

Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2016-2017

Department: Plant Sciences & Plant Pathology

Program(s): Environmental Horticulture Science

Assessment reports are to be submitted annually to report assessment activities and results by program. The reports are due every summer with a deadline of September 15th each year.

The use of this template is entirely optional.

Note: These reports have been required by MSU policy since 2004.

1. What Was Done

This year we evaluated learning outcomes 4 and 5.

- 4) Be able to communicate written and verbally effectively.
- 5) Be able to design a plant experiment and analyze data

2. What Data Were Collected

- 4) Two faculty evaluated student written proposals and research reports from HORT 486, the second semester of the Horticulture Capstone course. A 'written communication skills' rubric was utilized in this evaluation. Additionally, two faculty evaluated student oral research presentations in HORT 486, the second semester of the Horticulture Capstone course. An 'oral presentation' rubric was utilized in this evaluation.
- 5) Same as above, looking specifically at the 'content' rating from each rubric.

3. What Was Learned

- 4) The majority of students scored at a rating of 3 or higher on both the written paper and oral presentation.
- 5) The majority of students scored a rating of 3 or higher on the content knowledge of this assignment, indicating that most had acquired skills on designing and analyzing experiments to sufficiently draw accurate conclusions about their experiments.

4. How We Responded

Most of the students are receiving sufficient experience and skills in written and verbal communication during this program as well as designing a plant experiment and analyzing data. However, the burden of acquiring experimental design and data analysis is falling solely during the final capstone course. This may explain why not all students are completely prepared. We are looking to incorporate these elements earlier in the program. In addition, although most students received a rating of 3 or higher on their written research reports, this final report was the product of several rounds of revisions during the semester. The instructor believes that

early drafts reflected a general weakness in writing skills. Therefore, we are planning to change the program requirements to include a second required writing course.