

**Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Graduate Programs, AY 2011-2012**

Key Assessment Findings

During the Academic Year 2011-12, a total of **38** students took graduate comprehensive examinations across all degree programs. During this time the data available for tracking their progress was the pass/fail rate as voted by the faculty of the academic areas based on the recommendations of exam readers. While the results show that students are generally prepared adequately for the examinations, other data are required to yield a more detailed assessment of various elements of success in each program. The results were as follows:

	#	Fail %	#	Pass %	Totals
Master's Program	1	10%	9	90%	10
Doctoral Program	1	7.2%	13	92.8%	14
Licentiate Program	0	0.00	2	100%	2
STB Program	1	9%	11	91%	12
TOTAL					38

Curricular Improvements

During the academic year 2011-12, the STRS continued the use of rubrics developed during AY 2009-10 for comprehensive examinations at the Master's and Doctoral levels (S.T.B., M.A., S.T.L., Ph.D., and S.T.D.) in order to assess the effectiveness of the coursework portion of our graduate programs. A set of rubrics for each of these levels is currently in use, and faculty are using the rubrics (grids) to assess each examination according to the traits corresponding to expected competencies at each of the two levels. The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies is keeping these grids in order to generate information about the rates at which students exceed expectations, meet expectations, or fall below expectations for each trait. This is the third year we have used these grids, so while any individual year may contain insufficient information because of small sample size, we will begin performing a separate cumulative aggregation of the data to get a more accurate picture.

The traits being assessed are as follows: (1) Addressing the question; (2) Mastery of content; (3) Mechanics of writing; (4) Clarity of expression, and (5) Critical thinking. While these traits are the same for both the Master's and Doctoral examination rubrics, the detailed descriptions of each trait (i.e., what constitutes meeting, exceeding, or falling below expectations) differs to reflect the higher expectations of doctoral students.

The Associate Dean for Graduate Studies has also made a study of all syllabi for courses numbered 700 and above, taking care to see that appropriate assessment practices are built into each course and that the means and standards for computing final grades are clear. Marked-up syllabi were returned to the directors of the academic areas for their information and action.

The STRS has also begun an initiative to assess (1) the effectiveness of doctoral dissertation direction, and (2) the quality of dissertations used for completion of doctoral degree requirements. We were able to use data from past alumni surveys to address the first question. The results follow

1. 2008-09 Alumni Survey

1 = Strongly Disagree.....5 = Strongly Agree

Q21A. If your program included culminating requirements, please indicate to what extent the following statements were applicable to your principal advisor

	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>StdDev.</u>
A. Was interested in my research / project goals	13	4.7	0.48
B. Discussed my research / project with me on a regular basis	13	4.2	0.69
C. Critiqued my work in ways that helped my work progress	13	4.6	0.65
D. Returned my work in a timely manner	13	4.6	0.87

2. 2009-10 Alumni Survey

1 = Strongly Disagree.....5 = Strongly Agree

Q21A. If your program included culminating requirements, please indicate to what extent the following statements were applicable to your principal advisor

	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>StdDev.</u>
A. Was interested in my research / project goals	23	4.2	0.95
B. Discussed my research / project with me on a regular basis	24	3.9	1.06
C. Critiqued my work in ways that helped my work progress	24	3.9	1.18
D. Returned my work in a timely manner	24	3.9	1.23

These appear to indicate that there is room for improvement in our practices of dissertation guidance, and the STRS will work this academic year to formulate standards and educate faculty regarding expectations and best practices.