

**FCBE Assurance of Learning “Closing the Loop” Committee Report
Ph.D. Degree Program**

Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

**Fogelman College of Business and Economics
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This report provides a summary of the experiences gained, lessons learned, and recommendations for future improvement for the Ph.D. degree program in Business Administration in the Fogelman College of Business and Economics. In addition, this report details specific findings, conclusions, recommendations, and comments. All data used by this committee can be found on the FCBE Assessment website: <http://www.fcbeassessment.net>. The committee was given a general charge as follows:

General Charge to FCBE “Close the Loop” Committees

1. Review the assessment rubrics carefully for the degree program to assure a thorough knowledge of the goals and objectives established by faculty for the degree program.
2. Review data analysis and graphic representation for each objective to determine the degree that reasonable expectations were met. State the reason for your finding. If not met, what is needed to increase the likelihood that the objective will be met during a subsequent assessment—delete the objective, revise the objective wording, add specific assignments in courses, change in prerequisites, suggest a support activity, and so forth?
3. Include an appropriate statement for each objective to reflect findings that support your review comments so that a third reader can understand your reasoning and intentions.
4. Include specific review recommendations and/or comments for each learning goal for the rubric.
5. After all assessment data for the degree program have been reviewed. The committee should develop a team report in narrative form to summarize findings and conclusions. Be specific and relate conclusions and recommendations to specific findings.
6. Discuss the entire process with appropriate PhD faculty to assure input and that your recommendations represent PhD faculty.

Outcome recommendations:

The committee recommends that faculty and students be encouraged to meet a high standard of achievement and not merely focus on completing requirements on a checklist. College efforts to reward faculty for excellence in journal publications are a step in the right direction. The committee recommends that this recognition be extended in some form to doctoral students. Presentations at regional and local conferences should be used to meet objectives related to students' communication skills. Presentations at national and international conferences should be used to meet objectives related to quality of work and visibility. In all cases objectives need to be reviewed to ensure that the requirement emphasizes an assessment of quality and not just performing some particular action such as making a presentation.

Process recommendations:

Each objective needs to be reviewed and, if necessary, rewritten to state that satisfactory or good performance is expected, not just completion of an assignment or presentation. Objectives that are necessarily accomplished if a student graduates (such as objective 4 for Goal 3: Successful defense of a dissertation.) need to be eliminated or clarified. The committee recommends consideration of having separate objectives for the written and oral comprehensive examinations.

Summary of Goal-specific recommendations:

Goal 1:

1. Objective 1 needs to be rephrased (see above), to include consideration of a quality dimension regarding evaluation of completed paper.
2. Objective 2 needs insertion of a quality score on performance of theoretical questions on the comps.
3. Objective 3 needs to be rephrased to delete “national conference proceedings” component. Tie possible receipt of summer student research funding or assistantship to accomplishment of this Objective.
4. Rephrase Objective 4 to include evaluation of presentations at local, national, and international conferences.
5. Objective 5. Delete. This is implied by the degree completion.

Goal 2:

6. Objective 1 needs to be changed to include a quality evaluation for methodology section of comprehensive exam for each student.
7. Objective 2 needs to be rephrased to eliminate “or national conference” since Objective 3 is focused on conference paper presentation.
8. Objective 3 needs to be rephrased to include evaluation of student presentations at local, national as well as international conferences.
9. Delete Objective 4. This is implied by the degree completion.

Goal 3:

10. Objective 1 needs to be rephrased (see above), to include consideration of a quality dimension regarding evaluation of completed paper.
11. Eliminate “or national conference proceedings” from Objective 2 since Objective 3 deals with conference presentations.
12. Objective 3 needs to be rephrased to include evaluation of student presentations at local, national as well as international conferences.
13. Delete Objective 4. This is implied by the degree completion.

Goal 4:

14. Satisfactory progress. Suggest continued focus on maintaining current performance standard and continuing to improve.

Goal 5:

15. Correct assessment results reporting on website.
16. Consider finding a mechanism to develop norms where and how Objective 1 performance is being achieved. Current achievement levels of 81% Exemplary is acceptable.
17. Same comment is applicable for Objective 2.
18. For Goal 5, Objective 3, work is needed in this area to support and improve student presentation skills on comprehensive exams and PhD research seminars. Suggestions include increasing presentation opportunities and feedback to help students prepare to think and present ideas in face-to-face settings under exam pressure situations.
19. For Goal 5, Objective 3, we also recommend splitting oral from written and making these two different objectives to help tease out where students need to focus their learning for improving their skills.

