

# Assessment Cycle 2018-2019

## Homeland Security MS

**Program College: Arts and Sciences**

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**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

**College of Arts and Sciences' Mission.** The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequaled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

**Department of Criminal Justice, History, and Social Sciences.** The Criminal Justice, History, and Social Sciences Department at Northwestern State University is dedicated to the development of students for roles in academic, leadership, professional, and research careers in the challenging fields of criminal justice, history, public safety, law, and public service. Utilizing transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research and service the department produces graduates equipped to be productive members of society and a driving force in the economic development and improvement of the overall quality of life in the region. The department delivers Bachelor of Arts degrees in Criminal Justice and History and Bachelor of Science degrees in Unified Public Safety Administration with concentrations in Law Enforcement Administration, Fire and Emergency Medical Services Administration, Emergency Management Administration, and Public Facilities Management. Certificate programs in Pre-Law and Paralegal Studies and Public Policy and Administration are also available in addition to a Pre-law and Paralegal Studies concentration and minor. The department

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also delivers a Master of Science degree in Homeland Security, and a Post-Master's Certificate in Global Security and Intelligence.

**Homeland Security Program Mission Statement:** From the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to the current National Security Strategy, students will gain a distinct appreciation for the complexities of homeland security organizations, leadership, policies, ethics, and challenges, through the review of pertinent literature, critical thinking, research, and reflective analysis and evaluation. The Master's Degree in Homeland Security is unique in that it pushes students to develop plausible solutions to the inexorable national, international, and transnational, threats currently challenging global security through the innovative delivery of transformative student learning experiences which prepare our graduates for life and career success in this ever-growing occupational field.

**Purpose:** The master's program will prepare students to engage in research from a cross-national and global perspective. It prepares students for entry positions in government and the private sector in which the ability to comprehend, influence, and respond to government policy from a national, international, and global security perspective is increasingly critical. It will also prepare interested students for the pursuit of further / additional advanced degrees in Homeland Security, Political Science, Strategic Leadership, or International Relations at other institutions.

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the MA/MS program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator;
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the program faculty;
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core graduate courses if required (show cause);
- (5) The Program Coordinator, in consultation with the HS Advisory Committee, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.

**Note:** The Homeland Security Degree program assessment leverages five Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) expressing what the student will know, be able to do, or be able to demonstrate when they complete the program. Every course within the program is nested in a student's learning outcome attainment. However, HS 5000, HS 5050 and HS 5200 are foundational, and as such have been explicitly addressed in the first two SLOs due to the magnitude of the effect they have on a student's overall success in the program. The data derived from these courses are especially helpful in the overall program design. Due to changes instituted in the program of study beginning Fall 2018 we will no longer be separating our discussion of results for HS 5000 and HS 5050. The new program of study requires that every incoming student take both HS 5000 and HS

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5050 thus providing a more robust pool of data and ensuring that we have 100% assessment of all incoming students in both courses.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. First and second-semester students will be able to describe the historical evolution and context of early American domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges.**

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus objectives.

HS 5000: International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime, and Covert Ops  
**(Foundational Course)**

HS 5050: Homeland Security **(Foundational Course)**

HS 5650: International Security and Globalization **(Support Course)**

### Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)

On an annual basis, students enrolled in HS 5000, and HS 5050, required courses for HS Master's students, and HS 5650, a support course, will be administered their initial course exam containing a module of questions taken from a bank developed by a faculty committee and designed to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security from early America through current international and globalization challenges. Seventy-five percent (75%) of enrolled students will be able to describe a basic understanding by scoring 70% or higher on the exam.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target met.** 76% of students achieved 70% or higher

**AY 2018-2019 HS 5000 Target met.** 85% of students achieved 70% or higher

**AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met.** 79% of students achieved 70% or higher

**AY 2018-2019 HS 5050 Target met.** 85% of students achieved 70% or higher

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. In HS 5000, 76% of students achieved a 70% or higher on the exam. In HS 5050, 79% of students achieved a 70% or higher on the exam. For AY 2018-2019 85% of students met the target of scoring 70% or higher on 1.1, an improvement over the previous assessment and achieving the target for this measure. This improvement supports the changes instituted in AY 2017-2018: Faculty redesigned and restructured the course modules on the development of Homeland Security and increased the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. These changes resulted in an 8% increase in the number of students who scored 70% on the measure for this assessment period.

