

Department of Sociology
Graduate Assessment Plan – Masters Paper Requirement, Fall 2019

In 2017-18, Sociology completed an assessment of our undergraduate Learning Outcome #3. In the fall of 2019, we assessed the Masters Paper requirement for our program. In 2020, we developed a plan to assess the Learning Outcome #2 for our undergraduate program. The undergraduate assessment will be completed in the fall 2020 term.

Assessment report for the Masters Paper requirement

In 2019, an assessment committee in Sociology reviewed our graduate student program requirement for a Masters Paper and the contribution of this requirement to the learning outcomes for the program. This assessment reported to the department that the Masters Paper requirement and student satisfaction with their independent research projects contributed to the following learning outcomes.

The MA paper requirement in the second year of the program helps meet several learning outcomes for the program and builds the foundation for students to engage in independent and original research that contributes to the discipline. Every student asked reported an intention to submit their Masters Paper to an academic journal for publication. Two students out of eleven had already published their project. Students also reported the positive impact of working with their MA Paper advisor to develop original scientific analysis of data (qualitative or quantitative) and report it in a format consistent with that of a peer reviewed journal article. The assessment committee found that the requirement contributed to students' mastery of sociological knowledge (LO 1), proficiency in empirical data analysis (LO 2), independent scientific thinking (LO 3) and offered concrete avenues to work with an advisor to develop and improve their written communication skills (LO 4). In some cases, students who conducted original data collection became familiar for the first time with the ethical issues in research involving human subjects (LO 5). Finally, the requirement that their paper must be completed in a format that is ready for submission for review at a sociological journal contributes to students' professionalization into the discipline of sociology (LO 6).