GOAL 1: Students will demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their areas of specialization.

Objective 1: Present a completed paper as part of student's coursework requirements.

Mean: 7.4

Rubric: 81% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating of 7.4 and 81% are both exemplary and should be maintained and strengthened further. Completion of a research paper devoid of some quality dimension weakens performance measures of this Objective. (For example, one faculty in a student's discipline may require a 5-page research paper with oral presentation, and another faculty may require a complete paper without presentation, but including the standard components of a research paper. These two faculty members are also likely to assign different course grade weights to the course paper.) A more meaningful way to reduce outcome quality rating variance is to suggest a 'range' percentage of course grading tied to a semester research paper within department and across FCBE disciplines.

Objective 2: Complete questions on theoretical topics from comprehensive exam.

Mean: 7.18

Rubric: 77% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating and percentage reporting exemplary performance are in the lower range of the exemplary rating scale (7 to 9). Completion of the relevant theoretical questions does not imply competence (that is, a "passing score"). Recommend changing "Complete" to "Complete and pass" to strengthen quality assessment of this Objective. This suggested change should strengthen achievement score ratings on Objectives 3, 4, and 5.

Objective 3: Publish a manuscript in peer reviewed journal or national conference proceedings.

Mean: 6.82

Rubric: 74% Exemplary

Findings: The 6.82 mean rating is a "high" good, and is less than the 74% "low" exemplary. The gap may be due to information asymmetry or the quality rating gap between publishing in a peer-review outlet and a conference proceeding. Suggest incorporating a quality dimension to strengthen measurement and consistent rating of this Objective accomplishment across disciplines. Conference proceedings, with very rare exceptions, command little intellectual respect these days. Delete "national conference proceedings". Re-phrase Objective as "Publish a manuscript at or before graduation in a "B or better" rated peer reviewed journal in the student's discipline." The student's major professor or advisor should monitor accomplishment of this Objective to raise the quality outcome and assign correct assessment scores.

Objective 4: Present a paper at national conference.

Mean: 7.63

Rubric: 88% Exemplary

Findings: The 7.63 mean rating and 88% overall exemplary rating may suggest that this rubric is not precise enough to reflect what is intended to measure. These scores are, however both in the “exemplary” range and continuance that strengthen achievement of Objective 4 is recommended.

Objective 5: Successful final defense of a dissertation

Mean: 8.22

Rubric: 100% Exemplary

Findings: Both scores are exemplary. The gap between the mean and rubric seems to indicate some ambiguities in what is being measured or how it is to be assessed. This Objective is not providing any meaningful information suitable for driving continuous quality outcome measures and improvements.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Objective 1 needs to be rephrased (see above), especially regarding incorporation of a quality dimension.
- Objective 2 needs insertion of a quality score on performance of theoretical questions on the comps. Accomplishing this should help sharpen measurement and strengthen attainment of Objectives 3 and 4.
- Objective 3 needs strengthening by deletion of “national conference proceedings. Tie possible receipt of summer student Research funding or assistantship to accomplishment of this Objective.
- Objective 4 needs to be strengthened by implementation of recommended changes to Objectives 1, 2, and 3.
- Objective 5. Delete. This is implied by the degree graduation.

Goal 2: Students will master analytical/methodological skills needed to evaluate and conduct research in their areas of specialization.

Objective 1: Complete analytical/ methodological questions from students' comprehensive exams

Mean: 7.35

Rubric: 75% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating is 7.35 and 75% of assessment results fall in the exemplary category. This appears to be a strong measurement of how effectively students obtain and use analytical/methodological skills as reflected in their comprehensive exams and the exemplary results are above minimum standards. The objective should be revised to require successful completion.

Objective 2: Publish a manuscript in peer-reviewed journal or national conference proceedings

Mean: 6.9

Rubric: 72% Exemplary

Findings: The rating mean is 6.9 and 72% of assessment results fall in the exemplary category. A majority of students are rated exemplary and the mean is almost 7 out of 9.