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**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, for AY 2019-2020, faculty plan to expand student's access to the latest research in the field and leverage the experience that new faculty bring to the program. The department plans to keep the target to 80% of the student achieving a 70% or better on the metrics as well as move forward with the plan to streamline the assessment process.

### **Measure 1.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)**

Students will demonstrate their critical thinking and problem-solving skills through scenario-driven exercises in which they are required to analyze and develop a response to a homeland security situation. In this response, they must create a plan that contains relevant, justifiable, feasible, and actionable recommendations based on the information presented. Eighty (80%) of the students will score 13.6 (85%) or higher (max is 16) on the Critical Thinking – Problem Solving Rubric

**Findings:** Target not met.

**AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target met.** 72% scored 12.8 or higher on the rubric

**AY 2018-2019 Target not met.** 78% scored 13.6 or higher on the rubric

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the students scored a 12.8 or higher on the rubric. The target in AY 2017-2018 was that 70% of students would score 12.8 or higher on the rubric. The AY 2018-2019 results for SLO 1 measure 1.2 was 78% of students earning a score of 13.6 (85%) or higher on the rubric, a failure to meet the updated target. For the current assessment faculty raised the target score from 12.8 (80%) to 13.6 (85%) and the achievement rate to 80% from 75% based upon AY 2017-2018 data. This change was part of the continuous improvement model and students failed to reach the new goal. This is not unexpected given earlier experiences with raising targets and goals for measures. Based upon the findings in the previous assessment, and to enhance student opportunities to achieve the new target the course materials were augmented with the inclusion of activities designed to facilitate an earlier development of the objective detachment needed for this type of exercise.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, in AY 2019-2020 faculty will continue to update course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with two new faculty members will support improvement goals. Faculty will maintain the current course design and keep the target score at 85%, keeping the target percentage of students achieving this score at 80%. Faculty will also be monitoring the effects of the program redesign that is described below.

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### Measure 1.3. (Direct – Knowledge / Ability)

At the end of each semester, students enrolled in HS 5000 and HS 5050, foundational required courses for all HS Master's students, will be administered their final course exam. A module of questions taken from a bank developed by a faculty and designed to evaluate the student's knowledge and understanding of the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security are included. Ninety (90%) of enrolled students will demonstrate a fundamental knowledge by scoring 90% or higher on the exam.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 HS 5000 Target not met.** 78% of students scored 90% or higher

**AY 2018-2019 HS 5000 Target met.** 90% of students achieved 90% or higher

**AY 2017-2018 HS 5050 Target met.** 98% of students scored 90% or higher

**AY 2018-2019 HS 5050 Target met.** 92% of students achieved 90% or higher

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met in HS 5050 and not met in HS 5000. In HS 5000, 78% of students scored 90% or higher. In HS 5050, 98% of students scored 90% or higher. For AY 2018-2019 targets were met for SLO 1 measure 1.3. This supports the changes that were implemented for the current assessment which included: Redesign and restructure the course modules in HS 5000 on the development of Homeland Security and increase the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrate reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhance the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required. These modifications led to measurable change in reaching the goals for AY 2018-2019 and resulted in a 6% increase in the number of students who scored 90% on the measure. This demonstrates that the planned restructuring of the course and the implementation of revised and improved modules to increase exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism have been effective and have demonstrably improved student success on this SLO. However, faculty have yet to meet the target for this measure in HS 5000.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, in AY 2019-2020 faculty will increase the exposure of students to the foundational concepts, theories, strategies, and challenges of Homeland Security by increasing the course modules depth of coverage in these areas. Faculty will also be monitoring the effects of the program redesign that is described below.

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**SLO 2. Third-semester students will know the role and functions of the various agencies comprising DHS and the U.S. intelligence agencies in assessing foreign, domestic, and cyber threats, what counterterrorism strategies are in use to thwart terrorist aggression and the constitutional issues associated with these strategies.**

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5100: Venue and Event Security

HS 5150: Domestic Terrorism Prevention and Analysis

HS 5300: Constitutional Issues and Global Security

HS 5400: Network Security and Cyberterrorism

HS 5750: Homeland Security Policy Seminar

### **Measure: 2.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

On an annual basis, a sample number of research papers and/or projects from the courses above will be evaluated by a panel of faculty members, using a standardized research paper rubric (attached). The papers and/or projects will be evaluated to determine if students can demonstrate a basic knowledge of fundamental principles of homeland security policy, domestic and international trends in terrorism, the evolving nature of cyberspace, and how the homeland security associated laws affect the operations of law enforcement and intelligence operations. At least 80% of students sampled will score 90% or higher on the evaluation.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target not met.** 78% of students scored 90% or higher

