

**UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in** 2013-14

**GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT** Geology & Geological Engineering **DATE** 2/7/15

**PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW** M.S. & Ph.D. in Geological Engineering

**COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW** Mary K. Askim-Lovseth and Surojit Gupta

**1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS**

- |                                       |        |       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-------|------------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced?          | YES___ | NO___ | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>X</u> |
| • If so, were goals well-articulated? | YES___ | NO___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___      |
| • Do goals address student learning?  | YES___ | NO___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___      |

**Comments:**

*There is an Assessment Plan posted for the M.S. program dated 2004-05, though it was reported in the Annual Report that there has been no assessment plan established for the graduate programs and no assessment activities completed. The Department should revisit the posted plan to determine if the student learning goals and related objectives are still relevant. All but one of the objectives related to student learning, "Students will work closely with a faculty advisor to design a program of study and a research topic."*

**2. ASSESSMENT METHODS**

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

**Comments:**

*Written and oral comprehensive exams and a thesis/dissertation are requirements of the programs. Comprehensive exams are to be taken early by the students and there is debate by the faculty regarding their purpose—a filter to "weed out students" or to assist with advising students. Graduate programs generally use comprehensive exams to assess student learning at the end of the program, making them a useful direct measurement tool. The Department should consider if this would be advantageous in developing its assessment practices.*

**3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

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

**Comments:**

#### 4. CLOSING THE LOOP

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

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO X QUALIFIED Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

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

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ QUALIFIED Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

**Comments:**

#### 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*

- X 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 has not developed an assessment plan for its Masters and Ph.D. programs, has little interest in doing so and does "not deem it a high priority at the present time," indicating that faculty feel they "are operating as they should."*

*It was noted that the comprehensive exams are used to screen students and help with advising, as the Department wants students to take the exams upon entering the program. No records have been kept over the years other than memory; it was estimated that about two-thirds pass on their first attempt.*

*The perception is that students are doing "acceptable" work just by presenting their proposals and completing the thesis/dissertation (though the Assessment Report states that one student failed the final defense twice but still received the degree after a threat of legal action). Clearly, an assessment plan is needed to document the findings.*

*It seems that the measurement of student learning involves a check-off system; completion of the comprehensive exams, proposal, and final defense indicates the student has achieved the overall goal of the programs—graduation. It would be important for the faculty to dialogue about what students should be able to know and do at completion of the programs and then develop a process to assure that this is being done. University resources are available to assist (Joan Hawthorne, the University Assessment Committee, and the University Assessment Consultants).*

#### MATERIALS REVIEWED

- X Annual assessment report
- \_\_\_\_\_ Annual report
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment plan (as posted)
- X Previous assessment review
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please describe)

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Section 1: \_\_Q\_\_    Section 2: \_\_N\_\_    Section 3: \_\_N\_\_    Section 4: \_\_N\_\_

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)
- Q    = qualified yes as action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done
- N    = no, it is unclear whether it was done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning

*Revised Sept 24, 2014*