M.S. in Interdisciplinary Ecology Academic Assessment Plan 2012-2013

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
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Office of the Provost

University of Florida

Institutional Assessment

Continuous Quality Enhancement

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2012-2013 Academic Assessment Plan for M.S. in Interdisciplinary Ecology

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

A. Mission

The mission of the School of Natural Resources and Environment is to provide interdisciplinary environmental degree programs with university-wide scope that provide future leaders with integrated thinking about natural and social systems and make them ready to overcome barriers to sustainable management of natural resources and the environment with reliable knowledge and good judgment. The M.S. degree program challenges students to garner and integrate an understanding of the dynamics and interplay of both natural and human systems in a holistic manner. The School of Natural Resources and Environment supports the missions of the college and university to serve the nation's and state's critical needs by contributing well-qualified and broadly diverse citizenry prepared to lead and participate in the workforce through graduate education and to expand our understanding of the natural world, the intellect and the senses through graduate student research.

B. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

SLO Type	Student Learning Outcome	Assessment Method	Degree Delivery
Knowledge	Identify the components, processes, and interactions of the social-ecological system	1) Evaluation of the student's Program of Study by the Supervisory Committee and the School using a faculty-developed rubric; 2) Evaluation during the thesis or project defense by the Supervisory Committee using a faculty-developed rubric.	Campus
Skills	Apply the scientific method to generate new knowledge	1) Evaluation of the student's Program of Study by the Supervisory Committee and the School using a faculty-developed rubric; 2) Evaluation during the thesis or project defense by the Supervisory Committee using a faculty-developed rubric.	Campus
Professional Behavior	Interact with professional peers with honesty, ethical behavior, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, and effective communication	1) Consistent adherence to the University's Honor Code; 2) Faculty evaluation of professional behavior during class activities, seminars, research work, and thesis or project defense. These behaviors will be evaluated over the duration of the student's degree program by the Supervisory Committee and assessed according to a faculty-developed rubric at the time of the thesis or project defense.	Campus

C. Research

The M.S. degree program challenges students to understand both natural and human dynamics in a holistic manner and to foster integration of human activities with natural resources and the environment. The M.S. degree program in Interdisciplinary Ecology promotes interdisciplinary thinking in natural resources and the environment by combining (1) coursework in the basic and applied science of ecology, related social sciences, and sustainability with (2) competence in an approved program in a traditional field of study. The former is achieved with a core-course and distribution requirement. The latter is achieved by additional coursework in an individually tailored plan of study developed in conjunction with and approved by the major adviser and supervisory committee. Each student is expected to develop a research proposal that provides not only the rationale for their work, but also a detailed description of the methodological and analytical details necessary to carry out the work and analyze the data collected. The thesis itself is a written culmination of the effort and represents an original scientific contribution that has been successfully defended.

D. Assessment Timeline

M.S. in Interdisciplinary Ecology College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

Assessment SLOs	Annual Evaluation	Thesis or Project Defense
Knowledge		
#1	X	X
Skills		
#2	X	X
Professional Behavior		
#3	X	X

E. Assessment Cycle

Assessment Cycle for:
M.S. in Interdisciplinary Ecology — College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Analysis and Interpretation: June 2014 and June 2017
Program Modifications: Annually following data compilation/inspection and August 2014 and 2017 following analysis
Dissemination: September 2014 and September 2017

Year / SLOs	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17
Content Knowledge						
#1	D	D	A	D	D	A
Skills						
#2	D	D	A	D	D	A
Professional Behavior						
#3	D	D	A	D	D	A

D = data compiled; A = compiled data analyzed

F. Measurement Tools

Students pursuing the M.S. degree in Interdisciplinary Ecology are, by nature of the program, engaged in a wide variety of learning activities and research endeavors. Thus, there is not a common suite of courses or even a specific area of knowledge that can be used to assess Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). In the Interdisciplinary Ecology M.S. degree program, a graduate student's supervisory committee tailors his/her plan of study specifically to the educational needs, research plans and career aspirations of the individual student. It is the responsibility of the major adviser and supervisory committee to regularly evaluate the academic progress of the student and assess the student's performance relative to professional standards, as judged collectively by the supervisory committee.

The achievement of program requirements as well as outcomes for knowledge, skills and professional behavior for each M.S. student are determined by the major adviser and supervisory committee during the program of study and at the conclusion of the thesis defense based on a faculty-developed rubric. The same form and scoring system are employed for each student to record and report the professional judgment of the supervisory committee, with respect to each of the aforementioned SLOs.

The Coordinator of Academic Programs collects and collates the SLO assessments from each M.S. student and the resultant data are entered into a digital database for subsequent analyses by the Graduate Coordinator and Director of the School of Natural Resources and Environment. To assess academic performance of the Interdisciplinary Ecology M.S. program, SLO scores for all students will be subject to regular trend analyses. Results will be summarized and reported to the appropriate academic administrators in accordance with the aforementioned Assessment Cycle.

G. Assessment Oversight

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