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 82% of students achieved 90% or higher

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was not met. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of students scored 90% or higher on the evaluation. For SLO 2 measure 2.1 the target was met for AY 2019-2019, 82% of student's papers scored 90% or higher on the rubric. For AY 2017-2018 only 78% of papers sampled achieved this goal. The achievement of this goal can be tied to the changes made to HS 5000 and HS 5050 and the implementation of these changes. Faculty have seen a steady improvement in the overall quality of student's written work as the changes in timing and content of HS 5200 have been fully implemented.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement in AY 2019-2020, faculty will keep in place the current target of 80% of students achieving 90% or better scores on the evaluation rubric which will enable continuing analysis of the impact of the program redesign that went into effect in Fall of 2018. The students currently in these classes are all those who started under the new framework and this will give faculty the ability to evaluate the overall impact of these changes.

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### **Measure: 2.2. (Indirect – Attitude)**

At the end of each semester, the program will sample students with a survey, which will state: "In my homeland security courses I was provided a master's level of understanding of homeland security policy, strategy, threat assessment and trends, associated law and procedures, and how the various agencies interact across the spectrum of operations." Respondents will be able to respond with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. At least 85% of students will respond that they strongly agree or agree with the statement.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** 87% of respondents agreed with statements

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 89% of respondents agreed with statements

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of students agreed with the statements on the survey. Student responses continue to be positive regarding the content of their courses, and this has increased slightly for AY 2018-2019. The percentage of responses in the strongly agree or agree categories have risen from 87% in AY 2017-2018 to 89% for AY 2018-2019. As this is a continually evolving process, in its second year of application assessing the strength of the measure is somewhat problematic. These changes are based upon data from the AY 2017-2018 assessment and will continue to change based upon AY 2018-2019 data and feedback that is received.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, the semester surveys will continue to be utilized in a course-specific model which will give faculty more granular detail on the effects of the improvement of content. The department will be raising the target to 90% of students agree with the statements.

**SLO 3. Fourth-semester students will demonstrate that they understand the current policies and procedures to mitigate, prevent and respond to a disaster, analyze and implement regimens for safety and risk reduction, the ethics of care and compassionate leadership, and the mechanisms for measuring all-hazards threat and recovery.**

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5200: Research Design and Methods in Homeland Security

HS 5350: Executive Leadership, Diplomacy, and Ethics in Homeland Security

HS 5500: Counterterrorism, Intel Analysis, and Advanced Criminal Investigations HS

5550: Advanced Cyber-forensics and Cyberwarfare Issues

HS 5600: Managing Chaotic Organizations

HS 5700: Peace Studies, Conflict Transformation, and Global Security

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### Measure 3.1. (Indirect – Knowledge / Attitude)

At the end of their fourth semester, the department will sample students with a performance survey. One question on this survey states: "The Homeland Security program at NSU has enabled me to conduct risk assessments, implement mitigations measures, navigate leadership challenges, and know the foundational concepts of the all-hazards approach to the emergency management process." Respondents will be able to respond with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. At least 85% of students will respond that they agree or strongly agree with the statement.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** 85% of students agreed with statements

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 86% of respondents agreed with statements

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018, the target was met. Eighty-five percent of students agreed with the statements on the survey. For SLO 3 measure 3.1 AY 2018-2019, the target was met with 86% of the students agreeing with the evaluative statements. Student responses continue to be positive regarding the content of their courses and their overall assessment of the program. The percentage of responses in the strongly agree or agree categories has not changed significantly from AY 2017-2018 to AY 2018-2019. As discussed in the preceding analysis of SLO 2 measure 2.2 there are difficulties in comparing across academic assessments due to the evolution of the questions being asked. These changes are based upon data from the AY 2017-2018 assessment.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, surveys will be utilized and going forward the stabilization of the content of the survey will allow more robust comparisons of the results. The department will be raising the target to 90% of students agree with the statements.

