



UCF Academic Program Review 2012-13 Consultant Graduate Program Review

Program: Communication, M.A. – Mass 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.
Overall, the M.A. program in Mass Communication needs bolstering. Students in the program want an "applied" degree but neither the (1) number of faculty members available to teach nor (2) their scholarly credentials is sufficient to produce a distinguished graduate.

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

More faculty are needed. The undergraduate student-teacher ratio (35:1) is seriously draining resources from the M.A. program. Faculty are now stretched so thin that it is almost impossible to build a truly exemplary program.

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 M.A. program in Mass Communication is overseen by a fine director of graduate studies who is assisted by a talented admin. In many ways, though, the M.A. program in Mass Communication is more a post-B.A. program than a pre-PhD program, with the students moving in the former direction and the faculty in the latter direction.

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

The faculty appear to be giving the M.A. students as much time as they can, but the large undergraduate program is sapping the strength of all involved.

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.

M.A. students seem to be graduating on time (two years), although very few students are writing theses. The M.A. in Mass Communication is thus a course-taking vs. a career-making degree.

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

The M.A. program's excellence will ultimately be determined by the quality of the faculty overseeing it and faculty quality, in turn, will be determined by attracting top-notch scholars to UCF. Right now, faculty quality is higher in Human Communication where student demand is lower. Conversely, more students want an M.A. in Mass Communication but neither the quality nor quantity of faculty in that area is sufficient for them.

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.

Standards guiding admission to the M.A. program in Mass Communication are low and students' final assessments are unclear. The students with whom we met were earnest but not cerebral (although pleased with the education they were getting).

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

Considerable attention should be given to revising admission criteria and student assessment protocols. A weak M.A. program will inevitably become a burden to faculty (who expect more) and to students (who want less).

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:

<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
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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)

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

5.5 Program relationship with alumni

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> 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.

Admission to the M.A. program in Mass Communication (and Human Communication, for that matter) is not particularly selective. Students' GRE scores are extremely low (often less than 1,000), with students being largely recruited from the central Florida area.

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

It is hard to know whether (1) competing market forces, (2) a limited program vision, or (3) an insufficient number of faculty members is responsible for the modest group of M.A. students now enrolled at Nicholson. Making progress on all three fronts is necessary.

Section 6 Curriculum, Course Offerings, and Student Engagement Opportunities

Please evaluate the following:

6.1 Current curriculum's alignment with program goals

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

6.3 Availability and timeliness of required courses

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

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

<i>Please select only one option from the list below:</i>				
<input type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs Improvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/> 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.

Faculty members in Mass Communication are working hard to build a strong M.A. program but there are few of them available to do so. Also, the (theoretical) curriculum the faculty is building may not be the (practical) curriculum that students want.

Recommendations, if any, in the area of curriculum, course offerings, and student engagement opportunities:
The faculty needs to rethink the graduate curriculum in its entirety.

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)

Mass Communication faculty members at Nicholson are similar to those at comparable institutions nationwide but faculty strength in the program's three specializations (ADV, JOUR, RTV) is insufficient to build excellence in any one of them.

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

It is not yet clear what distinguishes the M.A. program in Mass Communication at Nicholson. Faculty strength is currently greatest in Advertising and Public Relations. Given the financial pressures UCF is confronting, one wonders if it wouldn't be best to build on that strength and abstain from building graduate emphases in journalism and RTV.

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

Not a relevant question for the M.A. program in Mass Communication.

Section 8 Analysis and Recommendations

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

(1) A very hard-working faculty that is (2) dedicated to student success.

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

(1) Insufficient number of research-oriented faculty in Mass Communication, (2) lack of clarity on program goals for a sustainable M.A. program, (3) weak pool of potential M.A. students, (4) inadequate student preparation for PhD programs, (5) unclear modes of student assessment.

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

Two improvements are necessary: (1) at least two more faculty members are needed in the Mass Communication area to sustain a viable M.A. program and (2) the program needs a narrower focus or it will become all things to all people and hence nothing to anyone.

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 Nicholson's graduate program is currently inadequate. In addition, goals for the M.A. programs in both Human Communication and Mass Communication need to be rethought. Currently, faculty strength is greatest in Human Communication but the number of M.A. students in that area is lowest. On the Mass Communication side, students want an "applied" masters degree but (1) faculty numbers in Mass Communication and (2) faculty credentials in that area are insufficient to turn out superior M.A. graduates.

The entire Nicholson faculty -- both those in Human Communication and those in Mass Communication -- should give serious attention to what they might achieve **together**. A new kind of M.A. program might be best, one that draws on both sides of the house equally and that produces something distinctive. So, for example, a program that focused exclusively on Corporate/Managerial Communication or Crisis/Risk Communication and nothing else would (1) tap existing faculty strength and (2) be realistic in light of UCF's current financial conditions. Such a program would bring considerable national attention to UCF (because nobody else is doing it) and could increase the credentials of students entering and leaving the program (because quality attracts quality). In short, it is time for Nicholson to rethink itself at the graduate level.