

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements Academic Year 2010-2011

National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) Doctor of Philosophy Program in Social Work

Assessment Measures

The National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS) uses the following measures to assess student learning outcomes:

- Progression through the program
- Grades, course evaluations, and enrollment totals for History and Philosophy of Social Work (SSS 940) and the introductory Research Methods course (SSS 950)
- Comprehensive examination pass rates
- Alumni Survey (every 5 years)

Assessment Findings

Progression through the program

In the 2011-2012 academic year, for PhD students were admitted. Two were full-time and two were part-time, no non-degree students were admitted. In that academic year, three doctoral candidates completed the program.

Grades and Course Evaluations for the Gateway Course

History and Philosophy in Social Work Knowledge Building (SSS 940) is the gateway course for the doctoral program. All new students – full-time, part-time, and non-degree – take this course in the fall semester of their first year. Final grades for the 2011-2012 year group were one grade of A and three A-.

There was a 100% response rate for course evaluations for this course. Students' mean score for "relevance of the course" on a 5 point scale was 5.0. "Knowledge and Skill of the Instructor" was rated 4.75, and "overall effectiveness of the instructor" was rated at 4.75. These evaluations indicate a strong satisfaction with the course, understanding of its relevance to the doctoral program, and appreciation of the effectiveness of the instructor.

Full and part time students take Research Methods (SSS 950) in the spring semester of their first year. Four students were registered for this. Final grades for 2011-2-12 year were three grades of A, and one B+.

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Comprehensive Examination Outcome

Program policy requires that a student must pass the comprehensive before submitting a proposal for the dissertation. The exam may be failed and retaken only once. A second fail results in dismissal from the program. Prior to the fall of 2006, students could receive a grade of pass or fail. The Doctoral Program Committee found that allowing a third option of “marginal” provided a finer measure of performance on the exam. Students receiving a grade of marginal on the written exam have the opportunity to take an oral exam in which they have a different medium in which to demonstrate that they understand the material. Students who take oral may pass (Marginal/Pass) or fail (Marginal/Fail) the oral and thus the entire comprehensive exam. A student who fails the oral must retake the written exam the following semester.

During the fall semester of 2011, one student took and passed the comprehensive exam. In the Spring of 2012 six students took the comprehensive exam. The results were evaluated via the rubrics established by the program committee See Table of Results below. Based on this analysis three students exceeded expectations and passed, two student met expectations and underwent an oral exam that they passed, and one student failed and plans to retake the exam in the Fall 2012.

**Table of Results
Student Learning Assessment Rubric
National Catholic School of Social Service
Rubric for PhD Capstone**

Trait	Level						Mean	SD	Total N
	Exceeding Expectations (3pts)		Meeting Expectations (2pts)		Below Expectations (1pt)				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
1) Critically analyze theory	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%	2.83	0.41	6
2) Demonstrate knowledge and skills in research	3	50%	2	33%	1	17%	2.33	0.82	6
3) Evaluate sociocultural context of theory and research	4	67%	2	33%	0	0%	2.67	0.52	6
4) Demonstrates ability to communicate in scholarly manner	5	83%	1	17%	0	0%	2.83	0.41	6

Note: 1) The "N" represents the number of students at each level of performance for each trait.

2) The "%" represents the percentage of the number of students falling at the level performance for each trait against the total number of students.

3) The mean is the average of all scores across the levels within the trait.

4) The standard deviation (SD) is the measure of the variability of the data set, indicating how "spread out" these data are from the mean value.

Alumni Survey

In 2008, the Doctoral Program Committee conducted a survey of a 10-year cohort of graduates. Among other issues, the survey explored progression through the program, degree of support alumni felt during their preparation, how well the program prepared them for their post PhD career. This survey is generated every five years to capture the views of a cohort of the most recent graduates. Thus, it will be repeated in 2013.

Curricular Improvements

In response to course evaluations, alumni comments, student forums, and the ongoing assessment of the Doctoral Program Committee, the Doctoral Program proposed and the Faculty approved a revised curriculum that was launched in the Fall of 2009. This new curriculum integrates those with clinical and those with macro interests throughout the required curriculum. Both advanced quantitative and advanced qualitative courses are now required. The integrative seminar has been broadened to be relevant to those of both clinical and macro interests. In the fall, students complete two required workshops. One is in scholarly writing. The other is an online research and statistics workshop that is taken during the summer prior to entrance. This course brings all who have come to us with research backgrounds that vary tremendously to the same level when they enter their first statistics and research courses. Overall, the research sequence has been strengthened. The new curriculum was reviewed at the end of the 2009-10 and over the summer. Adjustments were made to the History and Philosophy course, the integrative seminar, the contemporary theories course, and the writing workshop.

The university's commitment to objective measurement of outcomes has spurred further examination of our method of assigning grades to the comprehensive exam. The Doctoral Program committee has developed a set of rubrics for existing comprehensive exams. This system was piloted for the spring 2010 comps. The program continues to apply and adjust our system. We are considering another change in the comprehensive exam and will adjust the rubric system accordingly for the 2012-13 academic year.