San Francisco State University – Academic Planning: Assessment

Program Learning Goals Template

** Please see resources on the Academic Planning website

Department Communication Studies (Graduate Program)

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College _____Liberal and Creative Arts__________________________________________________

Guidance from the faculty University Academic Assessment Advisory Committee (UAAAC) for Learning Goals:

Learning objectives should reflect the program’s distinct mission in connection with the university’s broader educational goals, as well as aligning with the individual courses in which they are addressed. They should allow faculty to communicate their expectations, students to reflect on their own growth, and programs to measure and improve their educational results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEVELOPED</th>
<th>DEVELOPING</th>
<th>NEEDS DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>ABSENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning goals are clear and can be accurately assessed</td>
<td>Learning goals are mostly clear; some can be assessed</td>
<td>Learning goals are present but vague; unclear how an evaluator could determine whether goals met</td>
<td>Program learning objectives are absent or incomplete</td>
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List your learning goals prior to this semester.

Prior to the academic year 15/16, the graduate program in Communication Studies did not have formally formulated PLO’s. We did have something that looked like learning goals on our department webpage which were:

Graduate courses vary in character and scope; typically, students will be required to:

1. Locate and read primary sources, i.e., original research studies and theoretical essays.
2. Select, organize and evaluate materials that reflect both the discipline’s historical and cutting-edge scholarship.
3. Identify, analyze and synthesize principles, concepts and theories.
4. Formulate a problem in independent inquiry, gather, record, analyze and report data and conclusions both orally and in writing.

In department meetings last academic year 15/16 we developed an agreed upon mission statement and the graduate faculty started to work on formal PLO’s. We emerged from 15/16 with the following draft of program PLO’s.

Graduates of our program will emphasize social justice and ethical perspectives in their seminars and culminating experiences by

1. reading, evaluating and synthesizing scholarly sources
2. identifying, analyzing and synthesizing principals, concepts and theories
3. demonstrating wisdom in action as they apply communication knowledge and skills in their lives in and outside the academy

This academic year (16/17) we have continued to discuss and refine these initially proposed PLO’s and move them toward ratification and adoption.
Please address all questions. What was the process of revising your program learning goals this semester? How were department faculty members involved? Was it developed in department meetings or other gatherings?

We discussed and refined these draft PLO’s in a meeting where all graduate faculty in the department were invited to participate, and most, if not all faculty were present for the discussion.

What informed your discussions about your new or revised learning goals?

Starting with the initially proposed PLO’s from AY 15/16, we considered among other things how they would be listed when proposing new courses, how easily they could be assessed, and most importantly, how they reflected our intentions for students in the program.

We wanted the PLO’s to be simple and straight forward, but also honor the diversity the interdisciplinary perspectives represented by the faculty and the varying approaches to our discipline in the department.

We wanted social justice and ethical perspectives to run though all of the learning objectives and thus retained these as the preliminary statement that would apply at all levels. We thought it redundant to keep the wording “in seminars and culminating experiences since this seemed a given.

We liked the idea that the PLO’s could broadly reflect three steps in a scholarly process, namely an initial gathering of literature in a literature review, a stage of critical synthesis, and a process of analysis that had a product orientation with an outcome that engaged the student in application and reflection that could reach beyond a scholarly context into everyday lived experience. In terms of “scholarship”, we thought it was important to emphasize that the scholarship students would read in the program would be “primary scholarship” so this was made more specific. We considered words like “praxis” to reflect our desire to have students engage scholarship in “lived experience” but determined that this had connotations that were too specific in subdisciplinary areas of communications studies. We settled instead on a more neutral “local and/or global communities”. We also considered for example the phrase “demonstrating wisdom in action” in the initial draft and determined it had too much of a religious (particularly Buddhist) connotation to be appropriate for program learning outcomes.

What are you new learning goals as of Summer 2017?

Graduates of our program will emphasize social justice and ethical perspectives by:

1. Reading, evaluating and synthesizing primary scholarship.
2. Applying, critiquing, and/or extending communication focused theory and scholarship.
3. Actively engaging in, reflecting upon and analyzing communication processes in their local and/or global communities.

Give that this year you have revised your program learning goals, the next step would take one of them to assess in the academic year 2016-2017. Please let the Associate Dean of Academic Planning know if that is not the case. Thank you!