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Master of Arts in Anthropology

Academic Assessment Plan

**Version 3**

**Adopted by**

**The Anthropology faculty: February 2019 (Version 1 August 2009, Version 2 December 2017)**

Reviewed with curriculum changes by the Academic Assessment Committee as an information item: 1/15/21

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# Introduction

This document defines the educational expected outcomes for the UAA Master’s Program in Anthropology and outlines a plan for assessing them.

The revised outcomes and assessment plan developed from program revisions initiated in AY2018-19. Dr. Kristen Ogilvie took the lead in the revisions based on faculty consensus on direction and expectations achieved during faculty meetings. Dr. Ogilvie circulated the revised assessment plan, and the faculty accepted the revisions in February 2019. The faculty approved previous versions 1 and 2 of these objectives and assessment procedures in August 2009 and December 2017, respectively.

# Program history and assessment background

The MA program in Anthropology was developed in 1999 in response to student needs and external demand among professionals in the Anchorage area. Between 2002-2018, we have graduated 62 students with MA degrees in Anthropology. Of those 62 graduates, 31 earned their MA degree within the last 5 years (2012-2018). Many of these graduates went on to work in the field of anthropology/archaeology, both in and outside of Alaska. Several have gone on to pursue PhDs.

The major events that have affected the MA program in Anthropology at UAA since its inception are:

##  Early 2000s: Establishment of the voluntary Graduate Advisory Board (GAB)

The GAB provides advice to the Department of Anthropology on curriculum and training needs for entering the Alaska workforce in anthropology and archaeology; provide public/private/tribal/non-profit job, internship, and mentorship opportunities for graduate students; occasionally individuals serve as fourth members on graduate student thesis committees.

## Fall 2012: MA Program Revisions

Graduate program restructured to decrease the average time to completion of the MA degree and implement a research design course.

## Fall 2013-Fall 2014: Five new faculty hired

The new faculty specialized in biological anthropology, ecological/environmental anthropology, linguistic anthropology, medical anthropology, and Alaska Native anthropology. Goals of the new faculty hires included diversifying expertise in the department; developing courses and research projects appropriate for the 21st century needs of the discipline and of the Alaska work force; and attracting graduate students with diverse research interests to UAA.

## 2017-18: Revamping the UAA Anthropology undergraduate curriculum

The restructuring of the undergraduate curriculum and of courses offered by current faculty affected the stacked courses that are available for graduate students to take as a part of their required tracks in the MA degree. This increased the availability of both required and elective courses for graduate students.

## 2018-19: Revamping the UAA Anthropology graduate curriculum

In 2018, we initiated changes to the MA program to improve student success and address faculty reductions.

### Supporting Student Success

The original UAA anthropology graduate program does not meet the current needs of students. The original curriculum required students to gain detailed knowledge across three subfields in anthropology (archaeology, biological, and cultural) and choose a general or applied emphasis. Each subfield had a proseminar followed by an intensive comprehensive exam. This requirement no longer serves students well in the diverse field of anthropology or within our program’s current parameters. Most students who graduate from our program remain in their chosen subfield of anthropology (archaeology, biological, or cultural) working in applied settings, and anthropology is very specialized in its current practice. An additional concern for students was that they could not advance to candidacy until they had completed all three proseminars, which delayed many in their progress in the program. There are also problems pedagogically teaching these seminar-based courses with minimal participants, which has been a concern over the last two years as our program supports fewer students than in the past. There has been dwindling support for graduate students as evidenced by the reduction of teaching assistantships from nine to one over the course of two years, and fewer students accept admission leading to under-enrolled proseminars. In addition to concerns about the proseminars, the faculty have reconsidered having a general emphasis in favor of emphasizing applied anthropology exclusively. Only about 20% of our Master’s graduates since the program’s inception have completed the degree with a general emphasis rather than an applied emphasis. This figure reflects the specialization of the faculty mentors in applied research but also the value of an applied degree for students as they enter the professional sphere. With this emphasis on applied anthropology, it is noteworthy that current and previous students have also indicated an interest in highlighting ethical considerations in the practice of applied anthropology. The program redesign recognizes that our current faculty confirms that an applied Master’s program should confer specialized knowledge and skills on its graduates to prepare them for the ethical practice of anthropology.

