MA in Sociology

Assessment Plan*

Submitted by

The Graduate Assessment Committee: November, 2008
Sharon K. Araji, Chair

Submitted to

The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
UC Denver

* The UC Denver Sociology Department extends their thanks to the University of Alaska Anchorage Psychology Department for sharing ideas used in this assessment plan.
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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Sociology offers a BA degree in Sociology that can be completed solely on line, on campus or as a hybrid between the two. We have a separate assessment plan for this program.

The current assessment plan focuses on the MA program, which presently is offered only as a on-campus program, but some elective courses could be taken online. The MA program is designed as an extension of a BA or BS degree in Sociology. The Graduate Assessment Committee (GAC) consists of faculty members within the Sociology Department who teach in the graduate program. The learning objectives are reviewed and revised, if deemed necessary, every year, usually at the end of the spring semester. The assessment coordinator for the MA in Sociology is Sharon K. Araji, Professor and Chair of Sociology.
MA PROGRAM GOALS

MA Program Goals:

1. The overarching goal of the MA Program is to extend knowledge and skills acquired in a BA or BS degree in sociology or a related field and to further prepare students for careers in research, teaching or social policy in the areas of Social Psychology, Sociology of the Family, Urban Sociology, Criminology, Sociology of Health and Applied Sociology.

2. In order to prepare students for careers in Sociology, the MA program will (2a), expose students to empirical and theoretical research in order to advance and expand knowledge in the field of sociological theory; and, (2b), to demonstrate to students how theory and research can be used to address social issues in the communities where faculty, staff, and students live and work.

3. A third goal of the MA program is demonstrate the importance of understanding how gender, ethnic, racial and religion differences, among others, influence social structure and social processes in human societies.

4. A fourth goal is to provide students with opportunities to advance fluency in oral and written language appropriate to a student earning a master’s degree in Sociology.

5. A fifth goal is to include, where appropriate, assignments that involve critical thinking skills that can be applied in academia and the world of work.

6. A sixth goal is to provide students with exposure to information and opportunities to understand and participate in public and policy sociological roles.
MA PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Program Goal 1. The overarching goal of the MA Program is to extend knowledge and skills acquired in a BA or BS degree in sociology or a related field and to further prepare students for careers in research, teaching or social policy in the areas of Social Psychology, Sociology of the Family, Urban Sociology, Criminology, Sociology of Health and Applied Sociology.

Program Objectives

1. Students will be knowledgeable of key sociological concepts and demonstrate success at applying these to social issues.
2. Students will identify major sociological theories.
3. Students will be able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of existing sociological theories.
4. Students will be able to identify key philosophical assumptions and paradigmatic traditions underlying theoretical arguments.
5. Students will be able to identify major theoretical perspectives in specialty areas.

Program Goal 2. In order to prepare students for careers in Sociology, the MA program will (2a), expose students to empirical and theoretical research in order to advance and expand knowledge in the field of sociological theory; and, (2b), to demonstrate to students how theory and research can be used to address social issues in the communities where faculty, staff, and students live and work, and (3b), have a basic understanding of the connections between theory, research methods and statistical analysis.

Program Objectives

1. Students will be able to identify primary sociological research methods.
2. Students will be able to link theory, data, and hypothesis testing.
3. Students will be able to formulate research questions, analyze and interpret data and choose appropriate methods and analytical strategies to assess these questions.
4. Students will manage, describe, analyze, and present data using statistical computing software.
5. Students will be able to locate and evaluate original and published research in relevant areas.
6. Students will demonstrate knowledge and an understanding of basic statistical techniques.
7. Students will identify and utilize the format of sociological research articles.
8. Students will be able to interpret statistical analysis accurately and translate into written format.
9. Students will conduct an independent, supervised research project/thesis.

Program Goal 3. A third goal of the MA program is demonstrate the importance of understanding how gender, ethnic, racial and religion differences, among others, influence social structure and social processes in human societies.

Program Objectives

1. Be able to demonstrate how social factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class and religion, among other factors, can influence social processes and outcomes.

