

Program Assessment Plan

Department Name: Department of Biology

Major: MA BIOLOGY

Student Learning Goals:

1.	Learn and apply the scientific method of analysis.
2.	Acquire and utilize biological information relevant to their general area of biology (i.e. molecular/cellular biology, ecology, or evolutionary biology).
3.	Conduct a project (if appropriate) to the satisfaction of their project committees.
4.	Report results of project (if appropriate) and convey advanced biological principles both orally and in writing.
5.	Understand current theory, scientific tools, and techniques relevant to their area in biology.

Assessment Plan:

Assessment Measure:	Goals Addressed: (list by number)	How is the information used?
<i>Direct Measures</i>		
a) Performance in downstream courses	1,2,3,4,5	Each semester in each downstream course, instructors informally assess the preparation of students entering from upstream courses. For example, are Biometry II students adequately prepared by Biometry I? When problems are found, then discussions are initiated to identify and implement steps that can be taken to change the upstream course to make it more effective. As an example, lack of preparation for Biometry II caused us to examine the teaching of Biometry I and to institute changes in that course.
b) Graduate Studies Committee's Annual Progress Assurance Form (to assess each graduate student's progress, course work, and teaching performance)	3,6	Form reviewed annually to ensure satisfactory progress of each student. If a trend appears that indicates systematic problems with the program (such as too many students not making progress) then actions are taken. For example, we are considering the implementation of a policy prohibiting our teaching assistants from holding second jobs; we've found that individuals who hold second jobs invariably progress substantially more slowly than students who are only Teaching Assistants.
c) Project proposal and seminar	1,2,5	Faculty members informally assess the quality of presentations on a continuing basis. If a decrease in quality and/or quantity were to be noticed, then actions would be taken.
d) Project preparation, exit seminar, and defense	1,2,3,4,5	Faculty members informally assess the quality of theses on a continuing basis. If a decrease in quality and/or quantity were to be noticed, then actions would be taken. For example, in response to a poor quality thesis, the make up of the committee of that student was examined and found to be at odds with department policy. The action taken is that office staff members are compiling a list of all graduate committee memberships for examination by the Graduate Coordinator.

Assessment Measure:	Goals Addressed: (list by number)	How is the information used?
<i>Indirect Measures</i>		
e) Opinions of Professional Community (e.g., from comments on students entering other graduate programs or employment)	4	On an informal basis we use these measures to give a general indication of the strength of the program. If problems were to be noticed, we'd design and implement changes in the program to remedy the problems.
f) Alumni Survey	1,2,3,4,5	If students' perception of learning goals and of the quality of their education indicates problems, then actions would be taken.
g) External Review Boards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five-Year Program Review • INBRE • Other External Reviews 	4	Comments by external reviewers are used as the basis for proposing and designing changes to our program
h) "Where are they now?" which is our analysis of success at gaining employment and pursuing additional education	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Success of entry to grad programs or employment is informally assessed to give indication of the strength of our program. If we were to determine that there were problems, then we'd design and implement appropriate changes in the program.

Updated: September 15, 2005