Objective 3: Present a paper at a national conference.

Mean: 7.63

Rubric: 83% Exemplary

Findings: While the average and exemplary rating are relatively high for objective 3 but there still is room for improvement.,

Objective 4: Successful final defense of a dissertation.

Mean: 8.2

Rubric: 100% Exemplary

Findings: Although the average for this objective is 8.2, there is a total 100% exemplary in all three categories of 7, 8 and 9.

Goal 2 Conclusions:

Based on an overall assessment of the four objectives it appears that some of our students are in need of improvement in analytical/methodological skills, particularly in presenting and communicating effectively their research endeavors in a professional manner. Furthermore, the new initiatives in FCBE suggest the need for publishing in high-quality journals and for improved communication and confidence in professional interactions between our students and the Memphis

business community as well as their participation and interactions in professional conferences.

Recommendations:

- Assess and document students analytical/methodology skills in all the areas of concentration and core courses taken in their discipline.
- Reward both faculty and PhD students who collaborate on research published in top journals in concert with current initiatives in the FCBE promoting and rewarding high-quality research and publication.
- Strongly encourage PhD students to present at least one paper at local, regional, national and international conferences in their field of study.
- Strongly encourage PhD students to begin developing their dissertation topics very early in the program and continuously revise and revamp those topics throughout the program.

GOAL 3: Students will demonstrate ability to design and conduct original research in his or her chosen fields of specialization.

Objective 1: Present a completed paper in research seminar to faculty

Mean: 7.64

Rubric: 87% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating of 7.64 and 87% combined exemplary results suggest that there is widespread assignment of research projects to PhD students as well as the pervasive use of research seminars as a medium through which to present the students' work. However, the rubric metric as phrased seems somewhat ambiguous in that it isn't clear from the data whether the rating is given for completion (i.e., check the box) of an activity, is an assessment of the quality of the research paper and presentation, or some combination of the tasks by the raters. The metric needs to be re-phrased to communicate exactly what the evaluation tasks should be. The performance level is acceptable and should be maintained.

Objective 2: Publish a manuscript in peer-reviewed journal or national conference proceedings.

Mean: 6.74

Rubric: 67% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating and percentage assessment results suggest that this benchmark may reflect a higher level of difficulty for the PhD students, as the results are below the minimum acceptable level of 70%. A partial explanation for this result may come from variability across the departments in the level of emphasis placed on PhD students publishing manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals prior to or as they graduate. A perceptible shift in the dissertation model used across dept. Ph.D. concentrations from a 5-chapter model to an essay-type dissertation model is discernible in the FCBE and would possibly provide optimism for increases in this score in the future. Improvements in this metric would require increased emphasis on this activity through the coursework cycle as well as during (in addition to) the dissertation stage.

Objective 3: Present a paper at a national conference.

Mean: 7.58

Rubric: 88% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating of 7.58 and overall exemplary rating of 88% suggests that this performance metric is well within the capabilities of our PhD students. Future improvements may be potentially be made along the lines of increasing the quantity of papers presented at national conferences or to monitor the number of

journal manuscripts arising from papers initially presented at national conferences.

Objective 4: Successful defense of a dissertation.

Mean: 8.16

Rubric: 98% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating of 8.16 and overall exemplary rating of 98% suggests that this rubric is not precise enough to deliver value in assessing the learning goal of demonstrating ability to design and conduct original research by PhD students. Since the assessment is conducted on PhD students who are graduating, by definition everyone will have successfully defended a dissertation. The ambiguity in the rubric is a lack of specificity about whether the 1-9 scale applies to the quality of the dissertation research or to the “check the box” activity-based measure of “did they complete a dissertation?” This rubric needs to be re-specified, eliminated or replaced with a more meaningful measure.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The phrasing of the rubric for Goal 3, objective 1 needs adjustment to specify whether the evaluator is supposed to rate the quality of the presented research paper by the student or some other type of evaluative task. The distribution of the data for this measure suggests some variability in how the evaluators carried out the task. It is recommended that this particular objective be re-phrased to specify more clearly the evaluation task required.
- Both objective 2 & objective 3 for Goal 3 seem to be appropriate as measures of publication activity by the Ph.D. graduates. Although the overall Ph.D. program performance for objective 2(Goal 3) did not achieve the desired 70% level, continued emphasis by all Ph.D. concentrations on manuscript publication should help improve this mark. It is recommended that all Ph.D. concentrations be asked to continue their emphasis on student publication activity, both journal manuscript and national conference paper.
- For Goal 3, objective 4 – the sample of Ph.D. students used to provide the data consists of Graduating Ph.D. students. Consequently, a measure asking whether a dissertation was successfully defended provides very little useful information. It is recommended that the Ph.D. Sub-Council consider removing this particular objective.
- All PhD concentrations need to continue emphasis on student publications to increase performance level on objectives 2 & 3.