Program Goal 4. A fourth goal is to provide students with opportunities to advance fluency in oral and written language appropriate to a student earning a master’s degree in Sociology.

Program Objectives

1. Students will be able to distinguish between empirical and non-empirical truth claims.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge in the use of American Sociological Association (ASA) style.
3. Students will be able to demonstrate written and oral communication that meets the standards of a graduate with a Sociology MA degree.

Program Goal 5. A fifth goal is to include, where appropriate, assignments that involve critical thinking skills that can be applied in academia and the world of work.

Program Objectives

1. Students will be able to understand the logic of scientific reasoning.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking, not just memorization of material.
3. Students will demonstrate knowledge of key social trends in relevant areas.
Program Goal 6. A sixth goal is to provide students with exposure to information and opportunities to understand and participate in public and policy sociological roles.

Program Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the application of ethical principles in research and practice.
2. Students will participate in internships, if possible or relevant.
3. Students will develop substantive specializations in at least one of the five MA areas.
General Implementation Strategy

Grades for courses are collected at the end of the Fall or Spring semester. Research paper and oral presentation forms are collected at the end of each semester. Research Activity Reports are collected at the end of each semester. The Thesis/Project Evaluation Forms are distributed to the thesis/project committee members prior to the thesis/project defense and collected after the defense. Intern Evaluations are completed during the middle of each semester as well as at the end of each semester. Student Satisfaction Surveys are completed at the end of each academic year.

All data are returned to the GAC assessment coordinator. The GAC committee then compiles and analyzes the material and reports to the department Full-time faculty and the CLAS Dean and Assessment Director.

Method of Data Analysis and Formulation of Recommendations for Program Improvement

The GAC of the MA program meets at the end of the Spring semester to review the data collected using the assessment tools. This meeting results in recommendations for program changes that are designed to enhance performance relative to the program’s outcomes. The results of the data collection, interpretation of the results, and the recommended programmatic changes are forwarded to the office on a special date of each year. A plan for implementing the recommended changes, including advertising the changes to all the program’s stakeholders, are also completed at this meeting.

The proposed programmatic changes may be any action or change in policy that the Graduate Faculty deems as being necessary to improve performance relative to the program’s outcomes. Recommended changes should also consider workload (faculty, staff, and students), budget, facilities, and other relevant constraints.

Modification of the Assessment Plan

The faculty, after reviewing the collected data and the processes used to collect it, may decide to alter the assessment plan. Changes may be made to any component of the plan, including the outcomes, assessment tools, or any other aspect of the plan. The changes are, to be approved by the GAC. The modified assessment plan is to be forwarded to the CLAS Deans office and Assessment Director.
ASSESSMENT TOOLS

A description of the tools used in the assessment of the program outcomes and their implementation are summarized in Table 1 the tools and their relationships to the program outcomes are listed in Table 2.

There is a separate appendix for each tool that describes the factors that affect the results and gives examples of the tools and how they are implemented.

