



Academic Program Review

Program Name: Indigenous Studies - Master of Arts

Academic Year 2025/2026

Recent Recommendations

Using your most recent review, please respond to all feedback and recommendations.

Response:

Recommendations: Improve time to degree, Increase enrollment, Increase graduates. **Response:** There have been minor changes and improvements in SCH (a slight reduction) and majors (increase in student numbers), while the degree awarded has gone up by one since last review of 2023. Time to degree and increased graduates can only be achieved when an adequate number of faculty are hired. Beginning 1/1/26 there will be three faculty for approximately seventysfive MA and PhD students. Enrollment also cannot increase until an an adequate number of faculty are hired without undermining the quality of education to existing students.

Student Learning Outcomes

Describe the assessment of your student learning outcomes (SLOs). Discuss your findings, changes you are making, and what you hope to see as a result.

Response:

There are three primary criteria used for evaluating student learning under the MA in Indigenous Studies (note here that these are similar to our other degree program, typically, in Indigenous Studies (PhD)):

1. Performance in academic coursework,
 2. Successful completion of a comprehensive exam during the semester before graduation (or earlier), and,
 3. Submission and successful defense of a final project dissertation, as determined by the student's graduate committee.
- Student outcomes and assessment align with the mission and goals of the Indigenous Studies program, in addition to successful completion of coursework, assessment criteria and procedures include:
1. Ability to apply knowledge and skills gained in implementing practical solutions to real-world problems,
 2. Compare and analyze the epistemological properties, worldviews and modes of transmission associated with various Indigenous knowledge systems,
 3. Apply cross-cultural understandings and communication skills,
 4. Effective collaboration with Indigenous Peoples,
 5. Apply principles of cross-cultural and indigenous research methodologies and methods,
 6. Conduct research relevant to Indigenous communities that contributes to cultural, practices, community wellbeing, and quality of life.
- Student outcomes are assessed through comprehensive exams: research proposal, literature review and methodology; the graduate committee also conducts and evaluates student outcomes through the oral comprehensive exam. Committee chairs closely monitor students' IRB application, the research process and dissemination of research. Here is the more specific description of this evaluative process, adapted from and necessarily related to the Indigenous Studies PhD requirements, into which many of our graduating MAs continue their studies:

1. Research Proposal:

Through the work demonstrated in the research proposal, the student's committee is able to assess the scope, scale, applicability, and feasibility of the student's intended research. These comprehensive exams component measure the students' capacity for recognizing academic problems and social issues surrounding Indigenous peoples and their lives (roles and well-being). Importantly, it also requires the student to demonstrate an understanding of the particulars of the issue, the interrelatedness of the issue's components, and initial ideas (theoretically and methodologically) for addressing these. Here is where the student can express their academic interest within the context of Indigenous Studies according to the focuses and expectations taught in our classes.

2. Literature Review:

The thirty-second of the academic papers that make up a comprehensive exam is the literature review. Here the students demonstrate their capacity to research earlier work related to or relevant to their own current work. Through this exercise and subsequent paper, the students show their capacity to perform pre-research to ensure that earlier work is not replicated. Additionally, students are required to perform an assessment of the sources discovered and intended to be used in the students' MA field research and dissertation. Through the literature review the students' awareness of prior research, knowledge of how to access relevant research materials, and how to assess their value critically.

3. Methodology:

The academic paper is intended to make use of the first two, completing the comprehensive exam written requirements. Here the students provide a detailed explanation of their methodology, including how the methods are supported by the student's theoretical approach(es), how their theoretic approaches guide their choice and application of methods, and why the chosen methods are the most well suited to addressing the research questions, hypotheses, and/or academic problem addressed by the student.

Assessment:

The full graduate committee reviews, comments, and edits each of the comprehensive exam papers, providing advice throughout, and assessing the progress of the student according to factors that are determined for each student's research. As an inherently interdisciplinary program, the Indigenous Studies MA requirements differ from student-to-student, and assessment is unique to each project, with an emphasis on the projects' effects on the hosting research community. Common assessment points that can be applied to any project, such as the effective use of Indigenous research methods, worldview considerations, and applicability/relevance of research, are applied to all students' projects. Gaps noted during these assessments are identified by the graduate committee, who then makes decisions regarding the filling of these gaps: revision of comprehensive exam papers, additional mini-papers within the comprehensive exam process that help to address specific issues, or the requirements to take additional class(es).

