



The Anthropology PhD Curriculum Mapping & Dissertation Defense Rubric: Clarifying Faculty Expectations to Promote Student Success

Ann M. Sakaguchi & Christian E. Peterson, Department of Anthropology

Introduction

From Fall 2016 to Spring 2017 the Anthropology **FACULTY ACTIVELY ENGAGED** in the following program assessment activities:

1. Clarified course activities to align with program learning outcomes;
2. Revised the PhD curriculum map;
3. Identified collection point for program assessment data;
4. Collaboratively developed the PhD Dissertation and Defense Rubric (Student and Faculty versions).

The process helped faculty to reflect on the PhD curriculum and clarify their expectations of students.

Department Facts

- The Anthropology Department offers BA, MA (Plan A & B) and PhD degree programs.
- PhD program—full subfield offerings in Archaeology, Cultural Anthropology, and Biological Anthropology.
- Faculty N=13.5 FTE; PhD students N=26.
- Established in 1934 and is the leading Anthropology Program in Hawai'i, Pacific, and Asia.

Project Goals

- Investigate learning opportunities in the curriculum.
- Establish assessment process—data collection & development of evaluation rubric.

PhD Program SLOs

1. Gain in-depth knowledge of anthropological theory in major areas of literature pertinent to research interests. (**Knowledge**)
2. Acquire competence in advanced methods in a selected subfield of anthropological research. (**Methods**)
3. Gain an understanding of the ethical dimensions of community-based research. (**Ethics**)
4. Acquire knowledge of research through the design and conduct of an ongoing research project. (**Research**)
5. Develop the skills to present and publish original research. (**Present & Publish**)

Step 1: REVIEWED Existing Curriculum Map

| PhD Requirements | SLO 1 Knowledge | SLO 2 Methods | SLO 3 Ethics | SLO 4 Research | SLO 5 Present & Publish |
|---|-----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Candidacy Meeting and Committee Evaluation Courses with 4 Different Members | X | | | | ? |
| Comprehensive Exam | X | X | X | | ? |
| Dissertation Proposal | X | X | X | X | ? |
| Dissertation Research | X | X | X | X | ? |
| Dissertation Writing and Defense | X | X | X | X | ? |

Where are the learning opportunities to help students present & publish?

Step 2: SHARED Results & SURVEYED Faculty

Dear Faculty Colleagues teaching ANTH XYZ,

How is SLO#5 currently addressed as part of the PhD program?

