

**UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2007-08 Annual Reports**

DEPARTMENT Space Studies DATE 4.13.09

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Cassie Gerhardt & Naima Kaabouch

### 1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- |                                       |                    |                |                                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced?          | YES <u>U&amp;G</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u>      |
| • If so, were goals well articulated? | YES <u>    </u>    | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>U &amp; G</u> |
| • Do goals address student learning?  | YES <u>    </u>    | NO <u>U</u>    | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>G</u>         |

**Comments:**

**Undergraduate:** Undergraduate students may earn a minor in Space Studies, but it is not offered as a major. As such, the department's goals in the area of undergraduate assessment focused on aspects of the overall program and not individual student learning. Specifically, goals focused on increasing interest, awareness, and enrollment in the undergraduate courses.

**Graduate:** Students may attain an MS in Space Studies through either an on-campus or distance degree program. The goals stated at the graduate level are broad and include goals such as "*provide breadth in Space Studies education to include social sciences as well as technical topics*" and do not address specific learning outcomes.

In addition to the Departmental goals, please also consider UND's Institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses). Use 'U' (undergraduate) or 'G' (graduate) to identify UND/Essential Studies goals which are similar to the referenced departmental goals.

- 1 Communication – written or oral ("able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience")
- 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or "be intellectually curious"; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or "be intellectually creative"; explore, discover, engage)
- 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning ("apply empirical data...analyze graphical information")
- 5 Information literacy ("be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use")
- 6 Diversity ("demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...")
- 7 Lifelong learning ("commit themselves to lifelong learning")
- 8 Service/citizenship ("share responsibility both for their communities and for the world")

**Comments regarding departmental goals and alignment of departmental goals with institutional and Essential Studies goals:**

**Undergraduate:** The goals stated focus on increasing undergraduate enrollment and interest in the Space Studies Minor program as a way of recruiting students for the Space Studies graduate program. The stated goals reflect programmatic goals and do not address student learning.

**Graduate:** The goals included in the 2007-2008 annual report are program goals that focus on preparing or improving students for careers in space. The stated goals do not address specific learning outcomes. The department's posted assessment plan notes that their assessment of student learning has both an individual focus as well as a program focus. Specific learning outcomes are not addressed. The assessment plan notes "appropriate outcomes for each student are determined individually through consultation with a primary advisor who directs the student's program."

### 2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- |   |                      |                |                           |
|---|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced?  | YES <u>U &amp; G</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u> |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES <u>U &amp; G</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u> |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment  |                      |                |                           |

methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? YES\_G\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_U\_\_ QUALIFIED Y/N \_\_\_\_

**Comments:**

**Undergraduate:** The stated goals regarding the undergraduate minor in Space Studies focus on providing increasing enrollment and interest. The assessment methods identified include enrollment in specific courses as well as the number of students graduating with a Space Studies minor. The assessment methods seem appropriate given the stated goals are program goals and not goals related to student learning.

**Graduate:** The identified assessment methods include comprehensive exams, thesis quality, and capstone project performance. These assessment methods align with the stated goals. Space Studies does have an assessment plan posted online. The plan includes an assessment model that approaches assessment based on both program goals and individual student goals, but specific student learning outcomes are not referenced. The assessment plan indicates a number of assessment methods, but given the lack of specific learning outcomes it is unclear how the various methods are used to measure student learning.

### 3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported?	YES _U & G _	NO____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals?	YES____	NO_U & G____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement?	YES____	NO_U & G____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• Were the results tied to goals for student learning?	YES____	NO_U & G____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____

**Comments:**

**Undergraduate:** The assessment results included in the annual report were limited to a comment about decreased enrollment in a Space Studies 200 and a comment that “students in more advanced courses showed substantial learning.”

**Graduate:** The assessment results reported in the annual report stated the following, “We have had success in all but one of the assessment tools. Our comprehensive exam has not been successful. Too many mediocre answers. We believe much of the fault lies with the exam format rather than students’ abilities.” From this report, it is unclear the degree to which specific goals were accomplished.

In addition to departmental goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Use ‘U’ (undergraduate) or ‘G’ (graduate) to identify those results which are applicable to institutional/Essential Studies goal achievement. For indicated items, please describe findings in the appropriate section below. .

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

**Comments regarding results and the application of results to departmental, institutional and Essential Studies goals:**

**Undergraduate:** See above comments.

**Graduate:** See above comments.

#### 4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?

YES\_U &G\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_

QUALIFIED Y/N \_\_\_

- If so, do curricular or other improvements/ changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning?

YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_ U &G \_\_\_ QUALIFIED Y/N \_\_\_

#### *Comments:*

**Undergraduate:** The “closing the loop” activities stated include increasing lower division offerings and a change in instructor for a specific class. The changes do not clearly relate to student learning.

**Graduate:** The “closing the loop” activities stated are limited to a comment regarding the modification of the comprehensive exam format.

#### SUMMARY

##### *Strengths*

- ☒ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☐ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
- ☐ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
- ☐ Results are reported.
- ☐ Results are tied to closing the loop.
- (Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

##### *Areas for Improvement*

- ☐ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☒ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
- ☐ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
- ☒ No results are reported.
- ☐ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
- (Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

#### OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Although Space Studies has developed an assessment plan, the plan does not address clear student learning outcomes, but rather addresses larger programmatic goals. The assessment plan discusses an individual focus, but the annual report does not articulate how specific student learning outcomes are assessed. The degree to which the assessment plan is utilized is unclear from the limited documentation included in the 2007 – 2008 annual report. Further details regarding specific student learning goals and outcomes are needed.

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Section 1: \_\_?\_\_ Section 2: \_\_?\_\_ Section 3: \_\_?\_\_ Section 4: \_\_?\_\_

#### Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well
- N = no, this is not done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning
- NA = no information available
- ? = action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done