Table 1. **Program Objectives, Assessment Tools and Administration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency/ Start Date</th>
<th>Collection Method</th>
<th>Administered by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Course grades for Soc 5000, Professional Seminar</td>
<td>Course grades for Professional Seminar</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Soc. 5014, Classical Sociological Theory</td>
<td>Course grades for Classical Sociological Theory</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Soc. 5015 Contemp. Sociological Theory</td>
<td>Course grades for Contemporary Sociological Theory</td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grades for 5024</td>
<td>Course grades for Research Methods</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Soc. 5183 Quantitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>Course grades for Quantitative Data Analysis</td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Research Paper</td>
<td>Research paper in relevant courses</td>
<td>Every semester</td>
<td>Professor provides grades</td>
<td>Professor of course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Research Activity Reports</td>
<td>Report generated by each student about their research involvements during the semester</td>
<td>Every semester</td>
<td>Students complete and forward to Chair GAC</td>
<td>Coordinator/GAC Committee Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Thesis/ Project Evaluation Forms</td>
<td>Numerical assessment of the thesis by project/thesis committee</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Members complete at thesis/project defense</td>
<td>Project/ thesis Chair and GAC Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intern Evaluation Forms</td>
<td>Numerical assessment of interns at mid semester and end of semester by site supervisor</td>
<td>Every semester/ 2010</td>
<td>Completed forms by Intern Supervisor forwarded to GAC Coordinator</td>
<td>Intern Supervisor and Faculty Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Student Satisfaction Survey</td>
<td>Numerical assessment of student satisfaction with program</td>
<td>Spring 2009</td>
<td>Students complete surveys and return to GAC coordinator</td>
<td>GAC Coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2. Association of Assessment Tools to Program Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Outcome</th>
<th>Assessment Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students graduating with their Master’s degree in Sociology should have a broad knowledge of sociology with special emphasis in at least one of the areas of the MA program.</td>
<td>1. Grades for Courses 1 2. Research Activity Reports 1 3. Research paper/oral presentation 1 4. Thesis/project Evaluation Form 1 5. Intern Evaluation Form 0 6. Student Satisfaction Survey 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sociology graduate students should be able to complete coherent written research papers and oral presentations.</td>
<td>0.1. Grades for Courses 1 2. Research Activity Reports 1 3. Research paper/oral presentation 1 4. Thesis/project Evaluation Form 1 5. Intern Evaluation Form 0 6. Student Satisfaction Survey 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sociology graduate students should express satisfaction with the program (including types and time of course offerings, evaluation of faculty, academic and career advising).</td>
<td>0.1. Grades for Courses 1 2. Research Activity Reports 1 3. Research paper/oral presentation 1 4. Thesis/project Evaluation Form 1 5. Intern Evaluation Form 0 6. Student Satisfaction Survey 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 = Tool is not used to measure the associated objective.  
1 = Tool is used to measure the associated objective.  

*These special emphasis courses include Social Psychology, Sociology of the Family, Urban Sociology, Criminology, Sociology of Health and Applied Sociology.*
APPENDIX A: GRADES FOR SOCIOLOGY CORE COURSES

Appendix A1: Grades for Soc. 5000, Professional Seminar

Tool Description:

Students earn a traditional grade (A-F) for this course.

Factors that affect the collected data:

For the purposes of this outcome measure, any incomplete (I) grades would be subject to a discussion with the professor to determine what the expected grade will be once the “I” is removed from the transcript.

How to interpret the data:

1. Learning assesses a student’s familiarity with the style of professional research and writing and the discourse among competing theories in the discipline of Sociology. This course also assesses a student’s understanding of the general history, organizational structure, and contemporary trends of the professional field of sociology. Learning should provide students with an awareness of effective research tools available through use of the Auraria Library.

2. A passing grade is indicative of a students’ general awareness of the field of Sociology and where to acquire relevant information.
Appendix A2: Grades for Soc. 5014, Classical Sociology Theory

Tool Description:

Students earn a traditional grade (A-F) for this course.

Factors that affect the collected data:

For the purposes of this outcome measure, any incomplete (I) grades would be subject to a discussion with the professor to determine what the expected grade will be once the “I” is removed from the transcript.

How to interpret the data:

1. Learning assesses a students’ knowledge of major classical sociological theories and the developmental process of sociological theory. The course also assesses a students’ ability to analyze social phenomenon, social institutions, and social behavior using sociological theories and apply theoretical thinking to the explanation and understanding of everyday phenomenon. The course grade is also dependent on a student’s ability to write scholarly research papers.

2. A passing grade is indicative that the student has acceptable skills and knowledge in areas related to classical sociological theories.
Appendix A3: Grades for Soc. 5015, Contemporary Sociological theory

Tool Description:

Students earn a traditional grade (A-F) for this course.

Factors that affect the collected data:

For the purposes of this outcome measure, any incomplete (I) grades would be subject to a discussion with the professor to determine what the expected grade will be once the “I” is removed from the transcript.