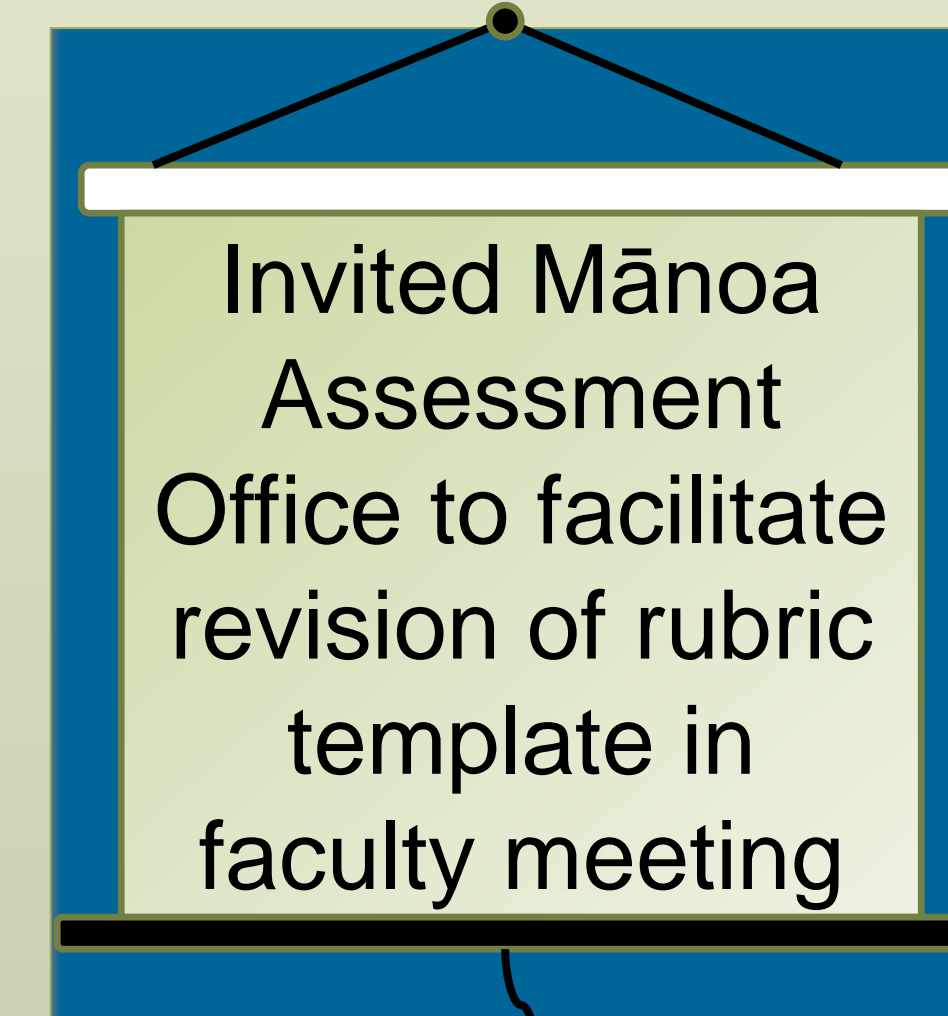
Please indicate which of the SLOs your course explicitly and substantially addresses. Describe course activities that you have used to address the PhD program SLOs.

Step 3: COMPILED Responses Into New Curriculum Map

| CRN | Course Type* | SLO 1 Knowledge | SLO 2 Methods | SLO 3 Ethics | SLO 4 Research | SLO 5 Present & Publish |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| 601 | Core | X | X | X | X | X |
| 602 | Core | X | X | X | X | X |
| 603 | Core | X | X | X | X | X |
| 604 | Core | X | | | | |
| Comprehensive Exam | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Dissertation Proposal | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Dissertation | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Dissertation Defense | | Assess | Assess | Assess | Assess | Assess |
| 640B | A M T | X | X | | X | X |
| 640C | A M T | X | X | | X | X |
| 640E | A M T | X | X | | X | X |
| 620H | A | X | X | | | X |
| 645 | A | | X | X | X | X |
| 660 | A | X | | | | |
| 661 | A | T | X | | | |
| 663 | | T | X | | X | X |
| 667 | M | T | X | X | X | X |
| 668 | M | | X | X | | X |
| 670 | M | | X | | X | |
| 671 | M | T | | | | |
| 681 | M | | | | | |
| 682 | M | | | | | |
| 695 | A M T | | | X | | X |
| 710 | M | X | X | X | X | X |
| 711 | M | X | X | X | X | X |
| 720 | A | X | X | X | X | X |
| 750B | A M T | X | | | X | X |
| 750D | A M T | X | | | | X |

* Note: Course types include Core, Area (A), Methods (M), and Theory (T) courses. PhD students are required to take 3 Core courses plus 2 each from A, M, and T courses. Courses not taught in the last 5 years are not included in this Curriculum Map. *

