



UCF Academic Program Review 2012-13 Consultant Graduate Program Review

Program: **Communication, M.A. – Interpersonal/Organizational Communication Track**

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Instructions: Please offer your assessment of each item below, considering when appropriate, your knowledge of other public research institutions. While a few items solicit an open-ended response, most ask you to rate a particular characteristic of the program under review as exemplary, appropriate, or needing improvement. At the end of each section, please elaborate on any items in that section identified as exemplary or needing improvement. Additional comments are optional. You may offer recommendations for improvement on the topics covered in each section at the end of the respective section and/or you may provide all recommendations for program improvement in item 8.3 at the end of this document.

Section 1 Program Goals and Planned Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Please evaluate the following:

- 1.1 Program goals and objectives, including those related to planned student learning outcomes (In addition to the program self-study, you may wish to consult the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* library in the UCF APR Web site.)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified item 1.1 as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.
There is little to differentiate the interpersonal track from other programs. As a result, the choice of the program is likely to be based on convenience and not content or quality of the program.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program goals and planned student learning outcomes:

The faculty should identify program strengths and differentiators and highlight those on the program website and in other materials.

Section 2 Program Coordination and Administration

Please evaluate the following:

2.1 Program administrative and management structures to effectively run program (e.g., effectiveness of program coordination, process for monitoring students' progress to degree, program handbooks, process for selecting preceptors/thesis advisors/research mentors/clinical supervisors)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

2.2 Student access to resources to enhance student success (e.g., advising, faculty members, appropriate technology)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (2.1- 2.2) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

The student advising center which services undergraduate students as well as graduate students is exemplary. Graduate students receive a great deal of assistance and support in the center.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program coordination and administration:

Section 3 Program Demand and Productivity

Please evaluate the following:

3.1 Program's ability to meet student demand for the major

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

3.2 Enrollment levels relative to faculty size and composition

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

3.3 Program's ability and responsiveness to meet the needs of other disciplines (e.g., program offerings that support other programs)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

3.4 Program's ability and responsiveness to meet local, regional, and national needs

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

3.5 Student retention

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

3.6 Student time-to-degree in the program

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (3.1- 3.6) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Enrollments vary from course to course. Enrollments in some courses are greater than an optimal size for graduate courses. One solution would be to offer additional graduate courses in a given term. Given the undergraduate student:instructor ratio for undergraduate programs that may be difficult.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program demand and productivity:

Reflect on course enrollments and the ability to offer additional graduate courses.

Section 4 Program Quality

Please evaluate the following:

4.1 Criteria for program admission (if applicable)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.2 Quality and rigor of student learning outcome targets (Refer to student learning outcomes assessment plans located in the *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment* library.)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.3 Evidence of student learning consistent with stated program goals (including planned student learning outcomes) and discipline standards

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.4 Student licensure pass rates (if applicable)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☒ Not Applicable

4.5 Placement rates for graduates relative to disciplinary trends at other public research universities

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☒ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Student Perceptions of Program Quality

Based upon your interactions with students in the program, please indicate how you believe students in the program view the program in the following areas:

4.6 Students' perception of the overall administration of the program

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.7 Students' perception of advising and mentoring

Please select only one option from the list below:

☒ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.8 Students' perception of program quality and rigor

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

4.9 Students' perceptions of the academic and collegial atmosphere of the program

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (4.1- 4.8) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Course scheduling issues were of concern to students. Those concerns took three forms: 1) a desire for more online course offerings, 2) a desire for more evening classes, and 3) a need to expand summer offerings, and 4) a concern that courses were not always sequenced well.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of program quality:

The student concerns dovetail with fundamental questions about the nature of the graduate program. Faculty should discuss the following issues and make certain the program is consistent with the preferences faculty express.

1. Does the NSC want a stronger online presence for its graduate programs?
2. Does the current course scheduling accommodate working students to a sufficient degree?
3. Is there a need to expand summer offerings to aid students' time to degree completion? If so, are there faculty and financial resources to do so?
4. Are students being placed into content courses before they have had either the theoretical or methodological training to maximize course learning objectives and outcomes?

Section 5 Student Characteristics and Quality

Please evaluate the following:

5.1 Program's ability to attract high quality students

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

5.2 Incoming students' credentials

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

5.3 Student diversity

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☒ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

5.4 Quality of student accomplishments compared to similar programs at other public research universities (e.g., theses, dissertations, creative works, papers presented; awards won; quality of subsequent graduate and professional programs entered; employment)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

5.5 Program relationship with alumni

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☐ Appropriate ☒ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (5.1- 5.5) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Mean GRE scores need to be improved. It is significant that the top 20% of students admitted could attend any graduate school in the field. We are concerned about the remaining 80%. The program does not appear to have systematic records regarding graduate placements or to reach out to alumni.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of student characteristics and quality:

Increase the mean and decrease the variance in GRE scores for admitted students even if the cohorts are smaller in the short run.