Oral exam:

The graduate committee also conducts and evaluates student outcomes through the Oral Comprehensive Exam. Here the students are required to present on their learning objectives of the comprehensive exam papers, and most importantly, here is where the graduate committee ask the students to elaborate on ideas presented in the written exams, and where the students are required to answer questions from the committee regarding their work in the exams, and on upcoming fieldwork. With the successful completion of the written and oral portions of the comprehensive exam process, the students are advanced to candidacy and are required to complete and Institutional Review Board (IRB) review of their proposed research (and research ethics is highly important to our department and is expected of all our graduate students).

Institutional Review Board process:

Committee chairs closely monitor students' IRB applications, the research process, and dissemination of research. The IRB is often the point where the student first thinks in great detail about the fieldwork aspect of their research, and the ethical considerations involved. As most of our students work with Indigenous communities—especially Alaska Native communities—ethics is central to our curricula. This includes working alongside community members as research partners, sharing the research, allowing for community review and assessment, and disseminating the research effectively for the benefit of the community.

MA Research Project Assessment:

The purpose of the project assessment is to evaluate the effects of students' fieldwork on the community, in terms of its impacts—positive or negative—on community wellbeing, and its effectiveness on addressing social problems that may be the focus of a study. Research design assessments involve evaluating the effects of ongoing collaboration with villages including data collection, analysis, outcomes, findings, and dissemination to community and other research partners. Student researchers working in Indigenous communities are expected to 1) develop their community engagement plan early in the research process and 2) assess the impact of their engagement both in terms of the quality and rigor of their research, as well as the perceived/understood benefits of the research by the community. This is done in collaboration with the graduate committee, which can require revisions of the research plan according to the ethical principles of research with Indigenous peoples.

Again, assessments within the Indigenous Studies MA are three-pronged:

1. course performance assessment: grades, and qualitative follow-up discussions with students by their graduate committee chair,
2. comprehensive exams assessment: qualitative assessment of knowledge (including ethics) learned, and innovations developed, to address topics of focus in upcoming research, appropriate use of Indigenous and related methodologies and theoretical approaches, and
3. MA research project assessment: qualitative assessment of the value, effects, and success of MA project in academic and local community contexts.

Did you make any curricular changes based on your most recent SLOA? If so, discuss what changes were made. If no changes were made, please discuss the strengths of your curriculum based on the assessment of your outcomes.

Response:

Curricular changes are made in the MA program in Indigenous Studies semester-by-semester according to the evaluations according to students, instructor self-evaluations, and once a year, evaluation of classes overall. As student needs shift, and as social and cultural needs and concerns change regarding Indigenous peoples and their communities, class curricula are revised, and new courses are created—first as special topics and then, if enough interest has been shown, as standard classes.

At the present these outcomes assessments are qualitatively evaluated at the level of course, graduate advisory committee, and departmental review. Besides the quantitative evaluations of the classes (in part) by students in our classes, we prefer to use qualitative categorical measures that more fully enable an understanding of student needs and learning outcomes—these are generally created by the instructor who best knows what kind of qualitative evaluation is most relevant and useful to their class. Once a year, the entire department reviews all class curricula together to assure that these curricula are timely, accurate, and useful to the student in the present.

Our MA program is small—currently we have ten active MA students.

As with the Indigenous Studies PhD program based on the very positive results achieved by our students according to the criteria discussed above. Not only is this evidenced by the consistent employment opportunities available to our students, but also by the frequent word-of-mouth promotion of our programs by current and former students, resulting in many more applicants per year than we have faculty capacity to handle (in both the MA and PhD programs combined).

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

Communication outcomes in the SLOA plan are: **Not Embedded**

Check the checkbox to certify completion of the following tasks:

☐ Upload supporting documents to the Supporting Documents folder. This includes artifacts, rubrics, and other documents related to your SLOA.

