learning**ePortfolios****First Year-Seminars & Experiences****Writing-Intensive Courses****Service-Learning and/or Community-based Learning****Internships****Capstone Courses & Projects****Other or None of these (explain)**

Program Profile and Financial Data

The program review elements in this section usually stay consistent for departments. Any responses you provide will be saved for your next visit. So, when it's time for the next program submission, your previous narrative profile answers will be here, ready for editing. You can then decide if any updates are necessary, based on your needs for the next program review cycle.

Financial Data Resources

The Board of Regents shapes program review, through BOR Policy 10.06, to support budget increase advocacy in the state legislature. The standardized financial data template should be analyzed with your data liaison to assess your program's capacity and resource status.

To keep integrity and remain standard across all of UAF it is very important that you do not provide any additional or alternative data.

Financial Template

Your data liaison may have uploaded your template to the Google folder for this program, or you may do so now.

Previous Feedback

Feedback will be provided once you have completed a full or mid-cycle review.

Cost Effectiveness

How does your department/program approach being cost effective?

The Arctic and Northern Studies M.A. degree is extremely cost-effective. The Arctic and Northern Studies program only has 1.1 Faculty FTE (0.6 line for Director [REDACTED], and 0.5 line for Assistant Director [REDACTED]). None of the affiliated faculty have lines in the program. The 1.1 Faculty FTE, with help from the affiliated faculty, support the Arctic and Northern Studies B.A., M.A., and the new Graduate Certificate degrees and the cohort of Interdisciplinary Studies (INDS) Ph.D. students housed in the program. We only offer two courses specifically for the M.A. program: ACNS 601 Research Methods and Sources in the North (taught by Boylan) and ACNS 689 Thesis Writing Workshop (taught by Dr. Jeremy Speight from Political Science). Neither of these two courses is stacked or cross-listed. The rest of the M.A. courses are stacked and/or cross-listed with other departments and programs. For example, even the orientation course to the M.A. degree, ACNS 600 Perspectives on the North, is stacked with ACNS 484 and cross-listed with History (HIST 600). ACNS has a small departmental budget, with most funds dedicated to office supplies and phone lines. The financial information provided by CLA Fiscal Officer [REDACTED] does not break down financial revenues/costs by degree program, but by all indicators the ACNS program (as a whole) is doing extremely well. Total Student Credit Hours (SCH), Service SCH, Total SCH per Department Full Time Equivalent (FTE), Service SCH per Department FTE, Majors in Programs, and Majors per Department FTE have all increased from FY2020 to FY2022, while FTEs have remained fairly stable (5.33 in AY20 to 5.79 in AY22; most of the FTEs are TAs). Moreover, ACNS brings in more tuition and project revenues than all program expenditures; tuition revenue has also increased from 2020 to 2022 by 25 percent.

Program's Value to Mission

UAF emphasizes “the circumpolar North and its diverse peoples” in its mission and serves as “America’s Arctic university.” Arctic and Northern Studies is one of few programs at UAF that specifically and comprehensively addresses the University’s mission. Our program focuses on teaching and researching Arctic-related topics, primarily focusing on the human dimensions. Our faculty’s research covers this geographic area from multiple perspectives with strengths in the disciplines of History and Political Science and expertise also from Alaska Native Studies, Anthropology, Art, English, Indigenous Studies, Psychology, among others. ACNS’s interdisciplinarity is especially advantageous, given the complexity of the challenges we face in the North. Moreover, the program is not duplicated in the UA system. In fact, no other academic institution in the United States offers a B.A. or M.A. in Arctic studies.

