

## Program-Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program: Undergraduate major

Department: Theological Studies

Degree or Certificate Level: B.A.

College/School: College of Arts & Sciences

Date (Month/Year): August 2021

Primary Assessment Contact: Lori Baron

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2021

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed/updated? 2021

### 1. Student Learning Outcomes

Which of the program's student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

#### Learning Objective #5:

"Explain the impact of theories, methods, and/or historiographies on academic theology and/or study of religion."

### 2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please identify the course(s) in which these artifacts were collected. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) online, b) at the Madrid campus, or c) at any other off-campus location.

Dr. Randall Rosenberg taught the Theological Studies Capstone course (THEO 4960) in the fall of 2020. This course was taught in person on the main campus. Each student wrote and delivered a presentation on a famous theologian, which serves as the artifact of student learning in this report.

### 3. Assessment Methods: Evaluation Process

What process was used to evaluate the artifacts of student learning, and by whom? Please identify the tools(s) (e.g., a rubric) used in the process and include them in/with this report.

Dr. Rosenberg assessed each student's presentation according to the rubric below (see #4).

#### 4. Data/Results

What were the results of the assessment of the learning outcome(s)? Please be specific. Does achievement differ by teaching modality (e.g., online vs. face-to-face) or on-ground location (e.g., STL campus, Madrid campus, other off-campus site)?

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. In their work, students were able to explain key components of theories, methods, and/or historiographies in academic theology and/or study of religion.	2	5	2
2. In their work, students were able to identify historical and current trends in theories, methods, and/or historiographies in academic theology and/or study of religion.	3	4	2
3. In their work, students were able to reflect on how such theoretical, methodological, and/or historiographical considerations could affect projects of interest to them.	2	5	2

#### 5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you?

Dr. Rosenberg supplied the following information and reflections based upon open-ended questions in the assessment plan:

##### Open-Ended Questions:

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?

The students who exceeded expectations were especially interested in questions of method throughout the course. They intend to pursue graduate studies in areas of theology that require a substantive integration of theories and methods. They clearly tracked throughout the course the distinctive historical and theoretical styles among a variety of methods in theology and religious studies. The course exposed them to the resources and tools for success in this area. It was clear that their past coursework prepared them to engage theories and methods at a high level.

2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?

Some students seemed to come into the course without the adequate background knowledge to engage questions of method in a manner fitting for a capstone student. They also did not show as much interest in theories and methods. They tended to have theology as a secondary major and were more interested in careers that emphasized pastoral practice and not so much in pursuing theories and methods as preparation for further study.

3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

The recent revision of the major to include a sequence on teachings in the Christian traditions may provide our majors with a more consistent overview of theories and methods. The students being assessed in this class completed the program prior to this revision.

Another idea is to demonstrate more consistently as a department how theories and methods might meaningfully impact pastoral practice.

## 6. Closing the Loop: Dissemination and Use of Current Assessment Findings

- A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss these results and findings from this cycle of assessment?

Results will be shared with the Undergraduate Studies Committee in our first meeting in September 2021. The committee is already fully aware of the issues assessed in this Capstone course, which have been addressed in a recent revision of the THEO major along with a thorough revision of our assessment plan.

- B. How specifically have you decided to use these findings to improve teaching and learning in your program? For example, perhaps you've initiated one or more of the following:

### Changes to the Curriculum or Pedagogies

- Course content
- Teaching techniques
- Improvements in technology
- Prerequisites
- Course sequence
- New courses
- Deletion of courses
- Changes in frequency or scheduling of course offerings

### Changes to the Assessment Plan

- Student learning outcomes
- Artifacts of student learning
- Evaluation process
- Evaluation tools (e.g., rubrics)
- Data collection methods
- Frequency of data collection

Please describe the actions you are taking as a result of these findings.

The assessment plan was thoroughly revised in the spring of 2021 with new and improved student learning outcomes and an evaluation process attached to specific artifacts. The Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies is responsible for communicating the learning outcomes to the faculty responsible for measuring them at the beginning of each academic year and will provide support for assessment throughout the year.

As Dr. Rosenberg noted, a new course sequence, Teachings in the Christian Tradition (THEO 3430/3435), was added to the major requirements this past year to address a gap in the curriculum. These courses will better prepare students for the Capstone course and future research.

If no changes are being made, please explain why.

## 7. Closing the Loop: Review of Previous Assessment Findings and Changes

- A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of assessment data?

As noted above, we have revamped our THEO major and minor(s) to reflect assessment data from previous years. The Teachings in the Christian Tradition sequence was added to the curriculum along with a course in world religions.

