

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2011-2012 Annual Reports
GRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT: Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

DATE: April 10, 2013

PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW: MS and Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular biology

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW: Bradley Myers and Paul Dreschel

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

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

Comments: The department identified four student learning goals and 2 objectives under Goal 1 for its Ph.D. students. It did not identify any assessment activity with regards to its goals or objectives for its MS students. (The goals and objectives for both MS and Ph.D. students are very similar). The two objectives tend to be subjective, e.g., "Students shall have at their command a broad knowledge of biochemistry and molecular biology"

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced? | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>x</u> |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a "multiple measures" approach? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>x</u> |

Comments: The department reported two assessment methods. The first was a graduate faculty meeting held after the administration of the Comprehensive Exam to 5 Ph.D. students. (A debriefing session was held with the students after the exam, which should be considered part of the assessment.) The second assessment activity was a survey of graduate students in SMHS regarding BIMD 500, a foundational class for many of the disciplines in the college. Neither method was specifically tied to any of the goals or objectives identified in the report, but they could have yielded valuable information for more than one of them.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Were any assessment results reported? | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>x</u> |
| • If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement? | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u> </u> |
| • Were the results tied to goals for student learning? | YES <u> </u> | NO <u> </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>x</u> |

Comments: The department reported a number of things learned from both assessment methods. Since the methods were not tied to specific goals or objectives it is difficult to say that the results either tied to or affirmed/disaffirmed achievement of those goals. Again, however, the results clearly related to several of the goals identified. The report did specifically identify things that the department would do, or at least would like to do, in response to the results.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

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

YES x

NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

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

YES x

NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments: The report indicates that the department was looking to make specific changes in the content of some of its courses to prepare its students or its Comprehensive Exam, which will likely continue to be a major assessment method for determining success in achieving the department's learning goals. Although the department put extensive work into a proposal for revamping its curriculum, only minor changes were currently possible because of objections raised by faculty from other departments that use BIMD courses in their own curriculum.

SUMMARY*Strengths**Areas for Improvement*

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

- ____ 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:

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology put considerable thought and effort into assessing whether its Ph.D. students had met the department's learning goals. While the assessment effort did not result in quantifiable or semi-quantifiable results, the department did partially close the loop on making changes to its curriculum in response to the work it did. The only thing that prevented a more comprehensive curricular reformation was the need to coordinate the changes with the curricular needs of other departments. The department may benefit from drawing more distinction between the learning goals of its MS and Ph.D. programs.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- x Annual report
 ____ Appendices (cited in annual report)
 ____ Other (please describe)

- x Assessment plan (as posted)
 ____ Previous assessment review

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Section 1: Y Section 2: ? Section 3: ? Section 4: Y

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well (*bearing in mind the kind of program(s) reviewed and recognizing that assessment is a cyclical process, i.e., with additional kinds of data to be collected in other years*)
 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