### Addressing Faculty Reductions

In addition to changes in faculty expertise that resulted from numerous retirements and new hires as mentioned above from 2013-14, budgetary, professional, and personal circumstances have reduced our faculty over this same period. In AY2017-18, two faculty members left without replacement, one faculty member was on personal leave, and another took sabbatical. In spring 2018, we deferred admissions to the graduate program for AY2018-19 due to this temporary shortage of available faculty to support the graduate program. In the long-term, the college is unlikely to reinstate the two empty faculty lines, and the program redesign in part compensates for the anticipated long-term faculty reductions.

### 2018-19 Program Revisions

Synthesis of these circumstances related to student success and faculty reductions suggested three areas to address in program revisions:

1. A focused emphasis on applied anthropology and ethical practice of applied anthropology would better complement faculty expertise, direction of the discipline generally, and current faculty and student interest.
2. Required subfield proseminars and comprehensive exams delay progress in program and do not reflect specialization needed for applied Master’s program.
3. Fluctuations in student support and consequent reduction in admissions as well as in faculty numbers necessitate a more flexible graduate curriculum.

As a result, we streamlined the graduate curriculum to respond to these issues. First, we dropped the “general anthropology” emphasis, and our program now specializes entirely in applied anthropology. The three “tracks” under the previous applied anthropology emphasis have now been designated as “applied program concentrations.” Parallel to the previous tracks or foci, they consist of Applied Cultural Anthropology, Applied Biocultural Anthropology, and Cultural Resource Management. Secondly, graduate students are no longer required to take courses across the subfields of anthropology, allowing them to specialize and complete their degrees more quickly. Finally, we now require an anthropological ethics course across all applied program concentrations. As a result of these revisions, we adjusted the program outcomes, removing specifically the outcome associated with the multiple subfield knowledge and adding one associated with ethical practice.

# Mission Statement

The Anthropology Graduate program provides students with a rigorous background in contemporary theory and practice in applied anthropology through advanced coursework, internships, independent research, and a research-based thesis. Students learn to apply anthropological concepts, methods, ethics, and perspectives to the specific subfield of anthropology in which they practice.

# Program Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students graduating with a Master of Arts in Anthropology will be able to:

1. Demonstrate graduate-level knowledge of core concepts and research methods in the selected applied program concentration.
2. Articulate key ethical considerations and responsibilities in applied anthropological research.
3. Design, conduct, analyze, and present applied anthropological research within the conventions of the selected program concentration and acceptable to the faculty of the anthropology department.

## Diagram of the program model showing the relationship between the program components, and the learning outcomes and categorical measures, as described in the text which followsProgram Model

The MA program (Figure 1) offers specialization in one of three applied concentrations: applied cultural anthropology; applied biocultural anthropology, or cultural resource management. Regardless of concentration, students take core courses in 1) theory; 2) methods; 3) ethics, and 4) research design. They also take specialized core and elective courses in their concentrations. Through these core and specialized courses, students gain knowledge of core concepts (SLO1), research methods (SLO1), and ethical considerations (SLO2). Upon completion of the research design course, students have a complete prospectus to submit to their graduate advisory committee (SLO2 and SLO3), which students orally defend to the faculty (SLO2 and SLO3). Subsequent thesis research and writing results in a written thesis submitted and orally defended to the faculty (SLO2 and SLO3)

Figure . MA in Anthropology Program Model with Outcomes

# Measures

## Outcome Measures

We measure the progress toward mastery of each student learning outcome (abbreviated as 1) Graduate-Level Anthropological Knowledge; 2) Ethical Awareness and Application; and 3) Anthropological Research Skills) in terms of categorical outcome measures nested in each:

### Graduate-Level Anthropological Knowledge

For the first student learning outcome, we measure the student’s demonstrated anthropological knowledge in four categories: Core Concepts and Theories; Research Design Process; Methods; and Professional Literacy.

### Ethical Awareness and Application

For the second student learning outcome, we measure the student’s ethical awareness and consideration in terms of: Knowledge of Ethical Considerations and Responsibilities; and Demonstration of Ethical Practice in Research.

### Anthropological Research Skills

For the third student learning outcome, we measure the student’s demonstrated anthropological research skills in four categories: Analytic Reasoning; Application of Research Design; Use of Methods; and Written and Oral Presentation of Research.