Section 6 Curriculum, Course Offerings, and Student Engagement Opportunities

Please evaluate the following:

6.1 Current curriculum's alignment with program goals

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.2 Design of core courses' to provide students a solid foundation in the discipline

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.3 Availability and timeliness of required courses

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.4 Adequacy of student professional development opportunities (e.g., research, clinical experience, student teaching)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.5 Balance between coursework and research, practica, independent study, etc., (e.g., too many or too few courses)

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.6 Overall quality and rigor of current curriculum

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

6.7 Incorporation of appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovations into the curriculum

Please select only one option from the list below:

☐ Exemplary ☒ Appropriate ☐ Needs Improvement ☐ Don't Know ☐ Not Applicable

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section (6.1- 6.7) as exemplary or needing improvement. Other comments are optional.

Although not viewed by us a necessarily problematic, with regard to 6.3 "timeliness of required courses" there is student concern that courses are not sequenced well. Specifically, some students expressed frustration at having to spend a non-trivial amount of class time in different courses hearing faculty members cover basic content and logistics (e.g., APA style).

Recommendations, if any, in the area of curriculum, course offerings, and student engagement opportunities:
See recommendations under Section 4

Section 7 Comparative Advantage

7.1 If applicable, please identify features that distinguish the program from similar programs at other institutions (e.g., curriculum, faculty member expertise, student engagement opportunities)

Most M.A. only programs lack distinguishing curricular features. As currently promoted the interpersonal communication track is not sufficiently distinct from competitors. The NSC faculty have the ability to distinguish themselves related to crisis and risk communication and should do so in recruiting students and online.

7.2 Does the program fit a disciplinary niche? If so, please elaborate.

There are fewer M.A. only programs in communication than in the past and a proliferation of Ph.D. programs of indistinguishable quality. The terminal M.A. program is a useful niche both in preparing students for doctoral studies, and providing advanced career preparation.

7.3 Please discuss the program's potential for achieving discipline (re-)accreditation or (re-)certification, if available.

Not applicable

Section 8 Analysis and Recommendations

8.1 Please identify up to five areas of greatest program strength.

Hard working, student centered faculty.

8.2 Please identify up to five areas of greatest concern for the program (e.g., program weaknesses, barriers, threats, unique vulnerabilities).

1. Faculty workloads, i.e., 2/3, 3/2, or 3/3 teaching loads interfere with research productivity which, in turn, influences the ability to attract students.
2. Student assistance needs improvement, e.g., assistantship stipends are well below those paid at other universities, and additional tuition waivers are needed. Lack of those resources hinders effective graduate recruiting.
3. The program needs more selective admission criteria.

8.3 Please reflect on program centrality, cost, comparative advantage, demand, and quality. Keeping these factors in mind, please offer your recommendations for program improvement considering each of the following, as appropriate:

- improvements necessary for successful continuation of program operation (if applicable)
- improvements that are not resource intensive, but that are likely to enhance program quality
- improvements that, if resources permit, could help take the program to the next level of prominence

As is the case for the Mass Communication program the Interpersonal Communication track would benefit greatly from additional tenure track faculty resources, student inducements comparable to competitors to enhance recruitment, a faculty workload that will allow for greater focus on the graduate programs, and a focus that distinguishes this program from others.

Section 9 Executive Summary

In one to two pages, please provide your overall impression of the program, emphasizing key aspects of the review. As appropriate, contextualize your assessment in relation to best practices in the discipline of study, graduate education, the broader higher education landscape, and/or industry trends within the field.

Student quality in the NSC's graduate program needs to be improved. Improving student quality will require offering competitive assistantships and increased tuition waivers. The strongest faculty members for the purpose of granting graduate degrees are in the interpersonal communication track but a greater number of students is in the mass communication track. That imbalance leads to student discontent regarding the distribution of course offerings (mostly by mass communication students). The program has the ability to distinguish itself by emphasizing crisis and risk communication, but does not do an adequate job doing so. There was discussion during our visit of a Ph.D. program. While the NSC can distinguish its curriculum from those of other Ph.D. programs in Florida, without teaching loads and student:instructor ratios that will allow for greater faculty productivity and smaller class sizes we do not recommend establishing a Ph.D program at this time.