

University Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness

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Report View 1415

NH-GR-CNH-MAJ-Nutrition-ECHNUTMS

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Program Background

Mission Statement.

List the names and titles of those participating in the assessment planning, analysis and reporting activities for this program.

Christina Shepard - Clinical Professor/Nutrition Graduate Program Coordinator
Carol Johnston - Professor and Associate Director of Nutrition Program
Punam Ohri-Vachaspati - Associate Professor

Please describe your program's assessment process and specific assessment activities during the 2014-15 academic year. Please include who was involved and how they were engaged in assessment activities.

These 2 courses, NTR 500 "Research Methods I" and NTR 501 "Research Methods II" are the key courses in this graduate program's curriculum on nutritional research analysis and design. Dr. Carol Johnston teaches the NTR 500 course and Dr. Punam Ohri-Vachaspati teaches NTR 501. Both are in-person courses for our MS in Human Nutrition degree. The faculty listed above participated in this assessment activity. Data were collected and reviewed by the head of our Program, Dr. Carol Johnston and by Christina Shepard, who coordinates our graduate programs. The program curriculum committee discusses these graduate assessments and examines competencies across the curricula to ensure adequate coverage of knowledge/skills. This committee then presents these recommendations to the entire faculty at faculty meetings to inform and gain approval of the faculty. Hence, faculty have a basic understanding of competencies taught in the different courses. Assignments from the required research methods classes (NTR 500 and NTR 501) for the MS degree were selected for this assessment plan as they represent an important component of these student's education for this degree program. Our goal was to examine student performance on particular assessment measures to understand how well students are performing on the learning outcomes identified in this assessment report.

If no data were collected for this program during 2014-15, please use the space below to note the reason and describe the strategies in place to ensure that data collection will occur during 2015-16, and then continue to the last page of this report and provide any changes to your current assessment plan.

N/A

During the 2014-15 academic year, what changes have been made to the program, curriculum, and/or instruction? Why were these changes made? Please discuss how those changes were implemented and their intended impact on student learning.

Several major changes occurred to the NTR 500-501 research series in 2014-2015. Based on student and faculty discussion [but not assessment results], Johnston (NTR 500) and Ohri-Vachaspati (NTR 501) converted their session C courses to be taught as NTR 500 in fall session A and NTR 501 in fall session B. This course series will help students learn research design as well as survey development prior to initiating their thesis research. In the past, NTR 501 was taught in the spring semester when many of the students were starting their research projects. With this change, students have a more complete research methods understanding as they plan their projects. We also began to offer NTR 500 online for the MS (dietetic) students. This separation of students will allow for better tailored instruction separating the MS thesis from the MS applied project requirements. These changes have strengthened the program by allowing for improved and impactful student learning.

Program Results

OUTCOME 1: Demonstrate entry-level competence in research design, statistical methods & ethical conduct in research studies.

What do these results indicate about the extent to which students from this program possess the knowledge or skill reflected in Outcome 1? How do your results support this conclusion? Please use the space below to indicate whether or not each performance criterion was met and to describe components of the program you believe contributed to this result.

The performance criteria used to assess outcome 1 were all met. NTR 500 is the first class taken by all Nutrition MS students, and its purpose is to introduce research methods and philosophy to these students. The instructor has been teaching this class for nearly 20 years and has a good grasp of how to effectively train students in research methodology. She is an active, funded researcher who continues to publish regularly in good journals. This record assures an up-to-date expectation of what is critical in research methodology. NTR 500 is a hands-on course designed to help students navigate the process of preparing a research proposal. The student-focused approach in this class engages the student to actively progress through the proposal writing phase of research. Assignments specifically target their research ideas and help students develop their projects. Students understand that their hard work will culminate in successful research and completion of their thesis requirement..

Outcome
1 met?
Yes

MEASURE 1.1: NTR 500 Research Methods Assignment 6: Levels of Measurement, Reliability, and Construct Validity

Performance Criterion 1.1: At least 75% of Nutrition (ECHNUTMS) students will earn at least a grade of "B: or higher on the NTR 500 Assignment 6: Levels of Measurement, Reliability, and Construct Validity.

Was the
Performance
Criterion Met?
Yes

Results: 10 out of 11 Human Nutrition students earned a B or higher , which is 91%.