Duplicative Programs

The Arctic and Northern Studies M.A. is unique not only in the University of Alaska system but also the country. Although some universities offer an undergraduate major concentration or minor in Arctic studies, no university in the country offers an M.A. (or B.A. or doctoral level education) in Arctic studies except for the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Community or Other Partnerships

Arctic and Northern Studies has relationships with several entities. ACNS Director [REDACTED] leads the Model Arctic Council (MAC), organized as a Thematic Network in the University of the Arctic (UArctic). The program also has a strong relationship with the Center for Arctic Policy Studies (CAPS) at the International Arctic Research Center (IARC). CAPS Director Dr. [REDACTED] is an ACNS affiliated faculty and often employs ACNS graduate students at CAPS or otherwise funds them on her research grants. ACNS Director Boylan and affiliated faculty Drs. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have also worked on research projects under CAPS. ACNS has a relationship with the One Health

program. Many of the ACNS courses are listed as part of the One Health M.A. curriculum (e.g., ACNS 600 Perspectives on the North; ACNS 652 International Relations of the North). Recently, ACNS partnered with the Copper Valley School Association (CVSA), and CVSA generously funded a two-year ACNS teaching assistantship (TAship). ACNS affiliated faculty routinely contribute to local education programs: History Day and We the People. Several ACNS B.A. students are Honors and/or Climate Scholars, while many M.A. students have been employed at local institutions like the Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC) and Fairbanks Climate Action Coalition (FCAC). Program alumni have gone on to work at a number of organizations in the public and private sector.

Value of Service Courses (Optional)

Although the discussion on internal and service teaching does not apply to the M.A. degree, students in other graduate programs (e.g., Anthropology, Indigenous Studies, One Health, Rural Development, Security and Disaster Management, etc.) routinely take our courses.

Post-Graduate Success

Arctic and Northern Studies prepares students for areas identified as high-need for the state of Alaska such as law, security, sustainability and the environment, civic engagement, and education. As a result, ACNS M.A. alumni have been highly successful in finding careers in higher education, government agencies, journalism and communications, consulting firms, environmental organizations, and businesses in the North, Lower 48, or abroad. Many also go on to doctoral studies.

Submission

Submitter & Collaborator Names

Brandon Boylan, Tyler Kirk

Submitter Email

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College or School Review Committee

The college or school committees set the tone for helping each program feel seen during this process. We have provided you with strength-based feedback tags to attach to this program review. Please select as many as applicable.

Overall Recommendations

Increase graduates

Explanation of Recommendations

Program has steady/increasing enrollments, coupled with increasing student credit hours, and tuition revenue. However, the decrease in graduates is of concern. In discussing this with the department representative are part of this review, we gathered that the online offerings have resulted in a significant increase of part time and non-traditional student participation, therefore impacting graduation data for this review period. Development of online degree is a major accomplishment and we commend ACNS for their efforts, as it may have resulted in increased credit hours and enrollment. Report does not address how online delivery and in-person delivery are combined. Online program established in 2020, so it may be too early to identify impacts, therefore we recommend commentary on this from the department in the next review cycle. SLOA discusses advising practices and passing of key courses. There are points where there is formal assessment; i) Institutional Review Board, where students have to take CITI training and submit a proposal that must pass review, ii) Rubric used to assess comprehensive exam, iii) Rubric used to evaluate theses, iv) Rubric used to evaluate projects. Report does not explicitly discuss how results of this analysis are used to adapt the program. Lastly, The committee has expressed concern regarding the pertinence and effectiveness of the CLA portal data in contributing to our assessment due to outlying factors and extreme circumstances from the covid pandemic and feel it necessary to provide a comment on this.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback (tags)

"Clear, concise presentation of findings"

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback (narrative)

Students outcomes are primarily assessed through exit interview and assessment of thesis/project by program chair. Students provide a self-assessment their knowledge. Assessment of thesis/project uses a rubric that evaluates 1) quality of writing, fluency, and mechanics; 2) analysis; 3) research skills; and 4) contribution. Could evaluation be extended to more reviewers than the chair? Could the student self-assessment be strengthened, more robust, and more quantitative? Model Arctic Council is identified as the primary activity for experiential learning. Well-recognized providing valuable pan-Arctic experience. How are costs of travel covered. Program tracks graduates and reports their employment on a public program website. This website serves as a recruitment tool and meets requirements for sharing professional outcomes recommended by graduate education.
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Profile Feedback