### Measure 3.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability)

Two or more faculty members will review position paper submissions by students using Critical Thinking – Problem Solving Rubric (16 point) (attached), in which they are required to analyze and respond to some aspect of Homeland Security, Policy, Strategy, or Leadership. The paper requires all students to demonstrate the capacity to critically analyze information in an objective manner and engage in the development, assessment, determination, compilation, and selection of a potential solution which best supports their position. At least 85% of projects, papers, and presentations evaluated will score 90% (14.4/16) or higher.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** 90% of papers scored 13.6 (85%) or higher on rubric

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 92% of papers scored 14.4 (90%) or higher on rubric

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**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. Ninety percent (90%) of papers scored a 13.6 or higher on the rubric. The target for AY 2017-2018 was at least 85% of projects, papers, and presentations evaluated would score 85% or higher. For SLO 3 measure 3.2 the target was met for AY 2018-2019. Based upon the decision from 2017-2018 no changes were made to the student learning outcome or measure, but faculty increased the target score from 85% (13.6) to 90% (14.4) out of 16. The department did, however, make significant changes to the courses in the program of study based on the findings from our AY 2016-2017. These changes were supported by the AY 2017-2018 assessment. The program-wide changes that have been put into effect, from the modification of course content to the systematic utilization of evaluation rubrics have resulted in students learning in greater detail and demonstrating a better grasp of the writing process and the expectations of the program faculty. The utility of the rubrics to enhance student's writing process is significant. Empowering students with the tools necessary to be successful is at the core of continuous improvement goals. The modifications described above resulted in a great success rate for students in addressing the requirements of this SLO and measure.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, in AY 2019-2020, faculty will continue to update course materials with the most current research and this in conjunction with two new faculty members will support improvement goals.

**SLO 4. Students will demonstrate proficiency in evaluating and analyzing Homeland Security research and being able to frame their own research questions.**

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5200: Research Design and Methods in Homeland Security

HS 5900: Graduate Seminar for Thesis Research and Writing Methods in HS

### **Measure 4.1. (Direct – Knowledge)**

Eighty percent (80%) of students taking the comprehensive examination will demonstrate proficiency on Part I of the exam, which requires students to analyze and critique two foundational and standardized questions.

**The evaluation is based on a skill assessment Comprehensive Exam Rubric (attached).** The rubric consists of five skill assessment areas, which faculty grading the exam will score from zero (low proficiency/fail) to three (Accomplished proficiency). A combined score of 20 (minimum of 10 points per question) and above on the rubric will demonstrate student proficiency on this part of the comprehensive exam.

The Graduate Program Coordinator evaluates and reports scores. Students need a

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minimum score of 30 (10 points per question) to pass the three remaining questions focused on their specific areas of interest.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** 81% achieved average rubric score of 11.9 per question

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 83% achieved average rubric score of 11.9 per question

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. Eighty-one percent (81%) of students taking the exam averaged 11.9 rubric score per question. For SLO 4 measure 4.1 the target was met for AY 2018-2019 with 83% of students achieving and average rubric score of 11.9. This was accomplished by students with the expansion of the measure to include all questions on the examination. This improvement can be attributed primarily to the revisions to the HS 5200 course enacted after the results of the 2016-2017 assessment, as well as the inclusion of the various rubrics that are now standard for all courses in the program, enhancing students' understanding of expectations of the faculty for each stage of the program. Overall scores are satisfactory with rubric values for individual questions ranging from 10 to 13 with an average of 11.9 (Comprehensive Examination Rubric attached) As mentioned above, the HS program has undergone extensive revision over the previous two years. This includes both the content and assessment processes for the general exam as well as the pool of faculty available to serve as advisors and evaluators. The department will continue to evaluate the content contained on the comprehensive examination as it further expands the specialized topics in the second portion of the examination.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, in AY 2019-2020, the department will raise the target to 85% of students achieving a rubric score of 11.9 or better.

### **Measure 4.2. (Direct - Knowledge)**

Ninety percent (90%) of thesis and non-thesis proposals will demonstrate student proficiency in developing research questions about political-security phenomena that directly relate to and expand upon an existing theoretical body of knowledge.

