

Arctic and Northern Studies - Master of Arts

Current Compliance Year: 2024-2025

Mid-Cycle review

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.

Increase graduates

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.

Response to Previous Recommendations (if any):

We thank the committee for its review of the ACNS M.A. program in AY 2023. We continue to offer both an in-person and online/remote M.A. degree. Many of our online students are non-traditional and remain part-time, hence their time to graduation is longer. Some of our courses are offered only in-person, some only online asynchronous, some only online synchronous, and some hybrid (in-person/asynchronous, in-person/synchronous, asynchronous/synchronous). We are proud to be the largest M.A. program in the College of Liberal Arts.

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:

"Clear, concise presentation of findings"

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.

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

After discussions with the accreditation officials at UAF, we are in the process of amending our SLOA Plan so that we can more accurately measure the extent to which we are achieving our student learning outcomes. We plan to have three outcomes:

- 1) Students will master two fields of literature related to their research in the program. Faculty will use a rubric to evaluate two comprehensive exams that students take.
- 2) Students will improve their research, theoretical, methodological, and writing skills. Faculty will use a rubric to evaluate the thesis or project that students produce.
- 3) Students will report growth in their knowledge and skills related to the Arctic and circumpolar North. Faculty will collect results from a survey administered to students at the time of their graduation to assess their self-reported gains in knowledge and skills.

We will finalize our SLOA Plan by the end of AY 2025.

Nonetheless, we have used rubrics for comprehensive exams, theses, and projects for years, and we summarize results below. This covers the period fall 2022 to summer 2024.

Comprehensive exams: The rubric asks about quality of writing, fluency, and organization; analysis; competency in literature field; and accuracy. The average score for all the faculty assessments of their students (that we have - which is ten) is 86.2 (out of 100).

Theses: The rubric asks about quality of writing, fluency, and organization; description and analysis; research and/or artistic skills; and contribution. The average score for all the faculty assessments of their students (that we have - which is three) is 96.33 (out of 100).

Projects: None of our students produced a project during the time period.

Evaluations from the four surveys we received from graduates during this time period indicate that the students believe that the program thoroughly educated them on the Arctic region, the program helped them develop their skills, the program faculty mentored and supported them, and the program prepared them for a career or future education related to the North.

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:

As mentioned, we are in the process of changing our student learning outcomes. However, we continue to make a number of curricular changes to improve the M.A. degree. With new faculty in both Political Science and History, we expect more course options to be available for students. We have added more course options to the concentration requirements in the program as well. We are also considering changing the number of comprehensive exams from two to one and the comprehensive exam format from a three-hour, sit-down, no-notes exam to a 24-hour, take-home, open-note exam. We have also developed a new Graduate Certificate for those students who do not want to or cannot pursue an M.A. degree.

Supporting Documents

Please ensure that all relevant supporting documents, such as artifacts, rubrics, and student data, are uploaded to your designated Google folder in WorkZone or directly into Google Drive. *Note: Do not include any information that may identify students in your data.*

Updated SLOA?

If you are updating your SLOA document, please include it with your report and other supporting documents in your designated folder. It does not need to be filed separately in the "SLOA" folder.

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. Please mark the appropriate box below.

Embedded:	
Not Embedded:	X – N/A because this is an M.A. program

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

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.

Student Success Data Trends (from AY23 to AY24):

Trend	Increase	Decrease	No Change
Persistence	X		
Pass Rates		X	
Student Credit Hours	X		
Majors	X		
Degrees Awarded		X	
Other Trends (Explain in narrative below)			

The persistence rate rose from 75% to 81.8%. Pass rates declined from 93.04% to 84.96%. Student credit hours rose from 458 to 482, and majors rose from 39 to 45. Degrees awarded dropped from 4 to 3.

Equity Gaps

Please discuss any equity gaps identified in your disaggregated student success data and explain how you plan to address them. Please contact your data liaison or make an appointment with [Julia Manfredini](#) to learn more about analyzing your data.

After examining the demographic data in the Student Success Data Dashboard, we do not notice any significant equity gaps among groups. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], all reported races, and all age groups have high course pass rates.

Optional Data Explanation

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

N/A

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

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.

High-Impact Practices Used in this Program

Please select all high-impact practices your program is currently using from the list below. For any practices you select, provide details in the corresponding narrative section. In the narrative, discuss how your program is implementing these practices, including any successes, known issues, and solutions. If you are considering incorporating any of these practices in the future, share your plans. If your program is not using any of the listed high-impact practices, please use the 'Other or None of These' field to explain how your program supports student success.