Program is unique in the state,Collaborative with other UA programs,Strong post-graduation success for students,"Strong service teaching component (GER, other disciplines, etc)"

Financial Feedback

High Tuition Revenues,Operates at Low Cost,Productive Faculty

Student Success & Equity Feedback

Program reports that graduates are successful in finding careers in higher education, government agencies, journalism and communications, consulting firms, environmental organizations, and businesses as well as going on to doctoral studies. Website documents graduates and their initial placements (<https://www.uaf.edu/arctic/prospective-students/careers-and-alumni.php>). The enrollment has recovered to pre-COVID. The number of student credit hours at graduate level have steadily increased as has tuition revenue. Concern is decrease in the number of graduates and implied time to degree, however, in discussion with department representative we have determined that the online offering have resulted in a significant increase of part time and non-traditional student participation.

High-Impact Practices Feedback

Program reports intensive writing practice, diverse and global learning, two comprehensive exams, and working with original data as high impact practices that serve students well. Degree is offered online, offering a broad student population a “gateway” to the North. Not clear how in-person and online components are combined.

Dean's Review Feedback

I appreciate the excellent reporting and effort of the ACNS MA program - and the thoughtful review of this program. As an interdisciplinary program the ACNS MA has demonstrated it's critical nature as it prepares students in scholarship and careers focused on addressing the complex challenges of the Arctic North. The Dean's office will continue to work with ACNS to assess and advocate for increased resources required to administrate, grow, and evaluate/track (both online and in-person) offerings for this important and complex masters program. A future hope is that ACNS will soon offer a PhD program.

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan
M.A. in Arctic & Northern Studies
College of Liberal Arts
Revised August 2020

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose	Intended Objectives/Outcomes	Assessment Criteria and Procedures	Implementation (what, when, who)
MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of UAF's Arctic & Northern Studies is to educate students and others on the Arctic region and circumpolar North, with focus on their peoples and communities, social systems, and environments in a rapidly changing context due to climate change, and prepare them to work on Arctic issues.. GOAL STATEMENT: The goal of UAF's Arctic & Northern Studies is to elevate significantly the interdisciplinary knowledge and curiosity of and appreciation for the Arctic region and circumpolar North among students and others and to provide an academic structure for learning about the Arctic region and circumpolar North for the UAF and wider academic and policy communities through high quality teaching and mentoring; innovative research and scholarship; and service, outreach, and networking.	Students will learn interdisciplinary ways to conceptualize and think about the Arctic region and circumpolar North.	M.A. students must take and pass the introductory / orientation seminar to the ACNS M.A. program, ACNS 600 Perspectives on the North. *Students typically take the course during their first semester in the program.	*This course is typically taught by an ACNS program leader.
	Students will learn about the region's peoples, communities, political systems, policies, histories, geographies, economies, ecosystems, literatures, and art forms.	M.A. students must choose one of three concentrations (Arctic Politics and Policy, Northern History, or Individualized Study) and take and pass courses that satisfy their concentration.	*ACNS advisors will ensure that students meet all requirements to complete their chosen concentration.
	Students will improve their research, theoretical, methodological, and writing skills.	Students must complete and pass ACNS 601 Research Methods and Sources in the North and ACNS 689 Thesis Writing Workshop. *Other courses, as well as comprehensive exams and the thesis/project, will provide opportunities to hone these skills. *They must also work closely with their thesis or project committee.	*ACNS administrators will monitor student progress towards degree completion. Students must satisfactorily complete coursework, comprehensive exams, proposals, thesis or project drafts, and final theses or projects.
	Students will master two fields of literature related to their focus in the program.	Students must successfully pass two comprehensive exams related to their fields of study. Faculty evaluate students' comprehensive exams with a rubric.	*Students and their committees collaboratively identify topics of exams and related reading lists *Students typically complete their comprehensive exams at the start of or during their second year. *Students must pass their comprehensive exams before writing their thesis or project. *Students' faculty committee evaluates comprehensive exams with a rubric developed for the program.
	Students will produce and successfully defend an MA	*The Institutional Review Board (IRB) must approve all	*Students typically present and defend their thesis or project

