

## **Assessment of Learning Outcomes for Advanced Degree Programs**

### ***“Generic” Student Learning Outcomes***

According to the Graduate Division, in addition to outcomes specific to the field of study, all graduate programs contain the following student learning outcomes:

In general, a student who has successfully completed the graduate degree requirements should be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of the methodology and techniques specific to the field of study.
2. Communicate both orally and in writing at a high level of proficiency in the field of study.
3. Conduct research or produce some other form of creative work.
4. Function as a professional in the discipline.

### ***Masters Programs***

At UHM, there are basically two types of masters programs, thesis and portfolio. However, within any given discipline the purpose of the masters will vary from the highly academic goal of training pre-doctoral students to the more applied goal of providing students with a terminal professional degree. Therefore the type of assessment is necessarily program specific. However, there are some general types of assessment that are carried out uniformly. These include the following:

- Initial Screening
- Knowledge Assessment (examinations, theses, practicums, performances, etc.)
- Culminating Experience (theses, portfolio, project)

### ***PhD Programs***

The traditional concept of doctoral education is the one student, one professor, one research project model. US institutions have recently begun to understand that graduate education should be designed to prepare students for a variety of roles and responsibilities, including the professorate, teaching, industry, government, etc. This involves providing students with opportunities to acquire other skills and experience in addition to research and scholarship.

Regardless of the discipline, there are three essential elements to all Ph.D. programs, each with its own type of assessment.

- Pre Dissertation assessment
  - Initial screening
  - Knowledge assessment including performance in courses, comprehensives and orals.
  - Assessment of ability to plan scholarly activities
- Dissertation research
- Final Assessment - evaluation of the original scholarship including public defense in front of recognized scholars in the discipline.

There is an extensive body of knowledge on doctoral education. The best starting point is probably the Council of Graduate Schools.

Endnotes:

1. Doctoral Education: Preparing for the Future, (1997) by Jules B. LaPidus, CGS
2. Role and Nature of the Doctoral Dissertation, (1991), CGS
  - A. The doctoral dissertation should:
    - i. reveal the student's ability to analyze, interpret and synthesize information;
    - ii. demonstrate the student's knowledge of the literature relating to the project or at least acknowledge prior scholarship on which the dissertation is built;
    - iii. describe the methods and procedures used;
      - (1) present results in a sequential and logical manner; and
      - (2) display the student's ability to discuss fully and coherently the meaning of the results. In the sciences the work must be described in sufficient detail to permit an independent investigator to replicate the results.
  - B. The dissertation is the beginning of one's scholarly work, not its culmination. Dissertation research should provide students with hands-on, directed experience in the primary research methods of the discipline, and should prepare students for the type of research/scholarship that will be expected of them after they receive the Ph.D. degree.