Capstone Courses & Projects		Research (Graduate Level)	X
Collaborative Assignments & Projects		Writing-Intensive Courses	X
Diversity/Global Learning	X	Publications	X
ePortfolios		Communications	X
First-Year Seminars & Experiences		Publications	
Internships		Scholarly Activities	X
Service or Community-based Learning		Other (Please describe in box below)	
Undergraduate Research			

Capstone Courses & Projects

N/A

Collaborative Assignments & Projects

N/A

Undergraduate Research

N/A

Diversity/Global Learning

We are an interdisciplinary program focused on one of the world's regions. We incorporate a diversity of perspectives from and on the Arctic in our curricula. Our student body is diverse, consisting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, men and women, and traditional and nontraditional students. We also encourage studying abroad in another part of the Arctic.

ePortfolios

N/A

First Year-Seminars & Experiences

N/A

Writing-Intensive Courses

Given this is a graduate degree, all of the courses emphasize writing, with many courses requiring a substantial term paper. Students complete a thesis or project as the final component of the degree.

Service-Learning and/or Community-based Learning

N/A

Internships

Internships are not built into the program, but students can pursue internships for academic credit that can be incorporated into their degree.

Capstone Courses & Projects

N/A

Other or None of these (explain)

N/A

Program Profile and Financial Data

The following feedback was received during your last full program review. **You are not required to respond to this feedback, but we encourage you to review it as it may provide valuable insights.** This feedback will also be available when your program undergoes its next full review in two years.

Previous Financial Feedback

High Tuition Revenues, Operates at Low Cost, Productive Faculty

Previous 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)"

Submission

Submitter & Collaborator Names

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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.

Mid-Cycle Review Committee

The Mid-Cycle Review committee plays a crucial role in supporting each program as they prepare for their Full Review. Our goal is to help programs feel recognized and supported throughout this process. To guide your feedback, we've included strength-based feedback tags; please select all that apply to this program.

Overall Recommendations (tags)

Address Equity Gap		Consider Curricular Revisions	
Develop Online Offerings/Options		Improve Time to Degree	
Increase Enrollment		Increase Graduates	x
Increase retention/persistence		Strengthen Advising Practices	
May be asked to share Effective Practices		Recommendation to University-Wide Committee	

Explanation of Overall Recommendations (narrative)

Please see the sections below on Student Success and Equity and High-Impact Practices Feedback for additional details.

Student Learning Outcomes Feedback (tags)

Strong		Developing	
Requires Minor Revision		Requires Major Revision	x

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback (tags)

Strong Alignment with SLOA Plan		Clear, Concise Presentation of Findings	
Compelling Learning Story		Missing a Direct Measure	x
Missing Active Verbs		Missing Curricular Connection	x
Missing Collaboration within Department			

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback (narrative)

Provided a response to the recommendations and noted that had a large program. However, the program did not provide a response or plan on how (or whether) they intended to increase the number of graduates.

Provided 7 SLOs. SLO #s 1-5 are ok, although they could be more clearly articulated/defined, (e.g., what are the interdisciplinary ways or what is improving research mean?). SLO #s 6 and 7 are not SLOs and are instead program outcomes. The recommendation is to retain them because they are important to track from the program perspective, but they are not SLOs (not KSAs involved) and should not be part of the SLOA plan. Removing these two SLOs also brings the program SLOA within the recommendation guidelines from NWCCU on the number of SLOs a program should have for assessment purposes (3-6 SLOs). In terms of SLO assessment, grades cannot be used as a valid means of assessment. The recommendation is to refine the assessment of these SLOs (some of this is there in terms of comprehensive exams that are assessed with a standardized rubric; what is the standardized rubric that is used?). A recommendation is to work with the UAF accreditation staff in refining this SLOA. Definitely on the right track.

The SLOA findings (3) did not match up to the list of SLOs (7). It was noted that the program is transitioning/amending the SLOA to focus on the three outcomes for which findings were provided. Also noted curricular changes tied to course offerings and a graduate certificate, Moving forward, it will be important to demonstrate continuous improvement and closing of the loop for the SLOA findings and linking them to the curricular changes (and how that in turn demonstrates continuous improvement). The program is moving in the right direction.

What assistance can the Accreditation Office provide to assist with SLOA revisions?

Student Success & Equity Feedback (narrative)

Please check your student credit hours data points as an increase from 458 to 482 students is indicated. Where is this data? From the dashboard, a decline in SCH is shown. How do your overall results compare to previous feedback? Are you heading in the right direction? Noted a decline in the number of graduates and did not discuss reasons for that trend (or mitigating responses to reverse it).

Please contact the CLA data liaison or make an appointment with [REDACTED] from PAIR to learn more about analyzing the program's data. What assistance can the Accreditation Office provide to better address this need?

High-Impact Practices Feedback (narrative)

There are 6 identified high-impact practices: diversity/global learning, research (grad), writing-intensive courses, publications, communications and scholarly activities. The narrative sections are limited in showcasing how these high impact practices are reviewed, measured, or assessed. Are there successes or known issues? Any areas to improve upon? Only three of the selected six categories have a narrative associated or answered, need to elaborate on the other three HIPs. Also, the program could have used more details for each practice with specific examples (e.g., what are the students doing specifically for each HIP?).

In summary, this information is helpful, but what is the next step or areas targeted for growth or improvement?