



Academic Program Review

Program Name: Indigenous Studies – Doctor of Philosophy

Academic Year 2025/2026

Recent Recommendations

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

Response:

Recommendation: Improve time to degree, increase enrollment, increase graduates. **Response:** No change in degrees awarded, slight decrease in SCH, increase in pass rates, increase in majors. 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 seventy-five MA and PhD students. Enrollment also cannot increase until 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 PhD in Indigenous Studies (note that these are similar to our other degree program, typically, in Indigenous Studies (MA)):

1. Performance in academic coursework,
 2. Successful completion of a comprehensive exam during the semester or year 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 well-being, and quality of life.
- Student outcomes of class-based learning are assessed through Comprehensive Exams as follows:

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. This comprehensive exam component measures the student's 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 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 student shows their capacity to perform pre-research to ensure that earlier work is not replicated. Additionally, the student is required to perform an assessment of the sources discovered and intended to be used in the student's PhD field research and dissertation. Through the literature review the student's awareness of prior research, knowledge of how to access relevant research materials, and how to assess their value critically.

3. Methodology:

The third 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 PhD requirements differ from student-to-student, and assessment is unique to each project, with an emphasis on the project's 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 (along with an outside examiner) asks the student to elaborate on ideas presented in the written exams, and where the student is 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 student is advanced to candidacy and is required to complete an 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). We encourage the completion of the IRB and review anytime after the completion of classwork, and no later than by the oral comprehensive exam.

Institutional Review Board process:

Committee chairs closely monitor a student's IRB application, 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 Indigenous 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.

PhD Research Project Assessment:

The purpose of the project assessment is to evaluate the effects of a student's fieldwork on the community, in terms of its impacts—positive or negative—on community well-being, 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.

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:

The purpose of the project assessment is to evaluate the effects of a student's fieldwork on the community, in terms of its impacts—positive or negative—on community well-being, 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.

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?

If so, please summarize what changes were made.

Response:

High Impact Practices **No**

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: **No Change**

Student Credit Hours: **Decrease**

Majors: **Increase**

Degrees Awarded: **Increase**

Other Trends (if applicable):

During the reporting period, the number of [REDACTED] enrolled in the program have increased by 25%. Additionally, in 2021, all students identified as [REDACTED], and there has been an increase in the diversity of students during the reporting period. All students report being 25 and older which likely has to do with students working their way through a BA and MA program in order to be accepted into the PhD program. Finally, 100% of students in the program are not recipients of the Pell grant.

Achievement Disparities

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

Response:

There has been a marked increase in majors and slight decrease in SCH. The persistence, degree awarded and pass rates, while varied each year, they are maintaining a flat trend with a minimum variation percentage.

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 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?

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

What role do your services courses play, if any?

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 do not. The majority find (or continue) employment with their Native organization (tribe, nonprofit, etc.), academia, or bureaucracy.

Submitter and Collaborator Names:

Michael Koskey; Sean Asikhuk Topkok; Teisha Simmons; Bryan Uher

Submitter Email:

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Committee Review

Program Name: Indigenous Studies - Doctor of Philosophy

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 PhD 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 accurately reported data trends consistent with the Student Success Dashboard, noting a 25% increase in enrollment and a shift toward a more diverse student cohort (from all students in 2021 to a broader range of backgrounds by 2025). The review also indicates a slight increase in degrees awarded and steady student persistence, which are reasonable outcomes for a small PhD cohort.

The program highlights community-based learning as a contributor to student success, though no additional supports for diverse learners are described. While the program emphasizes engagement with Indigenous communities and Indigenous research methodologies, it would be beneficial to include evidence demonstrating how these approaches contribute to students' academic achievement. The program also cites limited faculty hiring as an ongoing challenge that constrains cohort growth and graduation rates. Beyond collaboration with Indigenous communities, there is limited discussion of additional inclusive practices.

For the 2027 full program review, it is recommended that the program provide clear examples of strategies and initiatives that promote academic success and support diverse learners.

High Impact Practices Feedback

Narrative:

Similar to the MA program, the HIPs selected are not expanded upon in the description, making it hard to understand what these high impact practices are, how they are assessed or measured, and ultimately, how they relate back to student learning outcomes.

Reviewer Names: