Expected Outcome 1: Critical Analysis
Students will demonstrate critical analysis skills in examining text, data, or issues developing new knowledge and placing it within the broader environment of established theoretical and empirical knowledge. Demonstrated skills at the M.S. level will exceed expectations for undergraduate students and at the Ph.D. level will exceed expectations for master’s students.

Assessment Method 1: Content Analysis Evaluation of Research Proposals

Assessment Method Description

Evaluation of content of student presentations of research proposal developed by them to apply a student-selected social-psychological theory learned in CADS 7670, Social-Psychological Theories of Clothing Behavior
Five Ph.D. and five M.S. students’ each presented their self-developed research proposal to four graduate faculty (not including the course professor) using oral and Powerpoint presentations.
Proposals included a review of literature, justification of topic, identification of data to be collected, mode of analysis, and potential implications. A critical analysis rubric (1=end of term benchmark, milestones at two levels, to 4=capstone) adapted in 2013 was used. Components were: theoretical/conceptual framework; need for knowledge; data collection/findings; and reflection/implications. Three of the Ph.D. students were in their second year, and two were in their first year. Four of the five M.S. students were in their first year; the fifth was transitioning into the Ph.D. program, having not yet finished her thesis.
Findings

On a 4-point scale, average scores for the M.S. students ranged from 2.68-3.1, with the lowest being for reflection/implications and the highest for data description. Need for knowledge and theoretical/conceptual framework means were similar (2.82 and 2.9 respectively). The student who was transitioning into the Ph.D. program and had already developed her thesis proposal had scores similar to the Ph.D. students, as did a first year student who was mature and planning to pursue a Ph.D. following the M.S. Means were calculated for the other three students, who had completed their undergraduate degrees in the previous year; these were lower than the overall M.S. means (overall/newest to graduate study: 3.1/2.67, 2.9/2.33, 2.82/2.44, and 2.68/2.28). Means between the milestone levels of 2 and 3 showed that they exceeded what would be expected of undergraduate students.
How did you use findings for improvement?

For all except the one second year student, this was the first theory course taken. Achievement of levels between milestone 2 and 3 seem reasonable, especially in light of a higher expected level performance by the Ph.D. students. It is reasonable to expect that students can improve as they move forward. All of the M.S. students will develop research proposals either for their thesis or non-thesis project, and thus will gain more experience under faculty guidance even if they do not go on to doctoral study. Because the lowest mean score was for reflection and implications, the professor who teaches this and another theory course with a similar assignment will develop a requirement to be integrated into at least three of the weekly commentaries the students are expected to complete throughout the course. The additional task will be to provide specific suggestions for improving the theoretical and practical implications generated by the content of a required research article for the week. This assignment will ensure that students reflect and critically think about the implications derived from research findings. Because the Ph.D. students’ assessment showed that they had more advanced skills, M.S. students can be required to pre-submit their proposal to a Ph.D. student to get feedback for improvement. This should be a learning experience for both of them, particularly given that the Ph.D. students typically plan to pursue an academic career.

Additional Comments

Expected Outcome 2: Oral Communication Skills
Students will demonstrate appropriate oral communication skills at the M.S. level that exceed expectations for undergraduate students and at the Ph.D. level exceed expectations for master’s students.

Assessment Method 1: Evaluation of oral presentation of research proposal

Assessment Method Description

Evaluation of students’ oral presentations (with Powerpoint slides) of research proposal developed by them to apply a student-selected social-psychological theory learned in CADS 7670, Social-Psychological Theories of Clothing Behavior (see also assessment
Five M.S. students each orally presented their self-developed research proposal to four graduate faculty (not including the course professor). The rubric was used previously for assessing oral presentations in 2011-12 and 2012-13. These were evaluated on a 4-point scale (1=benchmark, milestones at two levels, to 4=capstone): organization/language, delivery, message/content, and material to support message. Four of the five M.S. students were in their first year; the fifth was transitioning into the Ph.D. program, having not yet finished her thesis. The 2013-14 group of students was larger than for the previous two assessments.

**Findings**

The mean scores ranged from: delivery (1.94), material to support message (2.5), organization/language (2.78), and message/content (2.83). These ranged between nearly reaching milestone 2 to nearing milestone 3. Only one student received one score at the benchmark level (1), and none below that. One student who was nearing completion and transitioning into the Ph.D. program, plus a first year student who was relatively more mature and had teaching experience, both scored higher (2.67) on delivery than the other three, all of whom were second term students. Only these two more experienced students received any scores of 4. That the two highest means were for organization and supporting material suggests that the M.S. students understood and strove to achieve the central objectives of the presentation but fell short more on how to deliver all of the necessary information in a timely and effective manner.
How did you use findings for improvement?

Oral communication was previously assessed in a required entry level course containing primarily M.S. students (2011-12) and another theory course (2012-13) composed of a more even split of Ph.D. and M.S. students. Evaluators’ scoring in the 2012-13 class was higher than for the entry course, suggesting that faculty may have had higher expectations beyond the first time experience.

As in previous assessments, the weakest performance for this evaluation was delivery. Noting that these presentations come at the end of the stresses of the term and are paired with a full, written paper and Powerpoint presentation development, all of which are relatively new for the least experienced students, the graduate faculty should (a) list the classes taught with oral presentations and what they are, and (b) work from that to devise strategies for enhancing the quality of the students’ professional presentations. Good delivery will be important in nearly all careers, even if not academic. One easily implemented strategy for gaining feedback and insights into the students’ perceptions of expectations would be to have peer evaluations of all oral presentations. These should go to the professor but not affect the presenter’s grade in the hopes of making the evaluations as objective as possible.

Additional Comments