At the end of each thesis and non-thesis proposal, committee members will score the proposal using the Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric (see attachment). The rubric consists of twelve skill assessment items, which the thesis committee members will score from low proficiency to high proficiency. A cumulative score of 125 or more will demonstrate proficiency.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** 100% of proposals have a rubric score of at least 140

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** 100% of proposals have a rubric score of at least 140

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. One hundred percent (100%) of the

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proposals had a score of at least 140. For AY 2018-2019 the target for SLO 4 measure 4.2 was met with all proposals attaining a rubric score of 140 points out of 200. The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of proposals and improved student learning in the program, a benefit of a data-driven approach. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and, most importantly, the final paper in the course is the student's proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu, or Final Project. This change has brought the course in line with common practices for methods courses in other disciplines and has greatly enhanced the experience and the final research project for students.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement in AY 2019-2020, faculty will maintain the target and refine the measures and rubric.

### **Measure 4.3. (Direct - Knowledge)**

Ninety percent (90%) of student thesis and or non-thesis papers will use the most appropriate methodology for the research question/hypotheses addressed. At the end of each thesis, Paper-in-Lieu, or Project, committee members will score the submission utilizing the Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric (see attachment). The rubric consists of twelve skill assessment items, which the thesis committee members will score from low proficiency to highly proficient. A score of 125 or higher will demonstrate proficiency. The Program Coordinator will evaluate and report scores.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met. 100%** Average rubric score 175 or higher

**AY 2018-2019 Target met. 100%** Average rubric score 180 or higher

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. An average rubric score of 175 or higher was reached 100%. For AY 2018-2019 the target for SLO 4 measure 4.3 was met with all papers attaining a rubric score of 180 points or higher out of 200. This increase of 5 points overall for the papers continue to come from improvement in the values attained for the rubric sections: "claims supported by research or experience"; "credible research sources"; and, "Grammar, Spelling, Organization, and Terminology". The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data and supported by AY 2017-2018 findings have a significant impact on the quality of papers and improved student learning in the program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and, and, most importantly, the final paper in the course is the student's proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu, or Final Project. These improvements allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement in AY 2019-2020, faculty will maintain the target and refine the measures and rubric.

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### **SLO 5. Students will demonstrate appropriate communication skills.**

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

HS 5900: Graduate Seminar for Thesis Research and Writing Methods in HS.

#### **Measure 5.1. (Direct - Skill)**

Eighty percent (80%) of students will demonstrate proficient written communication skills. Student thesis and non-thesis research papers will be used to evaluate their written communication skills by rating the quality of the writing on the Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric (see attachment). Eight components will be used to measure written communications skills on a scale from low proficiency to high proficiency. Proficiency will be demonstrated by a combined score of at least 125 on sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric.

**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** An average rubric score of 124

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** An average rubric score of 125

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. An average rubric score of 124 was reached. For AY 2018-2019 the target for SLO 5 measure 5.1 was met with all papers attaining a rubric score of 125 points out of a possible 155. This increase for the rubric scores continues to come from improvement in the values attained for the rubric sections: “claims supported by research or experience”; “credible research sources”; and, “Grammar, Spelling, Organization, and Terminology”. The modifications made to the HS 5200 course based upon AY 2016-2017 data have had a significant impact on the quality of papers and improved student learning in the program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and, most importantly, the final paper in the course is student’s proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu, or Final Project. These improvements allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement, in AY 2019-2020, the department will maintain the target and refine the measures and rubric.

#### **Measure 5.2. (Direct - Knowledge)**

Eighty percent (80%) of graduates will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication skills. Thesis and non-thesis defenses and project presentations will be used to evaluate students' oral communication skills by rating the quality of the presentations on Thesis – Non-Thesis Assessment Rubric (see attachment). Sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric will also measure oral communication skills on a scale of low proficiency to high proficiency. Proficiency will be demonstrated by a combined score of at least 125 on sections 1-4, 7 - 9, and 11 of the rubric.

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**Findings:** Target met.

**AY 2017-2018 Target met.** An average rubric score of 124

**AY 2018-2019 Target met.** An average rubric score of 126

**Analysis:** In AY 2017-2018 the target was met. An average rubric score of 124 was achieved. For AY 2018-2019 the target for SLO 5 measure 5.2 was met with all presentations attaining an average rubric score of 126 points out of a possible 155. This increase for the presentations came largely from effective use of information and a better overall grasp of the process that stems from improvement in the rubric sections: “claims supported by research or experience”; “credible research sources”; and, “Grammar, Spelling, Organization and Terminology”, increasing the professionalism of the students. Again, being able to focus on the process of writing and preparing a presentation has been a very positive change. The ability of the instructor to focus more on the process than finding topics and research questions allowed a more fruitful collaboration with the students, increasing the student’s confidence in their understanding of their subject matter and producing a more positive experience for them.

