

MSU Departmental Assessment Update Spring 2007

Department: Land Resources and Environmental Sciences

Department Head: Jon M. Wraith

Assessment Coordinator: Cathy Zabinski

Date: November 14, 2007

Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department

B.S. Degrees in:

- Environmental Sciences

 - Soil and Water Science Option

 - Environmental Biology Option

- Land Resource Sciences

 - Land Resources Analysis and Management Option

 - Agroecology Option

- Land Rehabilitation

M.S. Degrees in:

- Land Resources and Environmental Sciences

- Land Rehabilitation

- Entomology (cross-departmental within College of Agriculture)

Ph.D. Degree in:

- Ecology and Environmental Sciences (cross-college)

Update Report: Student Outcomes Assessment Plan
Land Resources and Environmental Sciences Department
November 10, 2007

The Department of Land Resources and Environmental Sciences (LRES) implemented our initial student outcomes assessment plan during Spring of 2004. The Plan included preparing tools for dissemination to undergraduate and graduate students to obtain feedback concerning their perceptions regarding the quality and effectiveness of our curricula, courses, instructors, and advising. These tools have been used for the past three years. Our Instructional Programs Coordinator continues to take the lead in contacting students to request that they complete our assessment instruments (outcomes, advising). Student participation remains relatively low, with about 30% of graduating seniors returning completed instruments. Graduate student participation is near 50%, because we often have a more effective ‘hammer’ to hold over them (e.g., signing off on final paperwork).

2004

GRAD:	16 students: 9 returned	56%
-------	-------------------------	-----

2005

Undergrad:	28 students; 10 returned	36%
GRAD:	14 students; 6 returned	43%

2006

Undergrad:	31 students; 9 returned	29%
GRAD:	8 students; 4 returned	50%

We continue to obtain valuable insight into student learning outcomes during our annual two-semester capstone course, where students undertake research projects that require a synthesis of what they have learned (are learning) in their disciplinary courses. These projects include preparation of written summary reports and public oral presentations, helping us to further evaluate their communication competencies.

As a result of information gained through direct student feedback mechanisms, the Capstone course, and faculty observations, we continue to adjust our degree course requirements, and to develop new courses to address aspects of our curricula that we consider as comprising ‘gaps’ in (potential) student learning.

We have yet to complete substantive collection of sample examinations, lab reports, capstone course activities and products, and other materials to assist in documenting students’ experiences in their courses. This effort will be taken up with renewed effort by our Instructional Programs Coordinator and faculty committee (next paragraph). Our procedures for in-depth peer review of teaching, currently nearing completion of substantive revision by faculty committee, will include acquisition of a portion of these materials, and will directly lead to improved student learning outcomes.

The topic of Student Outcomes Assessment was discussed at length during a faculty retreat on January 16-17, 2007, which focused on departmental instructional programs (agenda attached as

supplement, below). As part of the retreat a faculty committee was formed to build upon our 2004 Student Outcomes Assessment Plan. The committee conducted initial work to more explicitly define competencies, skills, experiences, and expectations for each of our degree programs. The balance of this work remains to be completed, and the effort will be reinvigorated during late CY2007, including a discussion as part of the LRES faculty meeting in December.

Supplement: Agenda for LRES Faculty Retreat, January 16-17, 2007
(red font indicates Outcomes Assessment topic)

LRES Faculty Retreat
January 16-17, 2007

AGENDA

Tuesday, January 16

8:40 Introduction

Undergraduate Instructional Program

Enrollment trends and implications (handouts)
MSU resource redistribution plan
Recruitment and retention
Who, how?

More effective connection with LRES student majors

LRES Curricula

Revisions, modifications, future emphases/opportunities, etc. (DA-1 handouts)
Non-negotiable courses per major
Update: UM Wildland Restoration degree
Soils minor (handout)

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch

Undergraduate Program, continued

Capstone Fall '07

Other

Graduate Program

Updates: EES Ph.D. degree, etc.

Potential dual-listing of courses: 4XX-5XX

LRES Graduate requirements, standards, expectations, procedures

Other

In-Depth Peer Review of Teaching

Presentation (Kevin, Cathy) and Discussion (handout)

Wednesday, January 17

8:30 Introduction

Student Outcomes Assessment

Define competencies, skills, experiences, expectations for each degree program (handout)

Breakout groups by undergraduate major

Undergraduate Advising

(handout: LRES student evaluation of advising form)

12:00 - 1:00 Lunch

Research and Affiliate Faculty

Criteria and procedures for appointment, review, promotion

New Faculty Hires

Update on current/pending searches (Tim, Jon)

Spatial Analysis position

Discussion of LRES future priorities