

# Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Summary

## Northern Studies MA

*College of Liberal Arts*

2013-2014

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Note: Northern Studies had seven MA graduates this academic year, but because we included the two from summer 2013 in last years assessment summary, this report includes data from the five fall 2013 and spring 2014 MA graduates.

### 1. Assessment information collected

a) Thesis and project evaluations on all graduates

b) Student self- and program evaluations

Note: in the future we will have comprehensive exam evaluations, as well; we have adopted a new SLOA plan this year.

### 2. Conclusions drawn from the information summarized above

a) The thesis and project evaluations are all strongly positive. Variation appears to represent differences in faculty members' standards/expectations as much as differences in student work

- a. Writing fluency averages 90%
- b. Quality of analysis averages 84%
- c. Research skills average 90%
- d. Quality of the contribution to scholarship in the field averages 98%

It is highly satisfying to know that faculty believe that students are making such strong contributions to the scholarship on northern issues.

b) Students all reported "value added" from their experience in the NORS MA Program.

- a. Eighty percent of the graduates noted improvement in writing skills, some great improvement.
  - i. One student expressed frustration that his writing skills had not improved more.
- b. Students generally expressed confidence that their analytical skills had improved.

- c. Students expressed satisfaction in the development of their research skills.
- d. Students acknowledged accumulation of knowledge and growth in their understanding of a broad spectrum of topics on the north.
- e. Regarding the greatest value, students responded quite individually:
  - i. One especially appreciated being able to complete the full program online.
    - 1. On the other hand, she noted variability in faculty's commitment to online teaching.
  - ii. Another student especially appreciated the program's flexibility, which permitted her to work full time while earning her degree.
  - iii. One student especially appreciated the RAsip that he had at the Rasmuson library through which he learned much and developed marketable skills.
  - iv. Another said he gained confidence in his academic/intellectual ability.
- f. As for strengths of the program, students noted
  - i. flexibility (being able to take classes from many departments and being able to research a wide variety of topics),
  - ii. dedication of faculty to students,
  - iii. the broad range of studies that students may pursue,
  - iv. the program's interdisciplinarity (which prepares students well for life outside academia, one student noted,
  - v. small class sizes.
- g. Finally, when asked about weaknesses of the program, students noted
  - i. Lack of office space for students without TAsips
  - ii. Not all courses are available online
  - iii. Need for more Indigenous faculty and indigenous perspectives presented in classes
  - iv. The program should be more visible within the UA system.

### **3. Curricular changes resulting from conclusions drawn above**

Given that the faculty's evaluations of theses showed the lowest score for quality of analysis, we will encourage those faculty teaching courses our students take and the faculty serving on NORS graduate advisory committees to emphasize analysis in their courses and in the writing of the theses.

Regarding the desire expressed for more Indigenous faculty, NORS relies on classes taught by other departments. Students may take any course in the UA system that

relates to their focuses in the program and research interests, so they do have access to Indigenous faculty. Also, they choose the members of the Graduate Advisory Committees freely.

**4. Identify the faculty members involved in reaching the conclusions drawn above and agreeing upon the curricular changes resulting**

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