How to interpret the data:

1. Learning assesses a students’ knowledge of major contemporary sociological theories and the developmental process of sociological theory. The course grade also assesses a students’ ability to analyze social phenomenon, social institutions, and social behavior using sociological theories. The course grade also evaluates the extent to which a student can apply theoretical thinking to the explanation and understanding of everyday phenomenon. The course grade is also dependent on a student’s ability to write scholarly research papers.

2. A passing grade is indicative that the student has acceptable skills in research design and analysis.
Appendix A4: Grades for Soc. 5024, Research Methods

Tool Description:

Students earn a traditional grade (A-F) for this course.

Factors that affect the collected data:

For the purposes of this outcome measure, any incomplete (I) grades would be subject to a discussion with the professor to determine what the expected grade will be once the “I” is removed from the transcript.

How to interpret the data:

1. Learning assesses students’ involvement and proficiency in Sociological research. The research methods course may serve as a basis for developing a thesis or project topic, but every student must develop a research proposal. Learning also assesses a students’ ability to critically evaluate a published research paper from the title through the discussion.

2. A passing grade in this course is indicative that the student has acceptable skill in research design and analysis.
Appendix A5: Grades for Soc. 5183, Quantitative data Analysis

Tool Description:

Students earn a traditional grade (A-F) for this course.

Factors that affect the collected data:

For the purposes of this outcome measure, any incomplete (I) grades would be subject to a discussion with the professor to determine what the expected grade will be once the “I” is removed from the transcript.

How to interpret the data:

1. Learning assesses the degree to which a student has a working knowledge of quantitative data analysis, including its basic concepts and assumptions. Learning also assesses a student’s ability to obtain secondary data and read data into SPSS, identify attributes of a data set and its components, select the appropriate analytic method to assess the relationship between multiple quantitative indicators, perform the analysis in SPSS, and evaluate analytic results in written and spoken language.

2. A passing grade in this course is indicative that the student has acceptable skill in research methods and quantitative data analysis.
APPENDIX B: RESEARCH ACTIVITY REPORT

Appendix B1: Research Paper Evaluation form

Tool Description:

Tool designed to determine if the graduating student has acceptable skills in writing a research paper including writing and mastery of the American Sociological Association (ASA) style. The survey is composed of four items that require rating from committee members on a 5-point Likert scale, shown below.

Factors that affect the collected data:

None

How to interpret the data:

Results of the ___ questions are averaged across a sample of research papers from relevant courses each semester.

Sample:

Research Paper Evaluation Form

Student Name: ___________________________________  Date: _________

Numerical Assessment of Research Paper: Instructions for Thesis/Project Committee Members

Please rate the items using the following scale: 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree.

_____ 1. The research paper is well organized and ideas demonstrate a logical flow.

_____ 2. The skills in research writing are evident in the paper.

_____ 3. The research paper provides evidence that the research literature is interpreted appropriately.

_____ 4. The student makes full and appropriate use of the elements of style and grammar of the ASA Publication Manual.
5. The students followed directions provided for the specific type of research paper requirement.

**Appendix B2: Oral Presentation Evaluation Form**

**Tool Description:**

Tool designed to determine if the graduating student has acceptable skills in oral presentation in class. The survey is composed of four items that require rating from committee members on a 5-point Likert scale, shown below.

**Factors that affect the collected data:**

None

**How to interpret the data:**

Results of the ___ questions are averaged across a sample of oral presentations from relevant courses each semester.

**Sample:**

**Oral Presentation Evaluation Form**

Student Name: ___________________________________  Date: _________

Numerical Assessment of Research Paper: Instructions for Thesis/Project Committee Members

Please rate the items using the following scale: 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree.

1. The oral presentation is well organized and ideas demonstrate a logical flow.
2. The oral presentation reflects major ideas in research paper on which it is based.
3. The oral presentation is professional.
4. The student can answer relevant questions from the audience.
APPENDIX C: RESEARCH ACTIVITY REPORT AS STUDENT PROGRESSES TOWARD THESIS/PROJECT

Tool Description:

Tool designed to determine if a student is involved in research activities and specify what those activities are.