☒ Upload your most recent SLOA to the Supporting Documents folder, even if no changes have been made since the last review.

Have changes been made to your SLOA document since your last review? **No**

If so, please summarize what changes were made.

Response:

High Impact Practices

Please indicate which high impact practices are currently being implemented in relation to the program's student learning outcomes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Capstone Courses & Projects | ☒ Graduate Level Research |
| ☐ Collaborative Assignments & Projects | ☐ Writing-Intensive Courses |
| ☒ Diversity/Global Learning | ☐ Publications |
| ☐ ePortfolios | ☐ Communications |
| ☐ First-Year Seminars and Experiences | ☒ Scholarly Activities |
| ☐ Internships | ☐ Studios |
| ☒ Service or Community-Based Learning | ☐ Practicum |
| ☐ Undergraduate Research | ☐ Other |
| ☐ Labs | ☐ None of these |

Discuss how the HIPs in the program are reflected in the SLOA. If you have identified HIPs that are not included in the SLOA, please consider an update.

Response:

During the review period (2023-2025), the Indigenous Studies graduate programs include 50-100% [REDACTED], 50-100% [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] (there are other [REDACTED] students outside the US also enrolled). The department is active in the University of the Arctic and the World Indigenous Nation Higher Education Consortium. All students are co-producing knowledge with various Indigenous communities.

Student Success

Please reference the [Resources tab](#) for information on accessing the Student Success Data Dashboard and contacting your designated data liaisons.

Student Success Data Trends

Persistence: **Increase**

Pass Rates: **Increase**

Student Credit Hours: **No Change**

Majors: **Increase**

Degrees Awarded: **Increase**

Other Trends (if applicable): Graduation informed persistence increased from 75% in FY21 to 77.8%, even after seeing a major decrease in FY23 and FY24 of 50%. Although there were no graduates in 2021 and 2022, the number of graduates to double between 2023 and 2025 from 1 to 2.

Achievement Disparities

Discuss any achievement disparities identified in your disaggregated student success data and explain how you plan to address them.

Response:

While [REDACTED] students and [REDACTED] students make up the majority of the program students, all races did see an increase during the reporting period.

Closing the Loop

Please discuss how your student learning outcomes are reflected in high impact practices and student success data.

Response:

Students are expected to participate in community-based learning by engaging with communities they are coproducing knowledge with. Additionally, the global learning experiences students are exposed to and participate in result in their ability to meet the student learning outcomes by applying the knowledge and skills they have gained to implement practical solutions to real-world problems, to compare epistemological properties, worldviews and modes of transmission that are associated with various Indigenous knowledge systems, and the ability to apply cross-cultural understandings and communication skills while effectively collaborating with Indigenous peoples. Through their global learning and community-based learning experiences, students can utilize Indigenous research methodologies and conduct relevant research with Indigenous communities.

Academic Program Profile

The following questions help show how your program supports the university's mission, connects with other UA programs, engages with the community, contributes through service courses, and supports student success after graduation. Please use this section to highlight the value your program brings to students, the university, and beyond.

UAF's Mission:

The University of Alaska Fairbanks is a Land, Sea, and Space Grant university and an international center for research, education, and the arts, emphasizing the circumpolar North and its diverse peoples. UAF integrates teaching, research, and public service as it educates students for active citizenship and prepares them for lifelong learning and careers.

In what ways does your program advance UAF's mission?

Response:

During the review period (2023-2025), 50-100% of the students self-identify as [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] (though there are other [REDACTED] students outside the US enrolled in a graduate program. All faculty are tenured or tenure-track, and they very active in teaching, service, and research.

How is your program related to others in the UA system?

Response:

N/A

Who are your key community or external partners?

Response:

All students and faculty are co-producing knowledge with various Indigenous communities.

What role do your services courses play, if any?

Response:

All students and faculty are co-producing knowledge with various Indigenous communities.

How do your graduates succeed after leaving the program?

Response:

Students are tracked following graduation through email inquiries regarding their employment and overall well-being. Most respond, but inevitably some few do not.