Submitted by: Professors Brandon Boylan and Tyler Kirk

	thesis or project that requires: a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature related to the student's selected topic; incorporates original data collection; demonstrates understanding and application of an appropriate research method(s); contains written analysis and/or interpretation; and integrates the work within the field to make a valuable contribution to the scholarly understanding of the Arctic and circumpolar North.	student research involving human subjects. *Students present and defend their thesis or project in a public setting. *Students' MA committees evaluate each thesis or project using either the ACNS Thesis Evaluation Rubric or the ACNS Project Evaluation Rubric.	during their last semester in the program *ACNS faculty, other faculty, ACNS and other students, and the public are invited to attend thesis and project defenses. *Students' faculty committee evaluates the thesis or project with a rubric developed for the program.
	The program offers opportunities for experiential, applied, and other out-of-classroom learning. This includes participation in the Model Arctic Council, research and scholarship, field trips, lectures and presentations by visiting scholars, and participation in ACNS social and academic events.	These opportunities will be announced through the ACNS website, email, and social media.	*Students will have the opportunity to participate in the Model Arctic Council and other opportunities as they are provided. *ACNS leaders will inform students of these opportunities.
	Students will find employment in or about the Arctic region and circumpolar North in which they can apply knowledge and expertise developed in the ACNS program.	*ACNS maintains a website of alumni and their professional accomplishments.	ACNS contacts alumni through email and social media to obtain their current employment and other updates.

Fiscal Report for Arctic & Northern Studies Program (CLA)

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	Definitions for the compiling staff	Definitions for the programs and reviewing committees
Total Student Credit Hours (SCH)	392	450	495	Provided in SCH tab in the student success data provided by PAIR.	Total Student Credit Hours delivered in courses/subject codes attributable to the program/department. Comes from the data dashboard.
Service SCH	392	450	495	Sum rows labeled as "In unit, outside department, Service" and "Outside unit, Service" in the SCH table of the data provided by PAIR.	Sum of rows labeled as "In unit, outside department, Service" and "Outside unit, Service" in the SCH table of the data provided by PAIR.
Department FTEs	5.33	5.15	5.79	FTE = Full-time equivalent employee. Use the worksheet below to calculate for each employee type, and then use the total from row 31 here.	FTE = Full-time equivalent employee. Fiscal staff have used the worksheet below to calculate for each employee type in this program/department's staffing.
Total SCH per Department FTE	73.51	87.36	85.47		Total SCH divided by employee FTE for the year. May give insight into departmental productivity scaled to the size of the department.
Service SCH per Department FTE	73.51	87.36	85.47		Service SCH divided by employee FTE for the year. May give insight into departmental productivity scaled to the size of the department.
Majors in Programs	38	38	47	Provided in the Majors table in the student success data provided by PAIR.	Total majors in the program (or all programs in the department), in the Majors table of the data provided by PAIR.
Department FTEs	5.33	5.15	5.79	From row 32 below or row 5 above	FTE = Full-time equivalent employee. Fiscal staff have used the worksheet below to calculate for each employee type in this program/department's staffing.
Majors per Department FTE	7.13	7.38	8.12		Total majors divided by employee FTE for the year. May give insight into departmental productivity scaled to the size of the department.
Total Unrestricted Expenditures				Total Expenditures made from budgets with an F1 (and/or F7) fund type designation	
Total Restricted Expenditures				Total Expenditures made from budgets with revenue of the F2 or S2 fund type designation, from provided cycle report data filtered by Data Liaison	
Total Unit/Central Support Allocated to Program(s)				Expenses incurred for direct support of instruction within orgs identified as central support; should NOT include Academic Services expenditures	Used to report additional costs that support instruction within the department/program that are not charged directly to the accounting level that directly represents the program; note that these costs should still be instructional costs, and should not represent Academic Service (AS) expenditures, as that is counted as a different type of cost within the UA accounting system.
*Maximum Possible Tuition Revenue to Unit				*Maximum possible distributed receipts to college from tuition: calculated based on total SCHs generated by the department/program and applicable AY credit hour rates, prior to any discounts. Unit distribution is based on the current 80/20 percent tuition distribution model where generating units receive 80% of earned tuition. PLEASE USE PAIR REPORTED SCH TO REPLACE ZEROES IN CELL CALCULATIONS.	Maximum possible distributed receipts to college from tuition; calculated based on total SCHs generated by the department/program and the applicable AY credit hour rates, prior to any discounts, and UAF's active tuition distribution model, which determines how much the unit receives of their generated tuition (80%), and how much the campus keeps, in addition to any out-of-state surcharges, to support central offices/other UAF functions (20%).
State Appropriation Revenue				Appropriations for current funds operation of the university from the general fund of the State of Alaska through the annual budget cycle. This category also includes TVEP and State Mental Health Trust funds, if allocated to the department. (F1)	Appropriations for current funds operation of the university from the general fund of the State of Alaska through the annual budget cycle.
Restricted/Sponsored Project Revenue				Revenue from external sponsors; includes grants, contracts, sponsored projects & restricted (grant) accounts funded by UA Foundation funds (F2/S2)	Revenue from external sponsors; includes grants, contracts, sponsored projects & restricted (grant) accounts funded by UA Foundation funds
Fees				e.g. Course Fees (9159), Non-Credit Special Course fees (9151), Tuition Surcharges (9164)	
Other UA Receipts/Revenue				Other Revenue: e.g. Performance and Sales Receipts, Space Rental Revenue, Indirect Cost Recovery (F1/F7); NOTE: COURSE FEES (e.g. 9151, 9159, 9164) REPORTED ABOVE	
Workload allocation: Teaching Units	22.9	19.5	18.5	Department faculty's workload units assigned to teaching	
Workload allocation: Service Units	7	5	6.5	Department faculty's workload units assigned to service	
Workload allocation: Research Units	9.1	4	5.5	Department faculty's workload units assigned to research	

Full-time Equivalent Worksheet**

	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	
Faculty FTEs	1.13	1.20	1.10	Base assumption: 12-month full-time = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE. Split appointments are multiplied by the % of effort assigned to this department. Part-time are multiplied by the % of effort assigned. F9 faculty on sabbatical count as 67% of one 9-month 0.75 FTE (or 0.50 FTE).
Adjunct FTEs	0.15	0.18	0.07	Base assumption: 40 units/credits = 1.0 FTE. Total # of credits taught by adjuncts in a year divided by 40 = the FTE of adjuncts in that year.
Staff FTEs	0.12	0.12	0.12	Base assumption: 12-month full-time = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE. Split appointments are multiplied by the % of effort assigned to this department. Part-time are multiplied by the % of effort.
Graduate TA/RA FTEs	3.94	3.06	4.50	Base assumption: 40 hours/week for 12 months = 1.0 FTE. 9-month = 0.75 FTE.
Total Departmental FTEs	5.33	5.15	5.79	Sum of all employee FTEs

**Note: FTE definitions and calculations for the purpose of Academic Program Review are different than for other institutional reporting processes (e.g. OMB or IPEDS reporting)

Summer 2019 Summer 2020 Summer 2021
Fall 2019 Fall 2020 Fall 2021
Spring 2020 Spring 2021 Spring 2022

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Summary

Arctic & Northern Studies (ACNS) M.A.

