2012-2013 Assessment Report
Program: Economics PhD in Forestry

School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

Economics PhD in Forestry

Expected Outcome 1. Graduates will have demonstrated a thorough understanding of a sub-discipline within forestry, wildlife sciences, or natural resources

Assessment Method 1: Oral and written preliminary exams
Assessment Method Description
One hundred percent of successful doctoral graduates pass an oral and a written preliminary examination regarding prior and current levels of scientific knowledge pertaining to their field of study. After successful completion of the defense, a post-exam rubric (see attached) is completed by the MP and CMs which includes criteria designed to gauge the level of understanding in their field such as (a) understanding subject matter, (b) knowledge in multiple disciplines, (c) coherence and clarity of scientific arguments. The rubric is a new addition to our graduate degree assessment and results will be compiled and reported to the faculty annually. In addition, portions of the new graduate alumni surveys focus on (1) and those results would be similarly reported.
Findings

How did you use findings for improvement?
Deficiencies among doctoral student in subject matter comprehension are identified from the rubric and communicated to faculty with the expectation that training in these topic areas would intensify. Unsuccessful completion of preliminary exams also serves as an indicator of shortfalls in knowledge. Evidence of only low to marginal levels of sub-disciplinary knowledge would be addressed
through discussions with MPs as well as solicitation of suggestions from the Graduate Program and Policies Committee.

Additional Comments

Expected Outcome 2. Graduates will have produced new and significant research within the sub-discipline

Assessment Method 1: Oral exam rubric and alumni survey

Assessment Method Description
There are several questions on the post-defense rubric that directly address the originality of the dissertation research as well as the degree to which the student clearly understands how his/her research contributes to ‘new’ knowledge within the sub-discipline. These include (a) degree of originality and (b) degree of creativity and insight. Also, several questions on the graduate level alumni survey (see attached) are designed to evaluate the degree to which our programs provide M.S. and PhD graduates with the research skills which are necessary to perform well in their new jobs.
SFWS Survey of MS and PhD Alumni

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this post-graduation survey. Your responses are private and will not be shared outside of this office. The responses will be summarized and included in a report to the Graduate Programs and Policy Committee (GPPC) and the faculty. We use these to identify areas for improvement in our graduate programs. Please contact Dr. Graeme Lockeby, SFWS Graduate Program Officer, lockedg@auburn.edu if you have any questions.

Please provide your current contact information.

Address __________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Email Address _____________________________________

A. Are you currently employed? If so, where?
   Organization Name ________________________________
   Organization Address ______________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Organization Phone (____) _________________________
   Email ___________________________________________

B. When were you hired? ____________________________

C. Did your graduate degree(s) improve your chances of securing this position?
   Yes _______ No ________

D. Is this position the type you targeted for your first job? ________________________________
   Why or Why not?
   __________________________________________________

E. What research skills are you using in your job and how well did your SFWS graduate degree(s) prepare you to perform these tasks?
   __________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
Findings

How did you use findings for improvement?
The rubric has just been implemented and so we plan to summarize results and discuss those with the faculty annually. The graduate level alumni survey will be implemented shortly and those results will be summarized and used in a similar manner. Any responses that suggest low to marginal originality will be discussed with MPs during their annual reviews. Suggestions will be made for improvement where needed.

Additional Comments

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Expected Outcome 3. Graduates will have exhibited competence in written and oral research communications.

**Assessment Method 1:** Graduate seminar

**Assessment Method Description**

All PhD students are required to pass a graduate seminar course where they are trained in oral and poster presentations such as those used at national research conferences. Although a very high proportion of doctoral students attend research conferences and make scientific presentations, this information has not been previously
Each graduating doctoral student completes a written exit interview form (see attached) and meets with the Associate Dean of Research for 30 minutes to discuss perceived strengths and weaknesses of our graduate program. We are gathering information on attendance at research conferences and publications now in our exit interviews (questions 5-7 on that form) so that we can assess the proportion of students who are active in these endeavors.

Similarly, the culture of our School strongly encourages publication of dissertation results and MPs guide their PhD students through that process. Also, some formal training is provided in the graduate research methods course. Data regarding GRA publications have not been previously tracked but are now being collected during exit interviews. Discussion topics during those interviews include (a) number of publications, (b) type of publication outlets, (c) number and type of presentations made at conferences, and (d) any awards received.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences
Auburn University
Graduate Student Exit Interview Questionnaire

1. What were the primary factors that prompted/encouraged you to enroll for graduate study at SFWS/Auburn?

   ✦
   ✦
   ✦
   ✦

2. What were positive and negative aspects of the admission and enrollment process for you?

   Positive
   ✦
   ✦
3. Were Graduate Student Orientation program(s) and Graduate Student Guide helpful to you?
   - Yes ☐ ☐ No ☐ ☐
   How could they be improved?

4. To enable us to prepare lists that might be helpful to graduate students who follow you, please list below a couple of the graduate courses taken that you would recommend (or not recommend, if applicable).

Courses taken and recommended

1. Course #/Title: ___________________________________________
   __________________
   Instructor: _____________________________
   Why?

2. Course #/Title: ___________________________________________
Instructor: __________________________________________

Why?

Courses taken and not recommended

1. Course #/Title: ______________________________________
   Instructor: __________________________________________
   Why?

2. Course #/Title: ______________________________________
   Instructor: __________________________________________
   Why?

5. Please list all publications (particularly those in refereed journals) that you compiled during your graduate program at Auburn.

6. Please list all conference presentations.

7. Please list all awards received.

8. How would you rate the services and support provided you by (if applicable):
   The Graduate School:
   Dean(s)/Graduate Program Office Office, SFWS:
   Your Graduate Committee:
   If you were dissatisfied, what improvements would you suggest?
   The Graduate School:
   Dean(s)/Graduate Program Office, SFWS:
   Your Graduate Committee:

9. What do you consider the highlights of your Auburn experience? Disappointments?

10. If you had it to do over again, would you have chosen Auburn? _______________
    If yes, what would you have done differently to make your experience more rewarding?
11. What are your post-graduation plans?
   If you have employment, please list employer name and contact information.
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

What are your job responsibilities?

Starting Salary (Optional)

12. If you are pursuing further graduate study, where, what degree, what area of study?

13. Please indicate a postal mail and/or e-mail address at which we can reach you after you leave Auburn. Our Student Services Office would like to keep track of you for mailings such as Alumni Newsletter, Alumni Surveys, Jobs List (if you like), etc.

   E-Mail:

   Postal mail address:


   ____________________________________________________________  ____________________________________________________________

   Name (Please print)  Student ID Number

   ____________________________________________________________

   Signature  Date

**Findings**

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
Lecture materials in the two classes undergo modification in response to student evaluations and classroom performance. As we build our database of GRA participation in conferences and publication results from exit interviews, we will examine those cases where presentations and publications did not occur or occurred to a very low degree and work to encourage 100% participation in each. If necessary, the School would make available some travel funds for those students who...
otherwise would not be able attend meetings.

Information from exit interviews has been used to organize programmatic responses. In one case, the exit interviews indicated that graduate students wanted to have more interactions with fellow grad students in other disciplines. In response, events such as in-house poster sessions are being organized to provide opportunities for greater interaction.

**Additional Comments**