Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) 2014 - 2015

Sociology MA

Goal

1. Sociological Research Competency P

Graduate students who complete the MA program in Sociology will demonstrate the appropriate array of sociological research skills.

Objective (L)

1. Sociological Competency In Research And Analysis P

M.A. Sociology students will demonstrate competence in advancing sociologically-informed arguments by producing a research paper that achieves the following: identification of patterns of social behavior; discernment of sociology's three major theoretical paradigms (structural functionalism, conflict, and symbolic interactionism); utilization of one or both of the two major sociological methods (positivism and interpretive).

Indicator

Professional Paper 🎤

All MA sociology students enrolling prior to Spring 2014 were required to write the professional paper, but could choose to take the Comprehensive Exams or write the Thesis if still enrolled after Spring 2014.

M.A. Sociology students writing the professional paper enrolled in SOCI 5099: Professional Paper Practicum bringing with them a self-chosen candidate paper from a previously taken class. That paper was presented to the director of graduate students for certification of eligibility for use in SOCI 5099.

Student papers deemed proficient by graduate director review were then made the official object of student SOCI 5099 participation and forwarded to the SOCI 5099 professor of record for the given semester.

At the end of participation in SOCI 5099, students failing to demonstrate the required level of content and writing mastery were to be assigned one of two courses of action: (1) work independently to complete the professional paper; and (2) to re-enroll subsequently in SOCI 5099.

Criterion

Professional Paper 🎤

All participating MA candidates will demonstrate proficiency as defined by the associated 4-point grading rubrics (see Attachments #1, #2, and #3). Minimum accepttable proficiency is defined by scoring an overall average of 2.0 of all graded rubric items as determined by a committee of SOCI faculty. Committee members will not have been professors of record for SOCI 5099 in the semester under evaluation.

Finding

Professional Paper Results DRAFT # P

Six students enrolled in SOCI5099: Professional Paper during Fall 2014 and Spring 2015. All six completed the Professional Paper successfully. Subsequently, the papers were evaluated by a panel of two Sociology faculty. The results of the

evaluation reveal that all six papers met the minimum criteria for all evaluation areas.

Indicator

Thesis DRAFT P

M.A. Sociology students enrolling in the Spring 2014 and after have the option to choose the thesis-track.

Criterion

Thesis DRAFT P

A successful SOCI MA thesis will be not less than 50 and not more than 100 printed pages of referenced, original SOCI research or a meta-analysis of existing research literature including primary and/or secondary data analysis.

Finding

Thesis DRAFT P

There were no students who started the Thesis option during this reporting period.

Action

Competency Sociological Research P

The data indicate the desired result is satisfied in the professional paper. Although the professional paper is phasing out, the Sociology Graduate Studies will continue to ensure that students who take the professional paper track have competence in sociological research. Regarding Thesis, the department Graduate Committee will meet and develop criteria and protocol for details of thesis assessment.

Goal

2. Comprehensive Exams DRAFT

SOCI MA students will sit for comprehensive examination as a powerful tool for demonstrating overall student learning outcomes.

Objective (L)

1. Comprehensive Exams DRAFT

MA SOCI students will demonstrate competence in applying sociological theories, sociological research methodologies and statistics, and research literature reviews of a selected, substantive sociological field.

Indicator

Comprehensive Examination P

M.A. Sociology degree candidates will complete a written comprehensive exam.

The specialty area will be assessed by an in-depth exploration of sociological literature on a topic of the students choosing, written answers to questions pertaining to sociological theoretical perspectives and appropriate research methodologies. In each case, an examination committee will be convened to discuss the performance of the students. A panel of at least two graduate faculty per each of the three examination areas will assess the quality of the written examination to determine student sociological mastery. Students failing to demonstrate the required level of content mastery will be allowed to retake that area of the

exam in the subsequent semester. A second failure will result in termination from the program.

Criterion

Comprehensive Exam # P

Possible examination grading outcomes are: High Pass, Pass, and Fail (see Attachment #1).

All M.A. candidates taking the comprehensive exam will complete all components of the examination with a score of High Pass or Pass.

Finding

Comprehensive Exams Results DRAFT # P

In Fall 2014 two students took the exam. One student passed and one student failed all three areas of the exam. The student who failed retook the exam in Spring 2015 and passed. In Spring 2015 five students took the exam. Three students passed and two students failed. One student failed the Methods/Statistics component and the other student failed the Sociological Essay Component (see Attachment #2).

Action

Comprehensive Understanding Of Sociological Theory, Research Methods, And Substantive Sociological Field

Two out of five students who took the exam could not complete a written comprehensive exam by failing one area of the exam. The Sociology Graduate Committee will meet and discuss the ways to help students to improve their understanding sociological theories and research methods, as well as their application to substantive social issues.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

Having now run the SOCI MA program in its present form since fall 2011, the SOCI chair, graduate director and graduate committee will begin preparations for a comprehensive program performance review slated for 2016-17. As a start to this process, the SOCI faculty will review student recruitment, entry credentials, and outcomes in relationship to each other.

For the academic year 2014-2015, the department will begin a phase-out of the professional paper project in favor of having all non-thesis students exit the program via comprehensive examination. While it is true that SOCI faculty successfully led students in necessary skill acquisition, after participation for 4 semesters in the professional paper project faculty became concerned that most students would be better served by breadth of knowledge than overspecialization. That minority of students seeking focused research experience will still be able to apply for the thesis track and/or prepare for doctoral SOCI studies.

As reported above, the comprehensive exam process was piloted in spring of 2014. The department will build on that process by creating comps performance rubrics (in each of the three dimensions: theory, methods, and literature review/substantive area) to assist students in preparing for exams. Faculty will also receive feedback from the comps process to assist them in modifying curricular content and pedagogy in further aid to students.

In addition, with the reinstution of the thesis track option the department will create and implement a thesis rubric specifically designed to detect thematic or recurrent weaknesses in student research capacities. The department will subsequently make continuous amendments to pedagogy and curriculum to address detected weaknesses.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

The Department continues to phase out the professional paper. The Comprensive exam rubrics have been created and implemented. The Thesis rubric is currently being developed.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

Comprehensive Exam Track

Assessment of student results on the comprehensive exams from the 2014-2015 academic year found that students has the most difficulty with the methods and statistics section. The graduate director and graduate committee will evaluate student preparation in methods and statistics and the structure of the exam, and make amendments as necessary to improve student success.

Thesis Track

Sociology MA students who choose the thesis degree track will demonstrate competency in research design, sociological theory, application of sociological methods, and data analysis. The graduate director and graduate committee will develop and an implement a rubric for assessing student performance in the thesis track during the 2015-2016 academic year.