Submitter and Collaborator Names:

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Committee Review

Program Name: Indigenous Studies - Master of Arts

Academic Year 2025/2026

Overall Recommendations

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Insufficient Narratives | ☐ Report Incomplete |
| ☐ Address Achievement Gap | ☐ Consider Curricular Revisions |
| ☐ Develop Online Offerings/Options | ☒ Improve Time to Degree |
| ☒ Increase Enrollment | ☒ Increase Graduates |
| ☐ Increase Retention/Persistence | ☐ Strengthen Advising Practices |
| ☒ May be asked to share Effective Practices | ☐ Recommendation to University-Wide Committee |

Explanation of Overall Recommendations

Response:

Because the MA and PhD in Indigenous Studies have very similar midcycle program reviews, this assessment will be largely the same for both programs as well.

During the 2023 full-program review, the MA in Indigenous Studies program was given recommendations to increase enrollment, the time to degree (shorten time to graduation), and the number of graduates. The program responded in this review by noting that they have largely not been able to accomplish these outcomes because they have an inadequate number of faculty. How has this been addressed, or how will it be addressed, moving forward? There is a need to differentiate the SLOs between the MA and PhD in Indigenous Study prior to the full-program review in 2027. Note that similar academic programs cannot have the same SLOs. In the case of graduate programs, there can be similarities between MA/MS and PhD programs; however, there needs to be differences such as PhD programs requiring more breadth and/or depth of knowledge and/or proficiency in skill or communications attainment. A request to the faculty in this program is to make it a priority to resolve that concern in the next two years; if assistance is needed, please reach out to the UAF Office of Accreditation and Assessment. Additional evidence will also strengthen the section on continuous improvement and closing the loop.

Student Learning Outcomes Feedback

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Strong | ☐ Developing |
| ☐ Requires Minor Revision | ☒ Requires Major Revision |

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Feedback

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

SLOA Feedback Narrative:

Provided 7 SLOs, all of which have clear and well-defined procedures for assessment and implementation plan (that includes where in the program the SLO must be completed and assessed in the program). The assessment plan and implementation processes for each SLO were good; missing was the inclusion of the artifacts for assessing each SLO. Evidence (data) on how the SLOs are being met was missing, both as a narrative within the template and as data in the supplementary document.

The program discussed the process for making curricular changes, but not any curricular changes that have been made (and why) since the last full-program review in 2023.

The program provided a discussion on how SLOs are reflected in the HIPs and student success data. Documenting continuous improvement and the closing of the loop are important components of the program review process, not just as an exercise, but to demonstrate that assessment results are used to make meaningful, evidence-based changes that enhance program quality and student learning. This process ensures accountability, fosters a culture of ongoing improvement, and provides clear evidence to accreditors and stakeholders that actions lead to measurable outcomes. For the full-program review in 2027, should include additional evidence to document this outcome specifically for each SLO to support the narrative overviews.

Student Success and Equity Feedback

Narrative:

The program notes data trends which accurately reflect the findings in the Student Success Dashboard, indicating an increase in graduation-informed persistence and a slight rise in graduation rates between 2023 and 2025 (from no graduates in 2021–2022 to one or two graduates in later years). The program also appropriately identifies student demographics, noting a higher proportion of [REDACTED] and a relatively even distribution between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] students.

Community-based learning is highlighted as a program strength that supports student success through co-production of knowledge. Students' engagement with Indigenous research methodologies is noted as a distinctive feature of the curriculum. However, the review does not describe specific measures to support diverse students, and while equity and achievement gaps are acknowledged, they are not addressed beyond recognition.

No concrete strategies for improving retention or graduation are provided, though the program cites challenges in hiring and a limited number of faculty relative to student enrollment, which constrain capacity and graduation rates. For the 2027 full program review, it is recommended that the program provide more detailed evidence of achievement practices, including specific strategies, initiatives, or supports that promote academic success amongst the cohort.

High Impact Practices Feedback

Narrative:

Revision suggestion - please discuss how the HIPs in the program are reflected in the SLOA. For instance, if service or community-based learning is checked as a category, please describe what that is and/or how it is assessed and relating to student learning outcomes.

Reviewer Names: