Results of Research

This report is divided into tasks that have been completed and tasks that need to be considered. It is also a summary of methods and procedures used.

Summary of Information Included

Completed Work (pp. 2-7)
Task 1—*Learn everything about the Exit Exam from MSU's website*
Task 2—*Interview the Assessment office to find additional information about Exit Exams.*
Task 3—*Check the Policy Library and other locations online to see if the exam must be proctored and given with paper and pencil*
Task 4— *Learn more about Blackboard as a possible tool to administer the Exit Exam*
Task 5—*Observe the Exit Exam process*

Issues to Consider (pp. 8-9)
Task 6— *What issues need to be considered for the transition from Assessment to IR?*
Task 7— *What needs to be done if moving to unproctored online?*

Completed Work

Task 1. Learn everything about the Exit Exam from MSU's website.
>   When researching everything I could online, I found essential information on the Assessment office's web page. I learned basic information about the exam's content and purpose.

About the exam:
- Students are required to take the Exit Exam before graduating. For a student to take the Exit Exam, they must first have completed 90 hours. Once they have done so, they can register for the exam the same way they do for other classes online. The Exit Exam is listed under GEN 499.
- The exam lasts for one hour and fifteen minutes.
- If a scheduling conflict occurs, and the student is not able to attend the section they registered for, they can drop the section (the same way they would drop a class) and register for a different section. If the student simply does not show up to their registered exam without dropping it, they will have to wait for the administrator to drop them from that section before they can register for a new section. It may take up to five business days for the administrator to drop them from the section.
- Once the student completes the exam, they receive a *pass* grade for GEN 499. They must have this in order to graduate. If the student submits an incomplete or invalid answer sheet, they will receive a *not pass* grade.
- The exam consists of 36 multiple-choice questions. The purpose of the exam is to test basic academic skills such as critical thinking, reading, writing, and math. It is not a content-based test.
- Students who complete more than one baccalaureate degree are only required to take one Exit Exam.

Purpose of the exam:
- It gauges the students' experience at MSU by asking them questions about their level of satisfaction. It is also used to measure students' integration of the three themes of the MSU mission in public affairs.
- The results of the Exit Exam affect MSU in many ways:
  - Help evaluate the effectiveness of the Missouri State University curriculum.
  - Represent the performance of Missouri State University students to the public.
  - Represent the university in funding decisions.
  - Provide an estimate of how students rank relative to their graduating classes. Individual exam scores will provide an assessment of abilities that may be helpful in applying for employment. Official score reports can be mailed to students who are interested in including it a portfolio or resume.

Task 2. Interview the Assessment office to find additional information on Exit Exams.
> I began this process by interviewing GAs Whitney and Ryan. Next, I interviewed Susan, who is the office's administrative assistant.

Summary of tasks and procedures:
- Send out mass e-mail to students once they've completed 90 hours.
- Order tests from ETS. Tests take 7-10 days to arrive. Due to monthly budget limitations, only 650/month can be ordered. Susan usually orders the following number of tests:
  - Fall: 1000
  - Spring: 1800
  - Summer: 150
- Create class sections on Banner
- Stuff booklets with pink sheets and bundle together in groups of 25. These pink survey sheets are located on a secure database. We can print off, but they usually get reused each testing period.
- Hire/coordinate proctors.
- Send reminder e-mails to students 2-3 days before exam is scheduled.
- Print off the roster one day before the exam.
- Administer/supervise exam.

  - Students *must have both* a photo ID (their driver's license, student ID, or passport will suffice) and their M-number on hand when arriving to take the exam. If they do not have both of these, they cannot take the exam. They will have to re-register for a different time.
  - If there's available room, students who have not registered for the exam but show up may be allowed to take the exam. This is only allowed if they have both their photo ID and M-number available. The administrator would simply add their name to the bottom of the roster, where there is available space.
  - It may also be the case that the student *was* registered for the exam, but they may have registered after the roster was printed. The same procedure would be followed as listed above for students who had not registered.
  - There is a script to read when students first arrive.
  - The booklets are passed out one at a time, and then also picked up one at a time. Students should not pass their booklets forward when they are done, but wait for them to be collected individually by the proctors. Proctors may, however, give exams to students as they walk in.
  - Students must stay in the room until the allotted time has ended, even if they finish early. If, however, students need to use the restroom, they can do so during the exam. They must leave their booklet and answer sheet on their desk while they do so.
  - It is important that the students especially understand how to correctly fill out their demographic information on the answer sheet. For instance, they might put their first name in the field where their last name is supposed to be entered.
- Add/drop students from course.

