Master of Sustainable Development Practice Academic Assessment Plan

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
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Office of the Provost

University of Florida

Institutional Assessment

Continuous Quality Enhancement

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Academic Assessment Plan for Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

A. Mission

The Master of Sustainable Development Practice (MDP) Program at the University of Florida provides an interdisciplinary curriculum in the health, natural, social and management sciences through integrated academic, practice and skills training. The curriculum is complemented by the opportunity to specialize in a particular field of interest from the university's diverse departments. The MDP Program is supported by more than 40 core and affiliate faculty from over 7 schools and 20 different departments, centers and research institutions at the University of Florida, drawing in this way, on the University of Florida's considerable depth. The program is committed to helping students understand the multidimensional nature of development challenges, to gain the analytical capacity and tools applicable to development challenges, as well as, to become critical thinkers concerning development process and their implications. The UF MDP Program trains students to become skilled practitioners who are able to:

- Intellectually and culturally address complex sustainable development challenges by working across disciplinary boundaries and bridge scholarship and practice
- Analyze and communicate multi-dimensional development problems (such as poverty, weak governance, and climate vulnerability) at the interface of the environment, health and development.
- Plan, manage and monitor development interventions.
- Acquire the knowledge and skills for assessing and/or managing organizations, staff and teams.

In addition to on campus instruction, student's carry out a capstone, field based training in collaboration with partners in regions of Africa, Latin America or other part of the world. Their practicum field and research experience is designed to help students build strong networks with practitioners and to apply their skills to real development challenges spearhead by partner, host organizations.

Utilizing the approaches indicated, the UF MDP program prepares graduates to take integrated approaches to advancing economic opportunities, public health, political empowerment and environmental conservation in Latin America, Africa and other regions of the world. Graduates assume positions that require development professionals in global nonprofits, private enterprises, governments, policy think tanks, NGOs and grassroots' organizations, depending on their professional interests and aspirations.

Due to its institutional home in the Center for Latin American Studies and the Center for African Studies and its collaborative links to faculty representing diverse departments, the UF MDP is fully aligned with the Mission and Institutional Purpose of the University of Florida and the Mission of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and SLO Assessment Measures of the University of Florida, Master of Sustainable Development Practice Program were submitted to and approved by the UF Institutional Assessment System (May 2012). A form has been prepared that is used by each student's supervisory committee during the final defense to assess whether each outcome has been achieved at a level commensurate with the degree. The assessment focuses on three types of outcomes: Knowledge, Skills and Professional Behavior, all vital for development practitioners. The outline and content of the form is provided here, followed by the Assessment Rubric that is used to carry out the assessment:

MDP Student Learning Outcomes Assessment - Evaluation by the Supervisory Committee

Student: _____   **Date:** _____

Degree: Master of Sustainable Development Practice

Milestone:

□ **Non-Thesis Master's Project Defense**

Knowledge Outcome:
Thorough understanding of complex interdisciplinary dimensions of sustainable development and the capacity to communicate in a clear manner the challenges associated with this endeavor.

Has the student achieved this outcome at a level commensurate with the degree?

□ Yes   Basis: Evaluation by the Supervisory Committee of (1) the student's Program
□ No   of Study and (2) his or her performance during the non-thesis project
□ Partially   http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/Curriculum%20Overview%20MDP-%202011.pdf
               http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/curriculum.html
               http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/learning.html

Comment _____

Skills Outcome:

Competence in the tasks related to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives, and the planning/utilization of participatory methodologies.

Has the student achieved this outcome at a level commensurate with the degree?

□ Yes   Basis: Evaluation by the Supervisory Committee of (1) the student's Program
□ No   of Study and (2) his or her performance during the realization of the field
□ Partially   practicum and the non-thesis project defense using the rubric at
                http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/Curriculum%20Overview%20MDP-
                %202011.pdf
                http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/curriculum.html
                http://www.africa.ufl.edu/mdp/about/summerfield.html

Comment _____

Professional Behavior Outcome:

Interacting with professional peers, partners and participants in development initiatives with honesty, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and effective communication.

Has the student achieved this outcome at a level commensurate with the degree?

□ Yes   Basis: Consistent adherence during the degree program to the University of
□ No   Florida's Honor Code, based on observation over the duration of the student's
□ Partially   degree program by the Supervisory Committee members of the student's
                professional behavior during class activities, seminars, the field practicum and
                the non-thesis project defense.