GOAL 4: Students will be able to teach college-level courses in their areas of concentration.

Objective 1: Complete instruction of assigned college course or classes within course.

Mean: 7.81

Rubric: 94% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating is 7.81, and 94% of assessment results are in the exemplary category. Only 6% of assessment results are in the good and fair categories. These results indicate that this appears to be a very strong measurement of how students complete instruction of assigned courses and classes within a course.

Objective 2: Assess student teaching evaluations for each course taught by a Ph.D. student.

Mean: 7.70

Rubric: 93% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating is 7.70 and 93% of assessment results fall in the exemplary category. Only 7% of assessment results are in the good and fair categories. Hence, the results indicate that this is a very strong measurement of assessment of student teaching evaluations for each course taught by a doctoral student.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- For Goal 4, the two objectives are achieved through teaching courses or classes within a course and by assessing student teaching evaluations. Both objectives have very high percentages of scores in the exemplary rating categories. Consequently, the focus should be on maintaining this high standard and on continuous improvement.

Goal 5: Students will be able to communicate the results of their research in a clear and concise manner.

Objective 1: Evaluate written and oral presentations from student's coursework.

Mean: 7.50

Rubric: 81% Exemplary

Findings: The mean rating is 7.50 and 81% of assessment results fall in the exemplary category. This appears to be a strong measurement of how students communicate, i.e., through written and oral presentations, and the exemplary results are above minimum standards. The focus should be on following continuous improvement processes to maintain and improve the rating level, raising it through mechanisms that improve students presentation skills. In addition to continuous improvement, the idea of measuring this objective across a variety of courses for students with different programs of study could mean incomparable measurements/assessments are made across students. One recommendation is to consider finding a mechanism to norm where and how this objective is being evaluated.

Objective 2: Evaluate oral presentation in research seminar.

Mean: 7.63

Rubric: 84% Exemplary

Findings: This is another example of excellent results through the student's research seminars. The rating mean is 7.63 and 84% of assessment results fall in the exemplary category. Although most students are rated exemplary, there are three levels of exemplary ratings. The focus should be on following continuous improvement processes to maintain and improve the rating level, raising it through mechanisms that improve students presentation skills.

Objective 3: Evaluate oral and written presentations given in comprehensive exams.

Mean: 7.51

Rubric: 64% Exemplary

Findings: The objective is challenging and appropriate for PhD students. Based on the rating mean of 7.51 and 64% assessment results fall in the exemplary category, work is needed in this area to support and improve student presentation skills on comprehensive exams. For future improvement to meet the challenging objective, seminars may consider including adding more presentation opportunities to help students prepare to think and present ideas in face-to-face settings. When reviewing the assessment outcomes for this objective there are some miss labeled levels, e.g., Good 5 at 3%, Good 7 at 2%, Good 8 at 3%, Good 9 at 15%, Exemplary 5 at 3%, and Exemplary 6 at 10%. When reporting the above Rubric percentage Exemplary, the values for the legitimate Exemplary 7, 8, 9 categories data was used.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- For Goal 5, the three objectives in Goal 5 are achieved through PhD core courses or events, i.e., in their courses, research seminars, and comprehensive exams. All Objectives 1 and 2 have received high marks in the assessment results, while Objective 3 needs improvement. For Objectives 1 and 2, the focus should be on continuous improvement to maintain and improve on the excellent assessment results.
- For Goal 5, Objective 1, in addition to continuous improvement, the idea of measuring this objective across a variety of courses for students with different programs of study could mean incomparable measurements/assessments are made across students. One recommendation is to consider finding a mechanism to norm where and how this objective is being evaluated.
- For Goal 5, Objective 3, work is needed in this area to support and improve student presentation skills on comprehensive exams and PhD research seminars may consider including adding more presentation opportunities and feedback to help students prepare to think and present ideas in face-to-face settings under exam pressure situations.
- For Goal 5, Objective 3, the reporting inconsistencies should be addressed. It appears the assessment outcomes for this objective have some mis-labeled levels values (e.g., Good 5 at 3%, Good 7 at 2%, Good 8 at 3%, Good 9 at 15%, Exemplary 5 at 3%, and Exemplary 6 at 10%).
- For Goal 5, Objective 3, we recommend determining whether activities in coursework or in seminars can help prepare students better for the stress and tension of comprehensive exams.
- For Goal 5, Objective 3, we also recommend splitting oral from written and making these two different objectives to help tease out where students need to focus their learning for improving their skills.