Each categorical outcome measure has two indicators that are assigned a self-rating and a faculty rating both on a four-point scale (1-Novice; 2-Developing; 3-Proficient; and 4-Mastery). Table 1 summarizes the indicators for each categorical outcome measure nested under each student learning outcome.

Table 1. Indicators by Categorical Outcome Measure for 3 Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

| SLO/Categorical Outcome Measure | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| **1 – Graduate-Level Anthropological Knowledge** |
| * Core Concepts and Theories
 | Self rating of core knowledge (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated core knowledge (1-4) |
| * Research Design Process
 | Self rating of research design knowledge (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated research design knowledge (1-4) |
| * Methods
 | Self rating of methods knowledge (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated methods knowledge (1-4) |
| * Professional Literacy
 | Self rating of professional literacy (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated professional literacy (1-4) |
| **2 – Ethical Awareness and Application** |
| * Knowledge of Ethical Considerations and Responsibilities
 | Self rating of knowledge (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated knowledge (1-4) |
| * Demonstration of Ethical Practice in Research
 | Self rating of ethical practice (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated ethical practice (1-4) |
| **3 – Anthropological Research Skills** |
| * Analytic Reasoning
 | Self rating of analytic reasoning (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated analytic reasoning (1-4) |
| * Application of Research Design
 | Self rating of application of research design (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated application of research design (1-4) |
| * Use of Methods
 | Self rating of use of methods (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated use of methods (1-4) |
| * Written and Oral Presentation of Research
 | Self rating of written and oral presentation skills (1-4)Faculty rating of demonstrated written and oral presentation skills (1-4) |

## Process Measures

In addition to assessing the achievement of the program’s student learning outcomes over the course of the program, we also examine student experience in the program to understand what contextual factors may influence student success in the program, including both program and personal factors. Table 2 summarizes the contextual factor data to be collected from students over the course of the program.

Table 2. Contextual Factors Collected for Process Evaluation

| Program Factors  | Personal Factors |
| --- | --- |
| * Years to Completion of Degree
 | * Student Age at Admission
 |
| * Desired Years to Completion at Admission
 | * Student Self-Identified Gender
 |
| * Satisfaction with Program
 | * Student Self-Identified Ethnicity
 |
| * Challenges in Program Progress
 | * Alaska Experience at Admission
 |
| * Marked Successes in Program Progress
 | * Years Since Completion of Bachelor’s at Admission
 |
| * University Financial Support
 | * Previous Research Experience before Admission
 |
|  | * Undergraduate GPA
 |
|  | * # of Credit Hours in Anthropology Courses at Admission
 |
|  | * Employment Status during Program
 |

# Process

The Master’s in Anthropology program faculty assess growth in the three student learning outcomes (SLOs) over the course of the program through student self-evaluation and faculty evaluation. The Anthropology Graduate Program Coordinator compiles the assessment results with the assistance of the anthropology faculty.

## Data Sources

The Faculty will obtain the data for the assessment from three sources (Table 3):

1. Graduate Student Self-Evaluations – source of student self-evaluation ratings of all outcome measures for all three SLOs. Also collects data on contextual factors. Three versions will include ANTH Grad Entry Survey, ANTH Grad Yearly Progress Survey, and ANTH Grad Exit Survey.
2. Faculty Evaluation of Key Work – source of faculty evaluation ratings of all outcome measures of SLO 1 Graduate-Level Anthropological Knowledge and first outcome measure of SLO 2 Ethical Awareness and Application. Faculty will evaluate the appropriate SLO outcome measures for the core courses: Core Theory; Methods; Research Design; and Ethics.
3. Faculty Evaluation of Defenses – source of faculty evaluation ratings for all outcome measures of SLO 3 Anthropological Research Skills and second outcome measure of SLO 2 Ethical Awareness and Application. Faculty will evaluate appropriate categorical outcome measures for both the prospectus and thesis defenses.