Factors that affect the collected data:

None

How to interpret the data:

Data are descriptive and serve to help determine the level of research activity each student is involved in.

Sample

Research Activity Report

Student __________________________ Date___________

Semester (circle one):  Fall, 200_ Spring, 200__

I was actively participating in research activities this semester.

_____ Yes  _____ No

If you indicated “yes” please provide specific details of your research activities.
Tool Description:

Tool designed assess for competence in basic practice under general supervision. This is a significant document composed of eight sections (see below) requiring the evaluator to rate the student on competencies within each section as well as comment and provide suggestions for further study.

Factors that affect the collected data:

None

How to interpret the data:

A letter grade is provided based on student performance. This grade is converted into a number using the following: A = 5; B = 4; C = 3

Sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Far Below Expectations</th>
<th>Below Expectations</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Above Expectations</th>
<th>Far Above Expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I. Basic Work Requirements

- Arrives on time consistently
- Uses time effectively
- Informs supervisor and makes arrangements for absences
- Reliably completes requested or assigned tasks on time
- Completes required total number of hours or days on site
- Is responsive to norms about clothing, language, etc., on site

Comments: ______________________________________________________________________________________

Suggested areas for further study: __________________________________________________________________

Other areas assessed include:

- Ethical Awareness and Conduct
- Response to Supervision
- Knowledge and learning
- Interaction with Clients
- Clinical Skills
- Interaction with co-workers
- Work Product
APPENDIX E: STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Tool Description:

Tool is designed to assess a student’s satisfaction with the program. Additional structured items and open questions surveying a student’s opinion about the range of courses offered, times, quality of instruction, the range of research, intern and elective options, level of career and academic advising, etc are to be determined. (Sample items provided).

Factors that affect the collected data:

None

How to interpret the data:

An averaged overall score is computed on the objective component of the survey and reported and published in the program outcomes assessment results. However, each item is reviewed by the coordinator and a summary of the data is presented to the GAC for review. If there are significant outliers in the data, special attention will be paid to those items and remedial actions will be implemented. In other words, the survey is treated as yielding a single score but in practice, each item is reviewed.

Sample 5:

Please rate your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with each of the following program features.

1. The current Master’s degree requirements:

   Dissatisfied: _____:_____:_____:_____:_____: satisfied                        _____ no opinion
   Comments: _________________________________________________________________

2. The quality of my sociology classes this semester:

   Dissatisfied: _____:_____:_____:_____:_____: satisfied                        _____ no opinion
   Comments: _________________________________________________________________

3. The variety of sociology classes listed in the schedule for the current semester:

   Dissatisfied: _____:_____:_____:_____:_____: satisfied                        _____ no opinion
   Comments: _________________________________________________________________

4. What is best about the graduate program?
5. What could be changed or improved in the graduate program?
APPENDIX F: THESIS/PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Tool Description:

Tool designed to determine if the graduating student has acceptable skills in research analysis including writing and mastery of the American Sociological Association (ASA) style, and computer literacy. The survey is composed of four items that require rating from committee members on a 5-point Likert scale, shown below.

Factors that affect the collected data:

None

How to interpret the data:

Results of the 4 questions are averaged across each committee member who completes the survey to provide a date point for each student.

Sample:

Thesis/Project Evaluation Form

Student Name: _______________________________ Date: ____________

Numerical Assessment of Research Paper: Instructions for Thesis/Project Committee Members

Please rate the items using the following scale: 1 Strongly Disagree, 2 Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly Agree.

____ 1. The thesis/project provides evidence that the research literature is interpreted appropriately.

____ 2. The skills in research writing are evident in the thesis/project.

____ 3. The student responds fluently and appropriately to both detailed and theoretical questions on the thesis/project.

____ 4. The student makes full and appropriate use of the elements of style and grammar of the ASA Publication Manual.