Step 4: DEVELOPED Dissertation & Defense Rubric



Dissertation & Defense Rubric – Student Version

| Criteria | Criteria Description |
|--|--|
| Student's writing is clear, organized, and of professional quality (SLO 5) | Technical terms are defined, explained and used only when necessary. Grammatical and spelling errors are minimal. Sentence structure is clear and concise. Paragraphs are cohesive. Organization is clearly signaled in prose. Transitions are fluid and logical. |
| Student demonstrates ability to describe clearly a well-organized problem (SLO 1, 4) | There is evidence in accordance with genre standards of the discipline and subfield. There is a clearly articulable outcome which is described in the thesis. Thesis has an objective and clearly identifies an unmet problem in the scholarly literature which is significant. |
| Student demonstrates ability to integrate and synthesize relevant literature (SLO 1, 2, 3) | Thesis identifies a limitation, absence or problem in the existing literature. Thesis directly addresses that problem and advances existing knowledge theoretically and/or practically. |
| Student uses appropriate research methods (SLO 2, 3, 4) | Thesis clearly identifies the state of the art theoretically and/or practically. Findings are significant. |
| Student exhibits proficiency when conducting research (SLO 3) | Thesis identifies a method from the literature. Connections between materials and are able to synthesize them into a coherent picture of existing knowledge. An awareness, drawbacks, and limitations. |
| Student presents justified and defensible conclusions (SLO 5) | Thesis demonstrates a depth of knowledge of existing ethical standards in their area regarding research and publication, collaboration in fieldwork and the security and ethical management of data and material. |
| Student demonstrates ability to orally present and articulate problem, approach, and conclusions of dissertation (SLO 5) | Research methods are appropriate to investigate the research questions and practical in field and/or laboratory and/or other conditions (e.g. measures, archives, etc.). Methods are rigorous and/or innovative. Research is original, clear and elegant. Research is accurate, engaged in logical, and data gathered is of high quality. Researcher conducts research which is appropriate and ethical. |
| | Researcher adheres to the highest standards of relevant professional organization. Student adheres to IRB protocol and human rights standards. Each provides how s/he has studied. |
| | Researcher anticipates how thesis and subsequent publications will be received and interpreted, and how this may impact their research respondents. |
| | Researcher plans for the ethical and secure management of data and material gathered in the course of research, including its return to research respondents, if such material are or derived. |
| | There is a central conclusion that emerges from the research question. Conclusion speaks to and advances the discipline. Conclusion is logically coherent. Alternative explanations are evaluated. Conclusion is directly motivated by research findings. Evidence is clearly presented and compelling. |
| | Student clearly and concisely assesses the questions put to them. Answers are well-organized and clearly supported. |
| | Student recognizes implications of thesis, including future possible directions of research and shortcomings of existing research. |
| | Student addresses and remedies any shortcomings or omissions in their verbal defense. |
| | Student responses help committee and student see students' thesis in light of broader issues in the research. Thesis is better understood and appreciated after defense than before. |

Faculty Evaluation Rubric for Dissertation Defense

| Criteria | Faculty Evaluation Rubric for Dissertation Defense |
|---|--|
| 1.1. Writing is clear, organized, and of professional quality (SLO 5) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 2.1. Student demonstrates ability to describe clearly a well-organized problem (SLO 1, 4) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 3.1. Student demonstrates ability to integrate and synthesize relevant literature (SLO 1, 2, 3) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 4.1. Student uses appropriate research methods (SLO 2, 3, 4) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 5.1. Student exhibits proficiency when conducting research (SLO 3) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 6.1. Student presents justified and defensible conclusions (SLO 5) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| 7.1. Student demonstrates ability to orally present and articulate problem, approach, and conclusions of dissertation (SLO 5) | Score (0-100) Comments |
| Overall: | Score (0-100) Comments |

Use of Results

1. Clarified standards of performance (e.g. poor/ good/ very good/ outstanding). **Faculty expectations better understood by students = increased STUDENT SUCCESS!**
2. Took advantage of curricular changes underway within the department to **share ideas and rethink courses and alignments = FACULTY ENGAGEMENT!**
3. Revised assessment program better **articulates skills/ knowledge to be acquired = improved PREPARATION FOR PROFESSIONAL CAREERS!**

Next Steps

To complete the assessment cycle, 'closing the loop strategies' will be used. Student perspectives will be cross-checked with departmental assessments to determine if they coincide using electronic surveys distributed to PhD students annually. Questions to be asked of students: (1) At what stage are they in the program? (2) Has the department provided learning opportunities to help achieve its SLOs? (3) Do they feel they have achieved these SLOs? And (4) what kinds of faculty support/ coursework are or would be most helpful in doing so?