Table 3. Data Collection by Data Source

| Data Source | Description | Frequency / Start Date | Collection Method | Old Assessment Equivalent |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Graduate Student Self-Evaluations | Student self-evaluation of anthropological knowledge and skills in addition to self-report of contextual factors | Annual / Fall 2019 | Graduate Coordinator administers entry, yearly progress, and exit surveys with every graduate student | None |
| Faculty Evaluation of Key Work  | Faculty evaluation of demonstration of graduate-level anthropological knowledge and ethical awareness in student work | Annual / Fall 2019 | Faculty panel evaluate key work of students during core theory, methods, ethics, and research design courses | Proseminar Grades / Comprehensive Exam Results |
| Faculty Evaluation of Documents and Defenses | Faculty evaluation of demonstration of ethical practice in research and anthropological research skills in student research  | Annual / Fall 2019 | Faculty panel evaluates prospectus and thesis documents and defenses for every graduate student | Prospectus Defense / Thesis Defense Review |

## Data Collection Procedures

Data are collected yearly from all graduate students through surveys and from faculty through various evaluations of key course work and prospectus and thesis defenses. Graduate students complete an entry survey in their first year, yearly progress surveys each year, and an exit survey in the semester of their graduation. Faculty complete evaluations of key work from designated core courses and of the prospectus and thesis defenses for every graduate student. This process allows for baseline, formative, and summative assessment to provide insight on developmental growth in the student learning outcomes over the course of the program. Additionally, process data are collected regarding student experience in the program. Table 4 summarizes the data collection approach.

Table 4. Overview of Data Collection Strategy

| Program Student Learning Outcomes and Associated Categorical Outcome Measures | Baseline Assessment | Formative Assessment | Summative Assessment |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 – Graduate-Level Anthropological Knowledge -Core Concepts and Theories (Theory Course)-Research Design Process (Research Design)-Methods (Methods Course)-Professional Literacy (All Four First-Year Courses) | * Entry Survey
* Faculty Pre-Evaluation of Key Work
 | * Yearly Progress Survey
* Faculty Post-Evaluation of Key Work in First-Year Core Classes
* Faculty Evaluation of Prospectus and its Defense
 | * Exit Survey
* Faculty Evaluation of Thesis and its Defense
 |
| 2 – Ethical Awareness and Application-Knowledge of Ethical Considerations and Responsibilities (Ethics Course)-Demonstration of Ethical Practice in Research | * Entry Survey
* Faculty Pre-Evaluation of Key Work in Ethics Course
 | * Yearly Progress Survey
* Faculty Post-Evaluation of Key Work in First-Year Ethics Course
* Faculty Evaluation of Prospectus and its Defense
 | * Exit Survey
* Faculty Evaluation of Thesis and its Defense
 |
| 3 – Anthropological Research Skills-Analytic Reasoning-Application of Research Design-Use of Methods-Written and Oral Presentation of Research | * Entry Survey
* Faculty Evaluation of Key Work in Research Design
 | * Yearly Progress Survey
* Faculty Evaluation of Prospectus and its Defense
 | * Exit Survey
* Faculty Evaluation of Thesis and its Defense
 |

### Baseline Data

Baseline data are collected for all three student learning outcomes during the core theory, methods, ethics, and research design courses required of all graduate students. Every fall, first-year graduate students enroll in a graduate-level theory course (either A610 Anthropological Theory or A611 Archaeological Theory). As part of this course, students will complete a self-administered questionnaire asking them to self-evaluate their anthropological knowledge, ethical awareness, and research skills in terms of all the categorical outcome measures. Additionally, the instructors of these theory courses will implement some type of assignment to gauge baseline knowledge of anthropological theory per instructor discretion. This work may include exams, portfolios, key projects, or other assignments. Similarly, instructors of the core methods, ethics, and research design courses will implement some type of assignment to gauge baseline knowledge of these subject matters as well. The research design course will also serve as a point of assessing baseline anthropological research skills. A faculty panel evaluate the level of knowledge demonstrated in these baseline assignments on a four-point scale (1-Novice; 2-Developing; 3-Proficient; and 4-Mastery) for the appropriate categorical measures at the same time that they evaluate the formative data at the conclusion of these courses.