**B. How has this change/have these changes been assessed?**

Changes were assessed through exit interviews with graduating seniors and in consultation with the department chair and the Undergraduate Student Committee.

**C. What were the findings of the assessment?**

Graduating seniors this year appreciated the addition of the course sequence in Christian traditions even though this was added after they matriculated. Students felt that the department had listened to them and had made significant adjustments.

**D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?**

Implementing our new assessment plan will provide us with specific information about key areas of our program. The plan evaluates six learning outcomes over a three-year period, measuring specific artifacts and encouraging narrative input from faculty by providing open-ended questions. As new students proceed through the new major and minors, we will be able to compare new assessment data to the older data and note what is working and areas that still need adjustment.

**IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools and/or revised/updated assessment plans along with this report.**

## Assessment Plan

Saint Louis University Department of Theological Studies  
Major in Theological Studies and Minor in Theological Studies

Rev. April 2021

### Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Students who major in Theological Studies will be able to (PLOs with an asterisk also apply to students who minor in Theological Studies):

- 1.\* Explain how Christian theology, including the Catholic tradition, engages ultimate questions about the nature of faith; the nature, existence, and personhood of God; the nature and ends of creation and human life; and evil (in ourselves and in the world) and salvation.
2. Describe how key historical texts, figures, and episodes have contributed to major doctrines of Christian theology.
3. \* Analyze entanglements of global movements and personal identities with religions, cultures, and interreligious relations in the past and present.
4. Apply concepts, including those from the study of ethics, sacred texts, and religious traditions to the question of the significance of theological and religious study for living a life of “faith that does justice.”
5. Explain the impact of theories, methods, and/or historiographies on academic theology and/or study of religion.
6. Research-intensive track: Produce an original piece of research appropriate for the academic study of theology and/or religion.

### Assessment Review Cycle

Year 1	PLOs 1 and 2
Year 2	PLOs 3 and 6
Year 3	PLOs 4 and 5

### Assessment Plan: PLOs, Measures of Assessment, Review Process

PLO	Measures of Assessment	Review Process
<p>1.* Explain how Christian theology, including the Catholic tradition, engages ultimate questions about the nature of faith; the nature, existence, and personhood of God; the nature and ends of creation and human life; and evil (in ourselves and in the world) and salvation.</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed in the required THEO 1600-1699 course. Specifically, the artifact(s) produced in the course will enable instructors to determine how well individual students meet this outcome. Seven (7) randomly selected instructors will assess the work against a standard rubric designed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The instructors will be asked to identify the artifact(s) utilized for their assessment and to assess the extent to which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #1 will be assessed in Year 1 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>

<p>2. Describe how key historical texts, figures, and episodes have contributed to major doctrines of Christian theology.</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed in the required THEO 3430 and/or 3435 course. Specifically, assignments and/or exams will enable instructors to determine how well individual students meet this outcome. The instructors of these courses will assess student work against a standard rubric designed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The instructors will be asked to identify the assignments and/or exams utilized for their assessment and to assess the extent to which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #2 will be assessed in Year 1 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>
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<p>3. Analyze entanglements of global movements and personal identities with religions, cultures, and interreligious relations in the past and present.</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed in the required THEO 2710 course. Specifically, the artifact(s) produced in the course will enable instructors to determine how well individual students meet this outcome. Two (2) randomly selected instructors will assess the work against a standard rubric designed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The instructors will be asked to identify the artifact(s) utilized for their assessment and to assess the extent to which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #3 will be assessed in Year 2 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>
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<p>4. Apply concepts, including those from the study of ethics, sacred texts, and religious traditions to the question of the significance of theological and religious study for living a life of “faith that does justice.”</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed in the capstone seminar (THEO 4960) via one or more assignments that call on the students to reflect on this question and articulate their own personal answer. Assessment results will be analyzed annually against a standard rubric by the seminar instructor and reported to the program coordinator. Instructors will assess student work against a standard rubric that will be created by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. The instructor will be asked to assess the extent to which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #4 will be assessed in Year 3 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department’s Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>
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<p>5. Explain the impact of theories, methods, and/or historiographies on academic theology and/or study of religion.</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed in the capstone seminar (THEO 4960) via assignments that call on the students to engage theories, methods, and historiographies; to articulate key components of them; and to reflect on how such considerations could affect research projects of interest to them. Assessment results will be analyzed annually against a standard rubric by the seminar instructor and reported to the program coordinator. Instructors will assess student work against a standard rubric that will be created by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. The instructor will be asked to assess the extent to which students failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #5 will be assessed in Year 3 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>
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<p>6. Research-intensive track: Produce an original piece of research appropriate for the academic study of theology and/or religion.</p>	<p><b>Direct Measures:</b> This outcome will be assessed with the senior thesis written by students on the research-intensive track. Assessment results will be analyzed annually against a standard rubric by the thesis advisers and reported to the program coordinator. They will assess student work against a standard rubric that will be created by the Undergraduate Studies Committee. The thesis adviser will be asked to assess the extent to which their advisee failed to meet, met, or exceeded expectations.</p> <p><b>Indirect Measures:</b> Majors on the research-intensive track will be asked to evaluate how well they accomplished this learning outcome in an exit survey and interview in the spring semester of their senior year. The undergraduate studies coordinator will tabulate survey results and keep notes of related comments in interviews.</p>	<p>Learning outcome #5 will be assessed in Year 2 in a three-year assessment cycle and the data will be reviewed by the department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The committee will discuss the data and identify areas of success and areas for improvement. The program coordinator will communicate recommendations for curriculum, pedagogy, and/or assessment revisions to the program faculty in a manner that allows for appropriate implementation.</p> <p>Reviews of the impact of any such program changes will also be conducted the year after the changes are made, and the records of those reviews will be maintained by the program coordinator.</p>
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### **Direct Measures: Rubrics for Instructor Assessment of Student Achievement of PLOs**

