

Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
Horticulture Graduate Program

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Executive Summary (full report available upon request)

Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
M.Ag., M.S., Ph.D. (Crop Science, Plant Science, Food Science, Environmental Science)	Total assessed	8 (All graduate students in Horticulture)
	• comprehensive exams	3
	• theses, formal or informal reports, and creative components	1
	• periodically meetings with all graduate students	8
	• exit interview	0
	• alumni surveys	5
• external review by CSREES	--	

Analysis and Findings

The Graduate Assessment Coordinator determines the number and outcome of comprehensive exams, and the number of theses, formal or informal reports, and creative components successfully completed by graduate students. In addition, the number of refereed journal articles, experiment station bulletins, professional papers, abstracts, professional presentations, and related scholarly activities by graduate students are tabulated. The Graduate Coordinator periodically meets with all graduate students to provide and receive information on program assessment. Students are asked to provide candid, mid-program impressions of their opportunities and progress toward educational goals, and to make suggestions to improve the assessment process and the degree program. Graduating students are requested to complete an exit interview. The Department participates in alumni surveys and periodically undergoes an external review by CSREES, a unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Scholarship and Related Activities

<i>Exams</i>	<u>Number</u>
Preliminary	2
Qualifying	0
Final	1
 <i>Degree Option Reports</i>	
Thesis	1
Formal Report	0
Informal Report	0
Creative Component	0
 <i>Publications in Print</i>	
Refereed Journal Articles	5
Expt. Sta. Bulletins	0
Professional Papers	1
Abstracts	2
 <i>Other Forms of Scholarship</i>	
Web Page Development	0
USGA Report	1
 <i>Professional Presentations</i>	
Local	5
Regional	1
National	1
International	0

<i>Exit Interviews</i>	0
<i>Student Awards, Scholarships, Fellowships, Honorary Societies</i>	
Local	1
Regional	0
National	0

Additional Assessment Activities and Outcomes

Alumni Survey: In January 2003, the Office of University Assessment conducted an alumni survey of graduates in calendar years 1997 and 2001. Eight graduates were targeted and five responded. Alumni were asked 15 common questions and nine developed by the Department of Horticulture & LA. A summary of the survey follows. All of the respondents are employed full-time and only one position was not directly related to the area of graduate study. All alumni indicated that their graduate program prepared them very well for their current position. Twenty percent were very satisfied with the over-all educational experience at OSU, 60% were satisfied, and 20% were neutral. Weaknesses of the graduate program were limited hands-on labs, lack of unity in the faculty, and limited teaching assistant opportunities. Faculty (accessible, encouraging, helpful, friendly), specialization related to interest area, and the opportunity to serve as teaching assistant were identified as primary strengths of the graduate program. Recommended strategies for improvement included more class options for teaching assistant duties, more real-life experiences, and increasing the size of the graduate student population. Two alumni received awards related to graduate studies (Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and U. Missouri Outreach and Extension Rookie of the Year). Sixty percent of alumni published research from their dissertation. Eighty percent felt that they expanded their knowledge and skills a great deal while a graduate student at OSU. Eighty percent of respondents strongly agreed that faculty were interested in the welfare and professional development of graduate students, and provided excellent advising.

Graduate Student Meeting: In August 2003, the graduate coordinator met with the Horticulture & LA graduate students. Topics discussed included graduate seminar, GPSGA, travel funds for professional meetings, offices and other departmental resources, teaching assistant policies and opportunities, and assessment. An overview was presented of the assessment information reported and its use for program improvement. Students were encouraged to participate in the process throughout their programs and beyond (alumni surveys, etc.).

Uses of Assessment Results

The Outcomes Assessment Program has contributed to an evolving philosophy in the graduate program. When necessary, graduate advisors are encouraging students to shift from an activity-based focus to an emphasis on quality outcomes. A focus on comprehensive goals is accomplished, in part, by placing a strong emphasis on peer-reviewed outcomes such as refereed publications and effective presentation of graduate student research at professional meetings. A general lack of resources to fund graduate student travel to professional meetings was recognized as a major limitation. The Office of University Assessment and Testing provided funding for this purpose. Two graduate students will utilize assessment funds to partially cover the costs of presenting research results at the annual meeting of the American Society for Horticultural Science in July, 2004. A commodity group organization has also committed support for graduate student travel to a professional meeting.

The alumni survey reinforced the concept that while individual students generally agree on many core issues, they have diverse expectations in some areas. One example where student expectations differ is teaching assistant opportunities. As a result, a number of options relating to the structure of teaching assistant opportunities were discussed with the department head for consideration of implementation. One step toward addressing the limited selection of graduate courses with laboratory components was the recent addition of HORT 5443, Basic Laboratory Instrumentation.

The graduate faculty have made a commitment to program excellence, but additional steps will need to be taken. Additional resources will need to be committed to attract and train highly qualified graduate students. Faculty must assume an increasing responsibility for securing the resources required to reach the goals of the graduate program. Investment in infrastructure, including laboratory and support facilities, and refilling vacant positions in priority areas is also needed to achieve state-of-the art programs.