2012-2013 Assessment Report
Program: Forestry, MS

School of Forestry & Wildlife Sciences

Forestry, MS

Expected Outcome 1. Graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of a sub-discipline within forestry or natural resources.

Assessment Method 1: Thesis defense

Assessment Method Description

One hundred percent of graduating M.S. students pass a thesis defense where their level of knowledge of their sub-discipline is evaluated. In addition, 100% of successful M.S. theses contain literature review sections which have been deemed adequate by major professors (MPs) and committee members (CMs) with regard to sub-discipline knowledge and understanding. Also, our post-defense rubric (see attached) includes several questions aimed at evaluating the level of knowledge exhibited by M.S. students during thesis defenses. The latter include (a) understanding subject matter and (b) knowledge in multiple disciplines.
Findings

How did you use findings for improvement?
Results from post-defense rubrics will be compiled and reported to the faculty annually. In addition, portions of the written / oral exit interviews and new graduate alumni surveys focus on (1) and those
results would be similarly reported. If patterns should emerge indicating deficits in fundamental knowledge within sub-disciplines, MPs would be expected to intensify related education and training.

Additional Comments

2. Graduates will demonstrate an ability to conduct meaningful research in their sub-discipline.

Assessment Method 1: Thesis defense rubric

Assessment Method Description

M.S. students who are successful in passing their final defense exams are deemed adequate by their MPs and CMs in terms of capabilities to execute research in a meaningful manner. In addition to the pass / fail system of the exams, the defense rubric (completed by the committee after the exam) provides more detail regarding the students' ability to conduct meaningful research. Also, several questions on the Graduate Level Alumni Survey (see attached) are designed to assess the degree to which our graduate programs provided them with adequate research skills for their jobs.

Alumni Survey is in Appendix A.

Findings

How did you use findings for improvement?
Results from the post-defense rubrics and graduate alumni survey will be compiled and discussed with faculty on an annual basis. Evidence of shortcomings related to design and implementation of research would be discussed with individual MPs and there would be expectations that corrective actions would be taken for future students.

Additional Comments

3. Graduates will demonstrate competence in oral and written
scientific communication skills.

Assessment Method 1: Graduate seminar

Assessment Method Description

One hundred percent of successful M.S. students 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 M.S. students attend research conferences and make scientific presentations, this information has not been previously tracked. We are gathering that information now in our exit interviews (questions 5-7 on that form – see attached) so that we can assess the proportion that participates and makes presentations.

Similarly, the culture of our School strongly encourages publication of thesis results and MPs guide their graduate 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 our exit interviews. Discussion topics during those interviews include (a) number of publications, (b) type of publication outlets, and (c) number and type of presentations made at conferences.

Exit Interview is in Appendix B.

Findings

How did you use findings for improvement?

Additional Comments
Appendix A

SFWS Survey of MS and PhD Alumni

Graduate’s Name ___________________________ Date ____________________

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 Lockaby, SFWS Graduate Program Officer lockabg@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? ________________________________________________________________

______________________________________

5
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? 

F. What was the most useful experience or information you gained in SFWS graduate programs? 

G. What information was not provided in our graduate programs that you would now find useful? 

H. Comments or recommendations for current graduate students: 


Appendix B

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

   ▶
   ▶
   ▶
   ▶
   ▶

   Negative

   ▶
   ▶
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