#### **Learning Objective #1:**

"1.\* Explain how Christian theology, including the Catholic tradition, engages ultimate questions about the nature of faith; the nature, existence, and personhood of God; the nature and ends of creation and human life; and evil (in ourselves and in the world) and salvation."

Rubric to be filled out by seven (7) instructors teaching THEO 1600-1699 annually.

*Assignment serving as basis for evaluation:* Artifact to be available for submission to University Assessment Office for purposes of assessment of the SLU Core (for SLO 1).

*Number of students in class:* \_\_\_\_\_

	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
Standard	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. In the artifact, students were able to articulate responses to ultimate questions found in the Christian tradition.			
2. In the artifact, students were able to demonstrate an accurate understanding of the meaning and implications of the ultimate questions considered.			
3. In the artifact, students were able to show familiarity with the Catholic tradition in terms of its longevity, breadth, and at least some of its particularities within Christianity and/or among religions of the world.			

**Open-Ended Questions:**

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?
2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

**Learning Objective #2:**

“Describe how key historical texts, figures, and episodes have contributed to major doctrines of Christian theology.”

Rubric to be filled out by professor(s) teaching THEO 3430 and 3435 annually.

Note: An artifact/assignment/exam must serve as the basis for the evaluation of student achievement according to the following three standards. One artifact can be designed to assess one, two, or all three standards. Please indicate below the artifact/assignment/exam that you are using to evaluate student achievement in each of the three categories/standards. Please submit the instructions that you give your students for each relevant artifact/assignment/exam together with this rubric.

*Assignment to assess Standard 1:*

*Assignment to assess Standard 2:*

*Assignment to assess Standard 3:*

*Number of students in class:* \_\_\_\_\_

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. In their work, students were able to identify the key points of debate in relationship to major doctrines of Christian theology.			
2. In their work, students were able to explain how key historical texts, figures, and episodes contributed to the formulation and/or development of these doctrines.			
3. In their work, students were able to demonstrate a sensitivity to historical context.			

### Open-Ended Questions:

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?

2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

**Learning Objective #3:**

“Analyze entanglements of global movements and personal identities with religions, cultures, and interreligious relations in the past and present.”

Rubric to be filled out by two (2) instructors teaching THEO 2710 annually.

Assignment serving as basis for evaluation: Artifact to be available for submission to University Assessment Office for purposes of assessment of the SLU Core (for SLO 5 and 7).

*Number of students in class:* \_\_\_\_\_

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. In the assignment, students were able to demonstrate introductory literacy in the teachings, practices, and cultures of a range of religious traditions in global, diasporic, and historical context(s).			
2. In the assignment, students were able to identify and evaluate the construction of “world religion(s)” as a category through colonial and imperial contexts.			
3. In the artifact, students demonstrated understanding of religion and social identity in relation to circumstances of race, gender, nationality, sexuality, locality, geography, and/or class.			

**Open-Ended Questions:**

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?
2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

**Learning Objective #4:**

“Apply concepts, including those from the study of ethics, sacred texts, and religious traditions to the question of the significance of theological and religious study for living a life of ‘faith that does justice’.”