**Decision:** Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-2019 results, and to drive improvement in AY 2019-2020, faculty will be continuing to refine this SLO with the goal for refining it to more closely focus on the completion of the thesis/PIL/Project process to enhance the goals of continuous improvement in the program. As this is still evolving, faculty will keep the target and measure the same for one more assessment cycle.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results

For AY 2018-2019, the Homeland Security Master’s Degree program assessment committee examined 12 measures for five Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Targets for eleven of the measures were met. Decisions that were implemented for AY 2018-2019 are:

- Program-wide changes that have been implemented, specifically the redesign of the program of study to reflect data driven decisions about required and elective offerings. from the modification of course content to the systematic utilization of evaluation rubrics have resulted in students learning in greater detail and demonstrating a better grasp of the writing process and the expectations of the program faculty. The utility of the rubrics to enhance student’s writing process is significant. Empowering students with the tools necessary to be successful is at the core of continuous improvement goals.
- Student’s achievement of targets for SLO’s have improved across the assessment, demonstrating that our modifications to the courses have been effective.
- The biggest change is a redesign of the program to restructure the

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required/elective matrix to ensure that all students are exposed to courses that have been identified by students as key to their success.

- Previously several of these courses were chosen based upon the student's prior educational program but the program will now require them for all incoming students.
- Faculty have changed the hours required for each track in the program. The thesis/paper in lieu track is 30 hours and the coursework only option is now 36 hours.
- Redesigned the course modules on the development of Homeland Security as a concept and increased the exposure of the students to the current and historical responses to terrorism; integrated reviews of the key learning objectives throughout the course; enhanced the literature contained in the reading list for the courses to more fully immerse the students in the contextual knowledge required.
- Redesigned the course modules to increase the exposure of the students to the context in which the Department of Homeland Security was established and the ongoing debate that is taking place in America concerning the threat of terrorist attack (s) on the US homeland. Expanded the module addressing the historical evolution and context of early America domestic homeland security challenges from the establishment of the Department in 2002 through today's international and globalization challenges was also implemented.
- Based upon findings in the previous assessment of the briefing note assignments the course materials were augmented with the inclusion of activities designed to facilitate an earlier development of the objective detachment needed for this type of exercise.
- Course materials were modified to extend and diversify the types of scenarios presented to the students to tax their skills and encourage more imaginative approaches to the situations presented.
- The modifications made to the HS 5200, a research methods course, based upon AY 2017-2018 data have had a significant impact on the quality of proposals and improved student learning in our program. These changes included an expansion of the literature examined in the course and most importantly the final paper in the course is the student's proposal for their thesis, Paper in Lieu, or Final Project.
- These changes in HS 5200 allow the student/teacher interactions during the thesis/PIL/Project completion phase of the program to focus more on the actual writing process rather than formulating a research question or project area as was the case before the institution of these changes.

## Assessment Cycle 2018-2019

### **Plan of Action Moving Forward**

Looking ahead to AY 2019-2020, and in keeping with our continuous improvement model, faculty have enacted significant changes in the admission process, seeking to address the discrepancies between academic success for applicants and impediments to their admission. It has been found in the assessments that students who have been admitted provisionally, largely due to low GRE scores, often possess the qualities necessary to succeed in a graduate program. Faculty will be closely monitoring the progress of these new cohorts through continued assessment.

Based on the AY 2018-2019 assessment report faculty have made changes to the program and will be changing and updating several student learning outcomes and their attendant measures. These changes were made based upon our findings in the AY 2016-2017 and AY 2017-2018 assessments and to bring our program in line with comparable programs at peer institutions. Faculty will continue piloting two hybrid courses, HS 5000 and HS 5050 will again be offered this fall as distance learning courses with the availability of WebEx interaction by online-only students, faculty are using these courses as a vehicle to test the impact of more traditional style student/student and student/instructor interaction on student learning outcomes.

Changes to student learning outcomes will continue to be primarily concentrated on the target scores and desired percentage of students achieving these goals. Based on the current and prior results faculty believe that outcomes are addressing the area's most important to student success. As a key component of continuous improvement model faculty will continue surveying students in every course to ensure that goals for their learning are being met.