Number of Observations Included in Assessment (e.g., number of students, papers, projects):	11 assignments were assessed.	Proportion of Target Population Assessed:	100%
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Data Collection Challenges or Issues [if applicable]: None

MEASURE 1.2: NTR 500 Research Methods: 3-Chapter Research Proposal

Performance Criterion 1.2: At least 80% of ECHNUTMS students will earn at least a "B" or higher on the NTR 500 3-Chapter Research Proposal.

Was the Performance
Criterion Met?
Yes

Results: 10 out of 11 Human Nutrition students earned a B or higher, which is 91%.

Number of Observations Included in Assessment (e.g., number of students, papers, projects):	11 assignments were assessed.	Proportion of Target Population Assessed:	100%
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Data Collection Challenges or Issues [if applicable]: None

Program Results

OUTCOME 2: Integrate knowledge of statistics and survey design in nutritional settings

What do these results indicate about the extent to which students from this program possess the knowledge or skill reflected in Outcome 2? How do your results support this conclusion? Please use the space below to indicate whether or not each performance criterion was met and to describe components of the program you believe contributed to this result.

The performance criteria used to assess outcome 2 were all met. NTR 501 is the second course in the research methods series for the Human Nutrition MS program. To begin to grasp research methods, this two series course requirement improves student understanding. As with NTR 500, the NTR 501 instructor is an active, funded researcher with a vast knowledge base for research methods. The most current concepts in research design are presented to students in an interactive format. Research methods tend to be unfamiliar territory for the students, and they struggle (particularly early in the course) with understanding how to prepare for lectures and complete assignments. We are aware of these insecurities and try to address them directly. In NTR 501, students successfully design a nutrition focused research study and develop a survey instrument for data collection. Through the semester, students work individually and in groups, on various components of the study. Students then present each piece to their peers and the instructor to improve upon the design. They also pilot test their survey instruments.

Outcome
2 met?
Yes

MEASURE 2.1: NTR 501 Research Methods II: Survey Assignments 1-4

Performance Criterion 2.1: At least 75% of Nutrition (ECHNUTMS) students will earn an aggregate (mean) score of at least a grade of "B" or higher on NTR 501 Survey Assignments 1-4.

Was the Performance
Criterion Met?
Yes

Results:	11 out of 13 (85%) of Human Nutrition MS students earned a B or higher.		
Number of Observations Included in Assessment (e.g., number of students, papers, projects):	13 sets of assignments.	Proportion of Target Population Assessed:	100%
Data Collection Challenges or Issues [if applicable]:	None		

MEASURE 2.2: NTR 501 Research Methods II Final Project

Performance Criterion 2.2: At least 75% of Nutrition (ECHNUTMS) students will earn at least a grade of “B” or higher on the NTR 501 Final Project. Was the Performance Criterion Met?
Yes

Results:	10 out of 13 (77%) Human Nutrition MS students earned a B or higher.		
Number of Observations Included in Assessment (e.g., number of students, papers, projects):	13 projects were assessed.	Proportion of Target Population Assessed:	100%
Data Collection Challenges or Issues [if applicable]:	None		

Program Self-Assessment

Please summarize how the assessment results for the 2014-15 academic year will impact your academic program in the coming year. Consider what the assessment data indicate are programmatic strengths or weaknesses and areas of possible development.

All outcome measures for the MS degree in Human Nutrition were successfully met during the 2014-15 academic year. Students successfully demonstrated competence in research and survey design, statistical methods, and ethical conduct in nutritional research studies. We believe that these research methods courses are a strength of our MS degree program. By adjusting the schedule of when these courses are offered, students will learn research design and survey development prior to initiating their thesis research. In the past, NTR 501 was taught in the spring semester when many of the students were starting their research projects. With the proposed change, students will have a more complete research methods understanding as they plan their projects. NTR 500 will also be revised to align more closely with the STROBE statement (to strengthen reporting of observational trials). NTR 500 will also be offered online for the MS (dietetic) students - this separation of students will allow for more tailored instruction, separating the MS thesis from the MS applied project. These changes will strengthen the program by allowing for improved and impactful student learning. These findings show that students are acquiring the desired skill sets to interpret and integrate research evidence. Furthermore, most of these students have successfully completed thesis projects and successfully defended their thesis in 2012 indicating that their research skills and information interpretation have been adequately applied.

Please summarize how the assessment results for the 2014-15 academic year will impact your assessment process for the coming year. Please consider revisions to your plan, sampling strategies, data collection, or any other areas.

Data collection worked very well during this 2014-15 academic year so no changes will be made to this assessment procedure for next year.

University Office of Evaluation and Educational Effectiveness

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