

School of Massage Therapy Assessment Report

August, 2008



Assessment Activities for the 2007 – 2008 year include the

following:

1. Development and piloting of a Comprehensive Capstone Final Exam.
2. Completion of an Employer Satisfaction Survey
3. A plan to develop a more robust chair massage assessment tools
3. NCETMB results
4. Pre-graduate survey and focus group data

1. Comprehensive Capstone Final Exam

Over the course of the past year, we have piloted our newly developed comprehensive final exam twice; once at the end of the Fall 2007 term and once at the end of the Summer 2008 term. The second pilot exam was an updated version of the exam based on student feedback and performance on the first piloted exam and contained 79 multiple choice questions. In August of 2008, 41 students took the exam and scored an average of 77.6%. The curriculum committee reviewed the results and student feedback on the exam at our August 1 meeting. (See **Exhibit #1** for August 1 meeting minutes). Questions which were missed by more than 10 students received additional scrutiny (See **Exhibit #2** for Question analysis documents). Based on the results of several exam items, a number of suggestions were made to faculty of content areas that could be emphasized more in class. For example, students could benefit from a more clear explanation of endangerment sites. Also, students did not score as well as expected on some muscle location and action questions. The relevant faculty were made aware of the concerns and will make the necessary adjustments in their presentations.

We plan on piloting the exam once more at the end of the fall 2008 term. Students graduating at the end of the summer 2009 term will need to pass the exam in order to graduate from the program.

2. Employer Satisfaction Survey

An Employer Satisfaction survey was completed this past summer. (See **Exhibit #3** for a summary of the results). The feedback received included a recommendation that more “spa” oriented techniques be taught. This point was taken under advisement, although no specific action taken. Spa techniques beyond the basic Swedish massage techniques do not fit well with the mission of the School of Massage Therapy.

Another recommendation was that students learn more marketing and business related curriculum. A course in Business Essentials is currently under development and will address this recommendation. Finally, a recommendation that there be additional pregnancy massage training was addressed through the development of a Massage for Special Populations which includes a module on pregnancy massage.

3. Chair Massage Assessment

During our July 18 and August 1 Curriculum Committee meeting informal and anecdotal data was presented to the curriculum committee regarding the lack of preparation and professionalism among students in general in chair massage (See **Exhibit #1** for August 1 meeting minutes and **Exhibit #4** for July 18 meeting minutes). This led to a discussion that more formal assessment mechanism for this part of the curriculum is needed. The fact that this information was informal and anecdotal bolstered this point.

We determined that the reason this data is informal and anecdotal is that no rubrics or assessment tools exist for the chair massage portion of the curriculum. Beth & Joanie volunteered to draft an objective list for chair massage to include technique, business knowledge, attitude, knowledge of necessary supplies, etc. This objective list will serve to inform related teaching activities and the development of appropriate assessment tools and measures.

4. NCBTMB Exam Results

On an annual basis, we receive a report of how our students performed on the National Certification Exam. There are two separate exams that students can choose from – the National Certification Exam for Massage and the National Certification Exam for Massage and Bodywork. The information included in this report has grown over the past few years, but is still very limited. This indirect assessment data is still considered valuable, considering the reporting requirement of COMTA of our pass rate, the wide acceptance and use of this exam nationally, and the comparison of performance to the Minnesota and national averages. The benchmark we have set for our students is that we would like to see our school perform at or above Minnesota and National pass rates and scores. The most recent report indicated a pass rate of 100% for the reporting period and has clearly met the benchmark we set for ourselves.

5. Pre-Graduate Survey and Focus Group Data

Pre-Graduate survey data

Students who are about to graduate provide valuable information related to the program they have just completed. In December of 2007 and August of 2008, we conducted a survey of students about the graduate. The survey invited students to report their level of confidence related to the seven program objectives. Students were able to respond with “Minimally Competent, Moderately Competent or Very Confident.”

Additionally, students were asked to respond to the following questions with a narrative response.

1. How well prepared do you feel to enter the professional world of Massage Therapy?
2. How has your perception of Massage Therapy changed during your year here?
3. Please share a few of your thoughts regarding your experience in each of the following classes. Feel free to comment on the textbook, the content of the course, the teaching methods used, etc. (followed by a list of all the classes)
4. Please share with us any other comments you have about the program or your experience here that will help us improve the program for future students.

Following is a summary of the survey completed by the December 2007 graduating class. The complete report is included as Exhibit #5.

Unfortunately we only had 4 individuals complete this survey in December 2007. This clearly brings into question the significance of the following data from the survey.

The following outcomes are highlighted as those for which less than half of responded recorded a response of “very confident.”

Direct clients, when appropriate, to a spectrum of other resources.

Minimally Confident = 0

Moderately Confident = 2

Very Confident = 2

Develop and sustain a successful massage therapy practice.

Minimally Confident = 1

Moderately Confident = 2

Very Confident = 1

Understand the psychological and professional boundary issues present in practice, and act based upon ethical standards of practice.

Minimally Confident = 0

Moderately Confident = 3

Very Confident = 1

Understand the importance of actively managing and maintaining your own health and wellness, including the use of effective biomechanical practices.

Minimally Confident = 0

Moderately Confident = 3

Very Confident = 1

Narrative responses:

In response to the question “*How well prepared do you feel to enter the professional world of Massage Therapy?*”, one student replied: “All except the business part of owning your own business. I wish there was a whole business class for people wanting to start their own business.” We have responded to this concern by developing a Business Essentials course to be offered in January of 2009 as an elective.

Following is a summary of the survey completed by the August 2008 graduating class. The complete report is included as Exhibit #6.

The survey was completed by 12 individuals out of 43 graduating students. The only outcome that any students rated minimally confident was: “**Develop and sustain a successful massage therapy practice.**” 2 students recorded a response of minimally confident. Again, in response to this and other related concerns, we will be offering a Business Essentials elective during the Winter 2009 term.

More than half of respondents recorded a response of “Moderately Confident” to the following outcomes:

- Direct clients, when appropriate, to a spectrum of other resources. 6/12
- Pass the National Certification Examination for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork and related state and local examinations. 8/12

Two themes that emerged from the narrative portion of the survey included 1) concerns regarding the quality of the Nutrition class and 2) the relationship between the Pathology class and the Special Populations class. Both of these concerns have come up

through previous informal feedback and in fact further substantiate the need for the following actions which have already taken place.

Concerns about the Nutrition class have been addressed by changing the textbook, the instructor and the format of the course (it will now be taught using an online format). The course has also been shortened from 1 credit to 0.5 credits.

With regard to the Special Populations and Pathology courses, these courses were actually split from a single course approximately a year and half ago. There is a minimal (but intentional) overlap of content between the two courses. There have been reports that there is little difference between the courses despite a clear separation of course objectives at the time of splitting the courses. During the June 6, 2008 Curriculum Committee meeting the distinction between the two courses was again discussed. We will follow up with this concern at future Curriculum Committee meetings and with the individual instructors.

Graduate Focus Group data

In December of 2007 and August of 2008 small groups of graduating students were selected to participate in a focus group to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The results of the August focus group are still being processed. Themes that emerged from the December focus group and actions are highlighted here.

There was concern expressed regarding the new Anatomy and Physiology instructor, Tom Braem. This particular group had Dr. Kren McManus as an instructor before she left at the end of the 2006/2007 academic year. By all reports, she was very respected and liked by the students in general. Tom came in with a great deal of experience, but with a full load of new classes and a new environment with new

expectations, the cards were not stacked in his favor. Filling Dr. McManus's shoes in the minds of the students during his first term was an unrealistic expectation. I have worked closely with Tom over the past year and feel confident that Tom is an excellent instructor. It will be interesting to see if this concern shows up in the August Focus Group data.

There was a point during the focus group that research related skills. All students participating in the discussion agreed emphatically with the statements that the "techniques [they] learned were based on good, solid research" and that they had the "ability to appraise whether something is evidence based." This was very interesting because this is an area that is lacking dramatically in the curriculum. The CAM Research Education Grant is designed to remedy this through programs and curriculums designed through the grant.

Much of the discussion focused on the clinical rotations to hospitals and other environments. Overall the feedback was very positive and substantiated the need to continue and perhaps expand these rotations.