Comment _____

_____

Signatures of Supervisory Committee Members:

_____

Committee Chair (Type or print name legibly)   (Sign)   (Date)

_____

Committee Member (Type or print name legibly)   (Sign)   (Date)

_____

Committee Member (Type or print name legibly)   (Sign)   (Date

Student Learning Outcomes - Assessment Rubric

	Student Learning Outcome	Method of Assessment
Knowledge Outcome	Students will identify, describe and explain complex interdisciplinary dimensions of sustainable development, and the capacity to communicate in a clear manner the challenges associated with this endeavor.	MDP students complete a non-thesis project report demonstrating knowledge of sustainable development related to their particular focus and field practicum. MDP students give a formal oral public presentation and attend a private defense of their report. The final report and presentation are evaluated and approved by a committee composed of a committee chair and at least one other committee member (at least one of whom must be core faculty of MDP) who complete and sign the learning objectives assessment form as part of the defense.
Skills Outcome	Students will identify and define tasks related to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives, and the planning and utilization of participatory methodologies.	MDP students complete a field practicum proposal and receive approval of it from their committee chair prior to summer field work/research. MDP students complete a field practicum of 10-12 weeks to carry out their approved practicum project, utilizing appropriate methodologies. MDP students present their research and participate in a poster session, sponsored by the MDP Program, and/or CAS/LAS, as well as completing a non-thesis project report.

Professional Behavior Outcome	Students will interact with professional peers, partners and participants in development initiatives with honesty, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and effective communication.	MDP students participate and display professional behavior, and teamwork skills in class activities, program-related workshops, seminars and development practitioner events, based on observation by their supervisory committee members. MDP students effectively communicate their report and field practicum research and findings in a formal and professional event open to UF faculty, staff, and students, evaluated by their supervisory committee members. MDP students complete their field practicum working successfully alongside local partners during their field practicum, in accordance with the terms of reference defined by the host institution/organization.

C. Research

Although the MDP Program Degree is non-thesis, students are required to carry out a capstone, field practicum project during the summer between their first and second years. The FP project includes research and data collection, depending on the specific project implemented by each student.

Students take part in a preparatory course prior to the summer field practicum. The primary deliverable of this course is a well-prepared proposal reflecting the student's thorough knowledge of the context in which he/she will be working, a strong grasp of the conceptual underpinnings of their work, clarity with regards to the methodological approaches that will be implemented and an understanding of the analytical procedures that will be utilized to process the information collected. Each student's field practicum proposal must have an internal logic linking objectives, methodologies and projected results.

The field practicum proposals must be approved by each student's supervisory committee and must be endorsed by the host organization with which the student will be working. In this way, the field practicum responds to identify needs of the host organization and in this sense is an invaluable service provided by the Program to diverse initiatives throughout the world.

The results of the field practicum experience is presented in a poster session held at the end of the fall semester and is documented in a comprehensive way in the definitive field practicum final report. The final report must be presented to the public prior to the final defense with the supervisory committee. Copies of the report are also made available to the corresponding host organization.

D. Assessment Timeline

The following table indicates the timeline for assessing knowledge, skills and professional behavior outcomes.

MDP Program   College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Assessment SLOs	Assessment 1	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Enter more as needed
Knowledge				
Students will identify, describe and explain complex interdisciplinary dimensions of sustainable development, and the capacity to communicate in a clear manner the challenges associated with this endeavor.	Poster development and participation in session	Public presentation and private defense	Knowledge demonstrated in committee-approved non-thesis final report	SLO form signed
	Performance summer field practicum			
Skills				
Students will identify and define tasks related to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives, and the planning and utilization of participatory methodologies.	Field practicum proposal content approved by committee	Skills and methodologies applied during summer field practicum (minimum of 10 weeks)	Demonstration of skills in poster session participation	Competency skills demonstrated in committee approved non-thesis final report
	Participation in special workshops throughout program	Skills demonstrated in Final presentation and defense		
Professional Behavior				
Students will interact with professional peers, partners and participants in development initiatives	Adherence to UF's honor code throughout	Student's professional behavior during class	Effective and professional communication of research	Student's professional behavior during the

with honesty, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and effective communication.	program	activities, workshops and seminars	and findings in public presentation and poster session	capstone field practicum

E. Assessment Cycle

The UF MDP is subjected to diverse assessments on a continuous basis. The Curriculum Committee (CC) meets once each semester to assess issues related to the curriculum, taking into account student evaluations, course availability and the degree to which desired competencies are being developed by the students during their enrolment in the program. The MDP Steering Committee (SC) also meets each semester to deliberate on issues related to program quality and development. Also, mid-program consultations are made with each student to discuss their individual progress and to receive feedback on the effectiveness and quality of the program. At the end of each year, graduating students are consulted individually through the application of an anonymous survey and in a group meeting with the Management Committee (MC) to discuss in broad terms student perceptions and concerns. Student feedback (SF) is encouraged and appreciated, since it provides invaluable insights on steps that might be taken to improve program quality. Finally, as a member of the MDP Global Association (GA), the UF MDP will participate in a periodic fashion in a process of self-evaluation.

