The anthropology department faculty met to discuss program assessment and consider changes in the curriculum on August 30, 2012, November 29, 2012 and most recently on September 20, 2013. We discussed the results of our outcomes assessment process and decided that the current process neither meets the needs of the department nor does it fit the model for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment that has been recommended for the university. We propose for the future, on the basis of our discussions, to implement a new procedure following the protocol in the attached document. The report below, however, is based on the current protocol, which was originally designed for assessment of the program and did not sufficiently, in our view, address assessment of learning outcomes. All of the objectives of the protocol are listed below, but we will focus here on those that most significantly address learning outcomes, 2, 3, and 4 (in red).

1. **Assessment information collected**

This table shows the measures, outcomes and data collected for the 5 learning objectives given in the protocol (dated May 2010). The outcomes given in red are learning outcomes and are therefore the focus of this SLOA report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment measures and learning outcomes</th>
<th>Information collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student’s initial preparation</td>
<td>Faculty surveyed, department data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Understanding of subfield, history, theory, methodology</td>
<td>Faculty surveyed, comprehensive exam data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ability to develop and present research</td>
<td>Faculty surveyed; data on proposal completion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to write proposals, reports, papers</td>
<td>Faculty surveyed; data on grants and publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skills useful</td>
<td>Faculty surveyed; employment and other data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Objective 2 – knowledge in the subfield
One of our measures of student general learning is the comprehensive exam, which is evaluated by the student’s committee. In 2008 we changed the exam from an oral exam conducted in conjunction with the student’s research proposal defense, to a written exam. Of the 15 students who entered during the period fall 2009 to fall 2010, 11 are recorded to have passed (during the period Apr 2011-Jan 2013). Passing the exam is direct evidence of learning appropriate to the student’s program. Since it is a requirement, all 11 MA students who graduated during the review period (different group than the aforementioned 11) of necessity passed this exam. Students who wish to complete the degree in the optimal two years are expected to take the exam in the fall of their second year. Data recorded on the time from matriculation to completion of the comprehensive exam showed that this was rare after the change to the new written exam. Of the MA students who graduated in the period 2010 – 2012 (on whom our records are complete), the median time from matriculation to completion of the exam is two years. These students typically took 3 to 4 years to complete their degrees. Time to degree after the completion of the comprehensive exam was equally irregular with a median time of 1.5 years.

The other measure of student learning within their subdisciplines is a survey of faculty. The survey question for this objective included the question of student performance in coursework in addition to the question of successful completion of the comprehensive. A total of 35 MA students who were in the program during this period were included in the survey to faculty.

Faculty responses gave 31 of these students a rating of satisfactory or exceptional in the learning indicated by coursework and comprehensive exam performance. One student’s performance was substandard and he left the program. Another, whose performance had been marginally satisfactory left the program for personal reasons and another whose performance had been outstanding left because of a faculty departure.

One faculty member noted the difficulty MA students in archaeology have who want to finish in two years. ANTH 605 Archaeological Method and Theory is only offered in alternate years and the course is needed to be able to complete the comprehensive exams.

Objective 3 – designing research

Successful completion of ANTH 652, Research Design and Professional Development Seminar is dependent on the writing and presentation of a research proposal as part of the class. Part of the implementation procedure for this objective is no longer relevant because MA students no longer do a public defense of their research proposals.
Of the 31 students for whom responses were given, 4 were judged by at least one faculty member to be deficient in research proposal preparation. One of the four students dropped out of the program, but curiously two of the others went on to Ph.D. programs at other universities and we do not know the ultimate outcome of the research design training that they received at UAF. Performance of all the others was deemed satisfactory or better.

Objective 4 – writing research proposals and results

There is significant overlap between Objective 3 and Objective 4. The faculty survey showing general agreement that students are learning to design and write up research satisfactorily.

2. Conclusions drawn from the information summarized above

Objective 2. The department faces a continual problem of whether and how to integrate the four subfields of anthropology in the educational program. Faculty raised concerns about the comprehensive exams being insufficiently comprehensive. This led to a further discussion of the learning goals of the program. Do we want all students to have training in all four subdisciplines, to have basic familiarity with all four subdisciplines or just to have specialized training in their respective subfields? We have not finalized our decision, but we reached a general consensus that it would be useful for all of the students to learn about the history of all four of the subdisciplines.

Objective 3. All faculty were in general agreement that the required course Anth 652, Research Design and Professional Development Seminar was serving the students well. The required training has led to more student confidence in the planning and carrying out of research, which has led, in turn, to the more efficient completion of theses. Questions were raised about whether students could use more specific training in research methods in each subdiscipline and whether methodology courses currently being offered should be required in students’ subfields. The problem of the alternate year offering of ANTH 605 was raised but no immediate solution was found.

Objective 4. The implementation for Objective 4 was actually somewhat inappropriate for the MA level. Students in the MA program learn to write proposals, but rarely in a way that we can measure their success in grants received. Instead, this learning outcome is best attested by the student’s success in completing research and obtaining his/her degree.
Notes on Objectives 1 and 5. Objective 1 was intended to tell us how well we are doing in evaluating students’ applications in relation to their success in the program. In general, faculty reported that they found students well prepared. In a recent case, we admitted a student who all concurred was not ready for graduate school. Coordination among faculty helped to prevent the student from investing too heavily and continuing on beyond the first semester. Statement 5 is about a program outcome, not specifically a learning outcome. In general, students have done very well either in finding employment in anthropology-related work or in going on to Ph.D. programs.

3. Curricular changes resulting from conclusions drawn above

The curricular changes outlined here have been proposed but not yet finalized.

1. Replacement of the course, Anth 629, Structures of Anthropological Argument, with Anth 485/685, Integrated History of Anthropology. The new course will cover the history of the discipline from the perspectives of all four subfields and will be team-taught by faculty members from each subdiscipline.

2. Requiring of all students to take a research methods course. Social-cultural and linguistic anthropology students will take either Ethnographic Research Methods or Discourse in Society. Biological anthropology and archaeology students will take either Archaeological Method and Theory or a biological anthropology course to be determined.

3. One final curricular change is dependent on hiring of replacement faculty and projections of enrollment. If we can return to minimum staffing numbers and admit correspondingly more students, we would plan to reinstate the graduate proseminars in each of the four subfields. Three out of the four proseminars would be required.

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

Kara Hoover, Robin Shoaps, Patrick Plattet, Brian Hemphill, David Koester, Joshua Reuther, Jamie Clark (was only present for part of the meeting).