

Indirect Evidence for Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) Assessment in the UCSC Graduate Student Survey

The UCSC Graduate Student Survey is administered biannually as a web-based questionnaire to all enrolled UCSC graduate students. Designed to provide comprehensive coverage of graduate students' training and experiences, the survey asks students to evaluate different aspects of their graduate program. The last Graduate Student Survey was administered in Spring 2013 and had a 50% response rate. If you would like to design and add survey questions specific to your PLOs in the Spring 2015 survey, please contact the IRAPS office.¹

The Graduate Student Survey includes a series of questions that could be used as "indirect" evidence for program learning outcomes (PLOs).² Responses from *students who have completed their coursework* are selected for this analysis to assess students' proficiencies after receiving the bulk of their formal training. For example, for a PLO such as "Ph.D. students will demonstrate an ability to conduct independent research," the following survey item could be used as indirect evidence: "Rate the quality of your preparation to conduct independent research/scholarship." Other survey items that could be used include: Write proposals to obtain funding; Write scholarly articles for publication; Adhere to research and/or professional ethics.

The survey questions provide a measure of students' self-assessment of their preparation based on the training and experience in their department to do the following:³

- Conduct independent research/scholarship
- Write proposals to obtain funding
- Write scholarly articles for publication
- Manage multiple projects and tasks at once
- Make presentation to academic audiences
- Adhere to research and/or professional ethics
- Teach undergraduate or graduate students
- Make presentation to non-academic audiences
- Work with people of varied educational levels

¹ If you need additional information and/or would like to add new survey questions, please contact Dr. Anna Sher, Assistant Director for Assessment, at asher@ucsc.edu or by phone 9-4302.

² For more information, please see page 20 of the *UCSC Guidelines on Development and Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes* <http://planning.ucsc.edu/irps/assessment/UCSCguidelines/>.

³ Response options are: Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Very Poor, Not applicable.

- Work with people from diverse backgrounds
- Find an academic job following graduation
- Find a non-academic job following graduation

The survey results are provided to the departments in a comparative format. Here is an example of students in a particular program rating their skills.

Rate the quality of your preparation to . . .		Ph.D. Program	UCSC Division
Conduct independent research/scholarship	Excellent/good	67%	78%
	Fair/poor	33%	22%
Total N		29	69

TA Training

The Graduate Student Survey also asks questions about students' experience as Teaching Assistants that might be useful when measuring teaching-related PLOs. For instance, students are asked to evaluate the extent to which their program provided TAs with resources and preparation for effective teaching (*too little, about right, too much*) in the following areas:

- Prepare TAs to assist faculty in teaching students discipline-specific knowledge and skills
- Prepare TAs to deal with students who challenge their authority and/or expertise
- Prepare TAs to respond to insensitive or offensive remarks/questions in their classes
- Prepare TAs to negotiate conflict in their classes
- Provide TAs with resources/"best practices" for teaching students of diverse backgrounds and abilities
- Provide TAs with information about resources and campus services for undergraduates seeking academic and other assistance
- Prepare TAs for dealing with academic dishonesty/cheating in their classes.

The survey results are provided to the departments in a comparative format. Here is an example of students in a particular program rating their preparation.

Your graduate program tried to...		Ph.D. Program	UCSC Division
Prepare TAs to assist faculty in teaching students discipline-specific knowledge and skills	Too little	17%	30%
	About right	83%	70%
	Too much	0%	0%
Total N		22	79