College of Liberal Arts

2019-2021

Submitted by:

Brandon M. Boylan

Contact Information:

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Date:

May 2021

Review Period: AY 2020 - AY 2021

1. Assessment information collected

- a) Faculty committee members' evaluations of their graduate students' comprehensive exams
 - a. Each committee member completes an evaluation based on a rubric for each of the student's two comprehensive exams. The rubric evaluates the quality of writing, fluency, and mechanics; quality of analysis; competency in the literature field; and the accuracy of the exam.
- b) Faculty committee members' evaluations of their graduate students' theses and projects
 - a. Each committee member completes an evaluation based on a rubric for the student's thesis or project. The rubric evaluates the quality of the student's writing, fluency, and mechanics; the quality of their analysis; their level of research skills; and the value of the contribution represented in the thesis or project.
- c) Students' evaluations of the Arctic & Northern Studies M.A. program
 - a. Finally, students respond to a number of questions related to their professional growth; perceived value of the program; and strengths, opportunities, and weaknesses of the program.

2. Conclusions drawn from the information summarized above

Five students graduated from our M.A. program in the past two years (AY 2020 and AY 2021): Lauren Baranik (summer 2019), Leanna Williams (fall 2019), Marley McLaughlin (spring 2020), Sam Urban (spring 2020), and Liz Bowman (fall 2020).

a. Faculty evaluations of students' theses and projects

Four students completed theses (Baranik, Williams, McLaughlin, and Bowman), while one student completed a project (Urban). At least one faculty committee member from each student committee turned in an evaluation of the thesis or project.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Summary

Faculty ratings of the quality of the writing, fluency, and mechanics ranged from 22 to 25 (out of 25), with an average of 23.45.

Faculty ratings of the quality of analysis ranged from 21 to 25 (out of 25), with an average of 23.27.

Faculty ratings of the level of research skills ranged from 20 to 25 (out of 25), with an average of 23.18.

Faculty ratings of the contribution significance ranged from 18 to 25 (out of 25), with an average of 23.

Over the years, we have observed that some students come into the program with strong writing and analysis skills, poised to develop these skills, while other students have struggled to write effectively and analyze deeply, developing their skills only marginally. To continue to address this concern, we still aim to be more demanding in the coursework prior to the thesis writing stage. We feel like the faculty quantitative evaluation of students' theses and projects remains high.

b. Faculty evaluations of students' comprehensive exams

Three students took at least one comprehensive exam over the time period (AY 2020-AY 2021): Karsten Hueffer, Line Persson, and Elise Sorum-Birk. One student took both exams: Karsten Hueffer.

Faculty ratings of the quality of writing, fluency, and mechanics ranged from 20 to 24 (out of 25), with an average of 22.2.

We observe that some students write strong comprehensive exams, while others struggle to write well (good grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization) owing to the time limit.

Faculty ratings of the quality of analysis ranged from 17 to 24 (out of 25), with an average 21.5.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of exam writing, for some students, is the ability to substantiate arguments and clarify concepts at a sufficient level, especially given the time constraint.

Faculty ratings of the level of competency in the literature field ranged from 17 to 24 (out of 25), with an average of 22.1.

Many students excel at mastering the literature related to their comp topics, although some struggle to integrate academic arguments in a sophisticated manner.

Faculty ratings of accuracy level ranged from 20 to 24 (out of 25), with an average of 23.

This higher mean score illustrates that while faculty would like to see stronger analytical and writing skills in the students, faculty are generally quite pleased with the accuracy of the content knowledge students express.

We feel like the faculty quantitative evaluation of students' comprehensive exams remains high.

The comps serve the purpose of forcing the students to become conversant in two bodies of literature

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Summary

related to conditions in the North, and this literature supports their thesis work, so we find the comprehensive exam process productive.

c. Student program evaluations

Four of the five graduated students in AY 2021-AY 2022 completed evaluations of the ACNS M.A. program.

All students reported improvement in their writing skills. Some mentioned how faculty feedback given throughout the program, particularly in the thesis writing stage, was helpful for improving their writing skills.