Degree Program:**Ph.D.**

Goal	Objective	Recommendation	Implementation
1. Students will demonstrate a detailed knowledge of their areas of specialization	1. Present a completed paper as part of student's coursework requirements. 2. Complete questions on theoretical topics from comprehensive exam. 3. Publish a manuscript in peer reviewed journal or national conference proceedings. 4. Present a paper at a national conference. 5. Successful final defense of a dissertation.	1. Rephrase to include a quality dimension regarding evaluation of paper. 2. Insert requirement for quality score on performance on theoretical questions on comps. 3. Delete "national conference proceedings" component, since Objective 4 deals with conference presentations. Tie possible receipt of summer research funding or assistantship to accomplishment of this Objective. 4. Rephrase to include evaluation of presentations at local, national, and international conferences. 5. Delete – redundant since sample consists of graduated Ph.D.s	

Goal	Objective	Recommendation	Implementation
<p>2. Students will master analytical / methodological skills needed to evaluate and conduct research in their areas of specialization</p>	<p>1. Complete analytical / methodological questions from students' comprehensive exams.</p> <p>2. Publish a manuscript in peer-reviewed journal or national conference.</p> <p>3. Present a paper at a national conference.</p> <p>4. Successful final defense of a dissertation</p>	<p>6. Rephrase to include a quality dimension for performance on methodology section of comprehensive exam.</p> <p>7. Delete "national conference proceedings" component, since Objective 3 deals with conference presentations.</p> <p>8. Rephrase to include evaluation of student presentations at local, national as well as international conferences.</p> <p>9. Delete. Redundant since sample consists of graduated Ph.D.s.</p>	

Goal	Objective	Recommendation	Implementation
<p>3. Students will demonstrate ability to design and conduct original research in his or her chosen fields of specialization.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present a completed paper in research seminar to faculty. 2. Publish a manuscript in peer-reviewed journal or national conference proceedings. 3. Present a paper at a national conference. 4. Successful defense of a dissertation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Rephrase to include consideration of a quality dimension regarding evaluation of completed paper. 11. Delete “national conference proceedings” component, since Objective 3 deals with conference presentations. 12. Rephrase to include evaluation of student presentations at local, national as well as international conferences. 13. Delete. Redundant since sample consists of graduated Ph.D.s. 	

Goal	Objective	Recommendation	Implementation
4. Students will be able to teach college-level courses in their areas of specialization.	1. Complete instruction of assigned college course or classes with course. 2. Assess student teaching evaluations for each course taught by a Ph.D. student.	14. Satisfactory progress. Suggest continued focus on maintaining current performance standard and continuing to improve.	

Goal	Objective	Recommendation	Implementation
<p>5. Students will be able to communicate results of their research in a clear and concise manner.</p>	<p>1. Evaluate written and oral presentations from student's coursework.</p> <p>2. Evaluate oral presentation in research seminar.</p> <p>3. Evaluate oral and written presentations given in comprehensive exams.</p>	<p>15. Correct assessment results reporting on website.</p> <p>16. Develop norms on where and how Objective 1 performance is being achieved. Current achievement level of 81% is acceptable.</p> <p>17. Same recommendation. Current achievement level of 84% is acceptable.</p> <p>18. Find ways to support and improve student presentation skills in comprehensive exams. Increase presentation opportunities and feedback to help students prepare to think and present ideas in face-to-face settings under exam pressure situations.</p> <p>19. General: Develop separate objectives for written & oral presentation skills.</p>	