Assessment Cycle for:

Master of Sustainable Development Practice Program   College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Analysis and Interpretation: MC, CC, SC, Program Director (PD) and Coordinator (PC)

Improvement Actions: Completed by PD, PC and MC

Dissemination: Completed by PD, PC

Year	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16

SLOs						
Content Knowledge						
Students will identify, describe and explain complex interdisciplinary dimensions of sustainable development, and the capacity to communicate in a clear manner the challenges associated with this endeavor.	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA
Skills						
Students will identify and define tasks related to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives, and the planning and utilization of participatory methodologies.	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA	CC, SC, MC, SF, GA
Professional Behavior						
Students will interact with professional peers, partners and participants in development initiatives with honesty, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and effective communication.	MC, SF	MC, SF	MC, SF	MC, SF	MC, SF	MC, SF

F. Measurement Tools

Direct assessments:

- Approved final study plan: Students must submit a study plan, approved and signed by the committee chair and by the student.

- Grading rubrics: Please see Annex I for an example of a core course grading rubric.

- Field practicum proposal: Students prepare for their field practicum and develop a comprehensive proposal in the course *Sustainable Development Practice Seminar*. This proposal is assessed and approved by each students supervisory committee and is endorsed by the host organization.

- Successful completion of the field practicum: Each student is required to carry out a field practicum following the guidelines document.

- Field practicum poster development: Students prepare and present a poster at the MDP Student Poster Session toward the end of the Fall semester in their 2nd academic year. The poster is a deliverable of the course, *Conservation and Development Practicum.* Posters must meet acceptable standards in the course. During the poster session, each poster is carefully assessed by a group of judges made up of core and affiliate faculty utilizing an assessment rubric and criteria.

- Practicum report draft: The first draft of the report is developed during the Fall semester following the student's field practicum. This is the central exercise of the course *Conservation and Development Practicum*. The supervisory committee of each student provides guidance during the preparation of these final reports.

- Final presentation and defense: Students must schedule a date and time in collaboration with their supervisory committee for the presentation and defense of their project. After the public presentation of approximately 30 minutes in length, the public engages in questions and discussion during a 10 to 15 minute period. Following this time period, the student meets with his/her supervisory committee to carry out the final defense, which includes the completion of the MDP learning outcomes assessment form and review of their student file.

- Final approved field practicum report: The supervisory committee chair must approve the final report at least two weeks prior to the final presentation/defense. A copy of the final approved definitive report is provided to the MDP Office.

- Exit survey: All graduating students are asked to complete an exit survey to evaluate their program experience. The exit survey is provided in Annex II as one measurement tool utilized by the MDP Program.

Indirect assessments:

- Initial meeting: During the first semester, incoming students are required to meet with the graduate coordinator to initially assess their learning objectives and program of study.

- Mid-point meeting: At the start their 2nd academic year, each student is required to meet with the director, program coordinator, graduate coordinator and supervisory committee chair to review his/her study plan, discuss the SLOs, and ensure graduation requirements are met. A report from the meeting is written and circulated to the student and supervisory committee members.

- Evaluation meeting: In the final term, graduating students have an opportunity to meet with the program management committee, which consists of the director, program coordinator, graduate coordinator and core faculty.

G. Assessment Oversight

Name	Department Affiliation	Email Address	Phone Number
Glenn Galloway	MDP Director, Latin American Studies	ggalloway@latam.ufl.edu	352-392-3292
Marianne Schmink	MDP Graduate Coordinator, Faculty in Latin American Studies	Schmink@latam.ufl.edu	352-273-4724
Cynthia Tarter	MDP Program Coordinator	ctarter@ufl.edu	352-392-3293

Annex I

Evaluation of the core course: Global Health and Development I (Note: All MDP courses have evaluation rubrics developed by the corresponding professor)

Exercises (4 total) 20%
Critical questions (5 total) 15%
Mid-term exam (take home) 25%
Final group project
Presentation 10%
Written 25%
Class participation 5%

Exercises.
These are short assignments during the early part of the course designed to apply the concepts and skills introduced in the earlier class sessions. Assignments are due before class on the week that they are listed.

Critical questions.
Students will prepare three critical questions based on the empirical readings for that week's class (don't use simple methodological readings for this). Questions should reflect issues that the article raises that you would like to discuss with colleagues. They shouldn't be factual or testing questions, but instead probing and exploring questions. Be prepared to read your questions in class as a way to build the discussion. Assignments are due before class and must be based on that week's reading.

Mid-term exam.
This is designed for you to test your understanding of the basic public health analytical methods, understand their application by others, and apply them to new situations. The exam is NOT a group project and must be completed independently.