### Formative Data

At the end of the core theory, methods, ethics, and research courses, a faculty panel will evaluate key work chosen by the instructor that demonstrates the appropriate categorical outcome measures for the course. This work may include exams, portfolios, key projects, or other assignments. Three faculty will assess the work on a four-point scale (1-Novice; 2-Developing; 3-Proficient; and 4-Mastery) for the appropriate categorical measures at the same time they evaluate the baseline assignment for the course. For student self-evaluation, each year in the fall, graduate students will complete an ANTH Grad Yearly Progress Survey, which asks students to self-evaluate their anthropological knowledge, ethical awareness, and research skills in terms of all the categorical outcome measures. Finally a measure of progress in the program, faculty will assess students’ development of all three SLOs in the evaluation of the Research Prospectus and its Defense. Students’ graduate advisory committees evaluate the prospectuses for their demonstration of each SLO and associated categorical outcome measures; all faculty who attend the prospectus defenses (minimally the graduate advisory committee) evaluate the work and presentations similarly.

### Summative Data

The culminating work for graduate students is the research-based thesis. Thus, faculty evaluation of this product highlights the summative assessment of the achievement of the program’s outcomes. Parallel to the prospectus evaluation, faculty will assess students’ development of all three SLOs in the evaluation of the Research Thesis and its Defense. Students’ graduate advisory committees evaluate the theses for their demonstration of each SLO and associated categorical outcome measures; all faculty who attend the theses defenses (minimally the graduate advisory committee) evaluate the work and presentations similarly. Finally, students also will complete an exit survey, which asks students to self-evaluate their anthropological knowledge, ethical awareness, and research skills in terms of all the categorical outcome measures.

## Data Processing and Analysis

The Graduate Coordinator will maintain a master data file for all students in the program. At each point of data collection beginning in Fall 2019, the responsible party (faculty or student) will submit the evaluations to the Graduate Coordinator for data entry. The Graduate Coordinator will solicit survey data from students yearly. The Graduate Coordinator will also analyze the data twice a year (fall and spring) to look for patterns concerning accomplishment of the student learning outcomes as well as emerging concerns/problems in the program process. Guiding questions for the analysis might include but will not be limited to:

* What are the average rates of mastery of the categorical measures at different levels (baseline, formative, summative)?
	+ Do faculty regularly mark some categorical measures with more or less strength in their evaluations?
	+ Do students self-evaluate some categorical measures with more or less strength?
	+ Do faculty and student evaluations resonate with one another?
	+ Are students showing development toward mastery of the Student Learning Outcomes?
	+ What areas as reflected by the evaluation of the categorical measures suggest more or modified instruction is needed?
* How are students experiencing the program?
	+ Are students reporting any problems or challenges related to the program?
	+ Are students moving through the program successfully and at the rate they desire?

### Current Graduate Students

Graduate students in the program prior to the 2019-20 program changes will begin providing data into the new assessment system immediately. They will not have baseline data or formative data from any work or accomplishments completed before 2019-20. However, some data on the successful completion of the comprehensive exams does translate into the formative assessment (i.e., faculty evaluation of key work). Students will also provide self-evaluations each year moving forward, and any outstanding prospectus and thesis will be evaluated using the new criteria.

### Formulation of Recommendations for Program Improvement

The faculty of the Anthropology Department meets at least once a year to review the data collected using the assessment tools. This meeting should result in recommendations for program changes that are designed to enhance performance relative to the program’s objectives and outcomes. The results of the data collection, and interpretation of the results, and the recommended programmatic changes will be forwarded to the office of Academic Affairs by the end of May each year. A plan for implementing the recommended changes, including advertising changes to the program’s stakeholders, will be completed at this meeting.

The proposed programmatic changes may be actions or changes in policy that the faculty deems to be necessary to improve performance relative to the program’s objectives and outcomes. Recommended changes will also consider workload (faculty, staff, and students), budget, facilities, and other relevant constraints. A few examples of changes made by programs at UAA include:

* changes in course content, scheduling, sequencing, prerequisites, delivery methods, etc.
* changes in faculty/staff assignments
* changes in advising methods and requirements
* addition and/or replacement of equipment
* changes to facilities

### Modification of the Assessment Plan

The Anthropology Department faculty, after reviewing the collected data and the processes used to collect them, may decide to alter the assessment plan. Changes may be made to any component of the plan, including the objectives, outcomes, assessment tools, or any other element; these are to be approved by the faculty of the program. The modified assessment plan will be forwarded to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Office of Academic Affairs.