The students reported improvement in their analytical skills. One student wrote, “My analytical skills were sharpened during my time in the ACNS program from the amount of time spent in discussion settings in my courses. This often translated into more clarity in my writing.” Another wrote, “Specifically, I feel that professors and courses have contributed to improvement in my ability to find, analyze, and interpret arguments and supporting evidence.”

Students’ self-assessment of the development of their research skills was mixed. Although some students saw moderate improvement in this area (one praised the Historiography course in particular), they felt like additional training relevant to the methods they used specifically in their research would have been beneficial. One student felt like they did not see much growth in this area.

All students reported learning a variety of topics related to the Arctic and circumpolar North. One highlighted the international dimension of the program, while another reported appreciation for its interdisciplinary nature. One student praised the program’s focus on Northern History. One wrote, “From a broad issue perspective, ACNS does an excellent job at making students see the circumpolar North as a massive region that is comprised of many individual identities and distinct countries/regions, yet also a unified, holistic domain where these aforementioned individual identities and regions are facing the same issues from climate change to indigenous rights to the exploitation of the North for government/private economic gain.”

Strengths:

Students mentioned the program’s international and interdisciplinary focus; ACNS- and UAF- provided opportunities for study, conferences, and networking; and the value of peer support and cohorts. Another mentioned the value of the program’s place-based education.

Weaknesses:

The students cited issues with the research methods course, stacked courses, cross-campus linkages, and differentiation between the thesis and project. One student felt like the research methods course did not prepare them to do research necessary for the thesis, suggesting that it come later in the curricular schedule. One student mentioned having mixed experiences with stacked courses, wanting to have more graduate-only courses. One student mentioned the need for more effort to keep students on track in the program (not letting them drift away), having more faculty dedicated to the program, and more connections between ACNS and other units across campus to highlight more opportunities and courses. One student mentioned confusion regarding the thesis vs. the project, questioned the value of the comprehensive exams, and mentioned some administrative issues regarding the achievement of a desired concentration.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Summary

3. Program changes

Leadership changes: Mary Ehrlander retired from UAF in summer 2020, and Brandon Boylan became Director. Recently hired History Assistant Professor Tyler Kirk has become the Assistant Director of ACNS.

Online ACNS M.A.: In AY 2020, we moved the ACNS M.A. online, so students now have the option of pursuing the M.A. face-to-face, online, or in a hybrid manner.

Thesis writing course: As of AY 2021, we are requiring a thesis writing course as a core component of the ACNS M.A. Dr. Alex Hirsch used to teach this course as an elective that we encouraged all students to take. Dr. Jeremy Speight will now be teaching this course each fall as a core requirement.

Analysis skills: Core ACNS faculty (Political Science and History faculty, who provide our three concentrations) continue to be committed to emphasizing analysis to a greater degree in all of our courses.

Realistic expectations about time to degree completion: In our academic orientations, and as we mentor students, we will emphasize more the challenges of completing the program in two years. We will stress the need to use the summer months between the two years effectively and maintain an ambitious schedule of submitting thesis chapter drafts to committee members and responding quickly to their feedback.

4. Identify the faculty members involved in reaching the conclusions drawn above and agreeing upon the curricular changes resulting

Brandon Boylan and Tyler Kirk

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK 2018
ARCTIC & NORTHERN STUDIES, MA

	YES	NO
Was the report submitted by the deadline (or was an extension given)?	X	
Is the plan current?	2013	
Does the plan include assessment of communication? (for Bachelor's degrees)	N/A	
Does the plan summarize and analyze two years of data?	X	
Does the report address the outcomes detailed in the plan?		X

COMMENTS:

- Your report is an excellent example of using the information gathered through assessment to drive curricular change.
- While you use comprehensive exams and theses as sources for your assessment material, it is clear that you use rubrics to evaluate them according to your learning outcomes.
- Your 2013 plan does not really reflect what you seem to be doing, and there are a number of items on it that were not addressed in the report, as well as several outcomes that aren't really related to student learning (such as attending events). The plan should be updated to reflect current practices and desired outcomes.