

Master's Degree in Plant Pathology

Summary of findings

For the Master's Degree in Plant Pathology, students are assessed at their initial proposal advisory committee meeting and defense. A passing performance at the defense is a score of 2.6 or greater.

All students evaluated in the Spring of 2016 performed satisfactorily.

Rubrics (Direct assessments) conducted in the spring of 2016

Problem solving and critical thinking rubric mean 3.1 (range 2.8-3.5)

Oral communication value rubric mean 2.9 (range 2.6-3.2)

Written communication value rubric mean 3.0 (range 3.0-3.0)

The rubrics developed and used suggest that the program is preparing students adequately. Although these direct measures were not used in the past, the performance of students is similar to previous years. The development and use of the oral, written, and problem solving and critical thinking rubrics provide a more consistent and quantitative measure of student performance, allows constructive feedback for the student, and allows committee members and the program to assess the development of the student over their degree.

Recommendations

More consistent use of the adopted rubrics for direct assessment of student performance, individually and collectively.

For required seminars for the degree program, apply the oral communication rubric throughout their degree, three seminars, to strengthen student's performance and examine how the course can be improved for student outcomes.

The written rubric will be applied in the evaluation of the student's skills in their proposal to highlight areas needing improvement, leading to more timely and satisfactory completion of the subsequent thesis.

The problem solving and critical thinking rubric will enable evaluation of the student during their proposal meeting as it relates to course requirements and provides a benchmark of performance.

Provide feedback to the student on annual evaluations to identify specific areas for student attention on the rubric scores from the student's committee.

As inadequacies in student assessment are identified, additional rubrics will be developed or areas in existing rubric will be revised.

Overall recommendation

As rubrics are used across more students, the direct assessment of the program's performance will identify additional assessments that need to be done and identify areas in the program that need additional effort in terms of course requirements or content, structure, or expectations. A more

structured feedback mechanism for students will increase understanding by the student of areas needing improvement.

Action plan

- Consistently collect direct measurements of student performance.
- Conduct data analysis of direct measures
 - Validate value of current direct measurements of student performance
 - Examine program inadequacies to insure student success