

Annual Key Assessment Findings and Curricular Improvements
School of Theology and Religious Studies
Graduate Programs
Doctoral Programs (PhD, STD)
Master's Program
Pastoral Programs (Master of Catechesis, Master of Divinity, Doctor of Ministry)
2016
Key Assessment Findings

Assessment Measures

The School of Theology and Religious Studies uses the following methods to assess student learning outcomes in the different academic areas:

Doctoral programs in Theology and Religious Studies

- **Enrollment, Retention, student grades and course evaluations**
- **Comps**

MA Programs

- **Enrollment, student grades, and course evaluations**
- **Comps**

Pastoral Programs

- **Enrollment, retention rates**

The School of Theology and Religious Studies (STRS) since 2013 has moved to a more selective and competitive way of evaluating doctoral applicants into the 9 major doctoral academic areas within STRS. The competitive evaluation focuses on a Research, Teaching and Learning model of delivering doctoral education. Each applicant goes through a rigorous and thorough evaluation of previous academic work, GRE exam scores, writing samples and recommendation letters. This rigorous evaluation produced in the last four years, high achieving and competitive students that are offered a full scholarship package and stipend for a period of five years. Right-sizing all PhD programs with STRS have resulted in smaller incoming doctoral class, it has improved the quality of students, and the retention of students. The Associate Dean will evaluate the effectiveness of the new model after 5 years of implementation. Programs will be evaluated on “time to completion rates” of these set of students as they are moving through Language exams, comprehensive exams, proposals, dissertation guidance and graduation.

Pastoral Programs: STRS in the past 3 years have gone through a rejuvenation of its pastoral programs specifically in aspects of managing and moving to a cohort system with the Doctor of Ministry program. The creation of the Master of Catechesis Program to serve both on campus and online populations. The Master of Divinity continues to grow with a more finely tuned arrangement of class scheduling to account for the growth in our seminarian population.

During the 2015/2016 academic year, total of 3 students took the masters level comprehensive exam with a 100% pass rate, along with our PhD. Comprehensive exams, of which 11 students took with a 100% pass rate in the previous year. Fewer students are taking comprehensive exams each year, a direct result of the right sizing of all graduate programs, an attempt to bring in the most competitive students and a reduced acceptance rate due to moving to a model of full scholarship funding. Prior to 2012, STRS typically have an incoming class above 40 students spread across all PhD programs. Since 2012, the school has systematically move to a stricter and more rigorous vetting of PhD applicants and bringing in an average of 12 students per year across all PhD programs.

GRADUATE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION RESULTS									
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES									
AY2011-2012 to AY2015-2016									
Master's Comprehensive Exam									
	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2011-2012	1	11.11%	8	88.89%		0.00%		0.00%	9
AY2012-2013	1	7.14%	13	92.86%		0.00%		0.00%	14
AY2013-2014		0.00%	6	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	6
AY2014-2015		0.00%	8	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	8
AY2015-2016		0.00%	3	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	3
TOTAL	2	5.00%	38	95.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	40
Doctoral Comprehensive Exam									
	Fail		Pass		High Pass		Pass w/Honors		TOTAL
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
AY2011-2012		0.00%	21	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	21
AY2012-2013	3	10.00%	27	90.00%		0.00%		0.00%	30
AY2013-2014		0.00%	19	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	19
AY2014-2015	2	33.33%	4	66.67%		0.00%		0.00%	6
AY2015-2016		0.00%	11	100.00%		0.00%		0.00%	11
TOTAL	5	0.00%	82	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	87
Note:									
1) Milestone outcomes were included in the categories High Pass and Pass with Honors if these designations were explicitly indicated in the students' milestone record.									
2) Category "High Pass" includes both "High Pass" and "Pass with distinction".									
3) The count in this table is based on the exam outcomes of all attempts in an academic year.									
4) Level of the comps, i.e. Master's and doctoral, is based on the milestone activities; if there is no specification of the level in the record, students' degree level is used to determine the level.									

Curricular Improvements

STRS continued the use of rubrics developed the previous year for comprehensive examinations at the Master's and Doctoral levels 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. 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.

At the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017, the grids from AY 2010-16 (See Appendix A) were totaled and the results distributed to the directors of all STRS degree programs in order to evaluate the level to which they prepare students for comprehensive examinations. 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.