Final group project.
Groups will conduct a situation analysis for a specific country, using primary data from Demographic and Health Surveys, published literature, and reports to assess health threats and identify underlying social, economic, ecological and institutional factors contributing to them. The analysis revolves around each of the health-related challenges addressed in the last part of the course. Students will work in a group to prepare a group presentation and written report. The grade will include an individual component based on peer-assessment.

Class participation.
Consistent with the spirit of graduate education and the interactive nature of development practice, students are expected to participate fully in every class session. Participation depends upon completing all readings before each class.

Annex II

Exit survey for UF MDP students (survey monkey, online and anonymous)

1. In what program learning opportunities did you participate?
(Check all that apply)

☐ MDP Practitioner Forum
☐ Center for African Studies Seminars (for ex: Baraza)
☐ Center for Latin American Seminars/Conferences
☐ TCD Program Seminars/Tropilunch
☐ Special MDP-sponsored Workshops (for example: Gender, Peacebuilding)

What suggestions do you have to improve the MDP Practitioner Forum and student participation in MDP seminars?
_____
_____

2. Please choose the rating to the right that best reflects your assessment and provide comments in the space below.

Rate your perception of the overall quality of the MDP degree program
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate your perception of the quality of the faculty associated with the MDP degree program
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the advising and support you received from the MDP Program in helping you in securing your field practicum placement
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the advising you received from the MDP Program related to program policy, field practicum funding requirements, graduation, and all academic-related support
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the quality of mentoring and advising you received from your committee chair.
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the quality of advising that you received from your other supervisory committee members
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the quality of the graduate support activities (workshops/seminars and others) provided by the program
☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Rate the quality of career advising that you received.

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Please provide comments on any of the aspects included in this section. We would value any specific suggestions you might have:

_____
_____

3. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:

Course offerings were adequate for my needs and interests
☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

The overall curriculum was appropriate for the MDP Program
☐Strongly Agree ☐Agree ☐Somewhat Agree ☐Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree

Please feel free to indicate specific feedback and suggestions you have for improving the curriculum:

_____
_____

4. Please answer the following three questions:

Do you feel that field practicum was useful to you in providing the skills and knowledge you will require in the future?

☐yes ☐No ☐ Somewhat

Would you recommend the MDP Program to your friends and colleagues?

☐Yes ☐No ☐ Yes, but with some reservation

Would you be willing to help us promote the program?

☐Yes ☐No

Please comment on your field practicum experience or one any other aspect of the questions above:

_____
_____
_____

5. Have you been successful in identifying an employment opportunity or lead(s)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please share how you identified this opportunity or lead(s):

_____
_____

_____

6. Do you aspire to continue with your education in the future?

☐Yes ☐No

Comments:
_____
_____

7. The purpose of this final section is to provide you the opportunity to share any additional comments and/or recommendations for enhancing the quality of the MDP Program. Any suggestions you may have to improve this questionnaire would be highly appreciated.
_____
_____
_____
_____

Many thanks for taking the time to take part in this evaluation. The results of this evaluation will be compiled and shared with the Management Committee prior to the evaluative meeting we will have with you and your fellow students. In part, the results will help to guide the format of this meeting.

Figure 1. University of Florida Graduate/Professional Program Assessment Plan Review Rubric

Related resources are found at http://www.aa.assessment.edu

Program: Year:

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	**Partially Met**	**Not Met**	
Mission Statement	Mission statement is articulated clearly.				
	The program mission clearly supports the College and University missions, and includes specific statements describing how it supports these missions.				
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Assessment Measures	SLOs are stated clearly.				
	SLOs focus on demonstration of student learning.				
	SLOs are measurable.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLO.				
Research	Research expectations for the program are clear, concise, and appropriate for the discipline.				
Assessment Map	The Assessment Map indicates the times in the program where the SLOs are assessed and measured.				
	The Assessment Map identifies the assessments used for each SLO.				
Assessment Cycle	The assessment cycle is clear.				
	All student learning outcomes are measured.				
	Data is collected at least once in the cycle.				
	The cycle includes a date or time period for data analysis and interpretation.				
	The cycle includes a date for planning improvement actions based on the data analysis.				
	The cycle includes a date for dissemination of results to the appropriate stakeholders.				

Component	Criterion	Rating			Comments
		Met	Partially Met	Not Met	
Measurement Tools	Measurement tools are described clearly and concisely.				
	Measurements are appropriate for the SLOs.				
	Methods and procedures reflect an appropriate balance of direct and indirect methods.				
	The report presents examples of at least one measurement tool.				
Assessment Oversight	Appropriate personnel (coordinator, committee, etc.) charged with assessment responsibilities are identified				