Rubric to be filled out annually by the professor teaching THEO 4960.

*Assignment(s) utilized for assessment:* \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Please submit the instructions that you give your students for this assignment together with this rubric.

*Number of students in class:* \_\_\_\_\_

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. In the assignment, students were able to provide a cogent understanding of a ‘faith that does justice’.			
2. In the assignment, students were able to articulate generally how theological and religious study informs a life of ‘faith that does justice’.			
3. In the assignment, students were able to use specific examples gained from their learning in other coursework, including in ethics, sacred texts, and religious traditions, to inform their			

response.			
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### Open-Ended Questions:

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?
2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

### Learning Objective #5:

"Explain the impact of theories, methods, and/or historiographies on academic theology and/or study of religion."

Rubric to be filled out annually by the professor teaching THEO 4960.

Note: An artifact/assignment/exam must serve as the basis for the evaluation of student achievement according to the following three standards. One artifact can be designed to assess one, two, or all three standards. Please indicate below the artifact/assignment/exam that you are using to evaluate student achievement in each of the three categories/standards. Please submit the instructions that you give your students for each relevant artifact/assignment/exam instructions together with this rubric.

*Assignment to assess Standard 1:*

*Assignment to assess Standard 2:*

*Assignment to assess Standard 3:*

*Number of students in class:* \_\_\_\_\_

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations



1. In their work, students were able to explain key components of theories, methods, and/or historiographies in academic theology and/or study of religion.			
2. In their work, students were able to identify historical and current trends in theories, methods, and/or historiographies in academic theology and/or study of religion.			
3. In their work, students were able to reflect on how such theoretical, methodological, and/or historiographical considerations could affect projects of interest to them.			

### Open-Ended Questions:

1. Among students who exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?
2. Among students who failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an instructor have ideas about how these standards can better be met in this course or within the major and minor in Theological Studies as a whole, please share them here.

### Learning Outcome #6 (Research-Intensive Track):

“Produce an original piece of research appropriate for the academic study of theology and/or religion.”

Rubric to be filled out annually by the adviser for each student writing a senior thesis.

*Assignment(s) utilized for assessment:* Individual Senior Thesis

*Student Name and Thesis Title:* \_\_\_\_\_

Standard	Percentage (%) of Students Who...		
	Failed to Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations
1. Student was able to employ scholarly			

resources for research in the academic study of theology and/or religion.			
2. Student was able to implement a method of inquiry appropriate to their topic.			
3. Student was able to write a long paper (15-25 pages) that presented a coherent and compelling argument in defense of a defined thesis statement.			

### Open-Ended Questions:

1. If the student exceeded expectations, what do you think were the key drivers of, or factors in, their success?
2. If the student failed to meet expectations, what do you think were the main obstacles to their success?
3. (Optional) If you as an adviser have ideas about how these standards can better be met for research-intensive majors in Theological Studies, please share them here.

### Indirect Measures: Survey for Majors in Spring Semester of Senior Year

The undergraduate studies coordinator will circulate a Google form or Qualtrics Survey to all majors set to graduate in May or December of that year. The form will ask these questions:

1. Upon near completion of your major in Theological Studies, how well do you feel that you have accomplished the following program learning outcomes?

Program Learning Outcome	Not well at all	Insufficiently Well	Sufficiently Well	Very well
1. Explain how Christian theology, including the Catholic tradition, responds to ultimate questions about the nature of faith; the nature, existence, and personhood of God; the nature and ends of creation and human life; and evil (in ourselves and in the world) and salvation.				

2. Describe how key historical texts, figures, and episodes have contributed to major doctrines of Christian theology.				
3. Analyze entanglements of global movements and personal identities with religions, cultures, and interreligious relations in the past and present.				
4. Apply concepts, including those from the study of ethics, sacred texts, and religious traditions to the question of the significance of theological study for living a life of “faith that does justice.”				
5. Explain the impact of theories, methods, and/or historiographies on academic theology and/or study of religion.				
6. (Research-intensive students only:) Produce an original piece of research appropriate for the academic study of theology and/or religion.				

2. What courses and/or experiences, if any, best enabled you to achieve these learning outcomes, individually or collectively?
  
3. What courses and/or experiences, if any, do you think did not enable you to achieve these learning outcomes? How could they do a better job of doing so?
  
4. Feel free to add any additional comments about your experience with our program here. Keep in mind that you will also have the opportunity to discuss these and other matters with the Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies in your exit interview.