- Verify student information on answer sheet with roster. Students' names and M-numbers must be recorded on the answer sheets exactly as they appear in Banner.
- Ship booklets and answer sheets to ETS at the very end of the semester. Once student information is verified, the answer sheets get bundled together in groups of 100.
  - Next, mail the answer sheets and booklets back to ETS to be graded and processed.
  - Complete the labels:
    - List how many boxes or bags there are. Note that boxes and bags are considered separately. You will have a separate total number for boxes, and a separate number for bags.
    - In the Center name field, enter Missouri State University.
    - In the Center # field, enter 6665.
    - Make a copy of the mailing labels.
    - Mailing labels are located in a filing cabinet up front. The labels must be carefully sorted, since the 5 lb. and 15 lb. labels are mixed together. We receive labels from ETS whenever we receive test booklets.
  - Each bundle of answer sheets is mailed in its own UPS bag (one bundle equals 100 answer sheets). Bags are also found in the filing cabinet up front. Each bag will then be given a 5 lb. UPS label. The bags are then stacked and taped together. It is recommended that only a maximum of five bags be taped together.
  - The booklets do not need to be bundled together. Simply put as many booklets together that will fit into a large box. Each box will then be given a 15 lb. label.
  - Once they are ready to be shipped, the bags and boxes are placed on a cart and taken either to the small bookstore inside PSU, or to the actual bookstore, where UPS will pick them up.
- Record grades in Banner.
- Send out an e-mail near the end of the semester, when about two exams are still available. This email reminds graduating seniors who have not yet taken exam that they need to do so soon.
- When exam results are received from ETS, merge together with Banner information in SPSS. This new file is saved and used to upload test scores into Banner.
- Mail exam results to students who requested official scores.
- Respond to individual student inquiries as received.

Task 3. Check Policy Library and other locations online to see if the exam must be proctored and given with paper and pencil.

I first went to the Policy Library's webpage. There was a brief description for Exit Exams:

All students admitted into a baccalaureate degree program during or after the fall 1993 semester must complete a nationally normed test designed to assess basic academic knowledge and skills. Students must take this University Exit Exam prior to graduation and upon the completion of 90 or more credit hours. Completion of the University Exit Exam is tracked by student enrollment in GEN 499 (University Exit Exam). Each section of GEN 499 is tied to a date and time when the University Exit Exam is offered. If the student completes the exam, the student is awarded a "pass" grade. Students who take the exam but submit an answer sheet that is invalided or incomplete will receive a "not pass" grade. If the student fails to complete the exam, the student is dropped from the corresponding section of GEN 499 by the assessment office and must register for another available section.

Students who complete more than one baccalaureate degree are only required to take the exam one time. Requests for exceptions to the exam requirement due to extreme hardship should be directed to the assessment office. Information regarding the University Exit Exam may be obtained online at http://www.missouristate.edu/assessment/.

I also checked the course catalog:

Procedure for the University Exit Exam
In order to take the University Exit Exam, students must register for GEN 499 through the normal registration process. Following is the course description.

GEN 499 University Exit Exam

Prerequisite: senior standing. All undergraduate, degree seeking students admitted into a degree program during the fall 1993 semester and beyond shall enroll in a section of GEN 499 to complete a nationally normed test designed to assess general academic skills including critical thinking, reading, writing, and mathematics abilities. The University Exit Exam should be taken following the completion of 90 hours (senior year) and prior to graduation. Students who will be off campus during their senior year should call (417) 836-6300 or email assessment@missouristate.edu to make special arrangements to take the exam. There is no statute of limitation on the validity of the exam once it is completed. Additional information regarding this exam may be obtained online at www.missouristate.edu/assessment. Completion graded as P (Passed). 0(0-0) F,S,Su

I also searched MSU's website for "Exit Exam," "Proficiency Profile," and "GEN 499." None of my findings indicated that the exam had to be proctored.

Task 4. Learn more about Blackboard as a possible tool to administer the Exit Exam.

My first step was to analyze the current Blackboard, paying particular attention to the FAQ section. I have contacted FCTL for assistance. I have yet to hear from the person my request was assigned to.

This is the information on the present webpage:

- **Welcome Section**: Currently, when students open the BB page for the Exit Exam, it brings them to a Welcome page that has a brief explanation on it. It explains that if they are viewing this page, then they are most likely seniors preparing to graduate. It explains the material available on the page to help answer students' questions, and it also gives contact information if they have further questions after viewing the information. I think this Welcome section is very helpful, and should remain. I would only make minor adjustments to it.
- **Tabs**: The tabs/links on the left that guide students to more information about the exam should be expanded. There are currently only four: Welcome, About the Exam, Frequently Asked Questions, and Help (this link takes students to a help page for BB, not help on the exam).
  - <u>Welcome</u>: As stated above, the purpose of this section is very useful and should be kept, with only minor adjustments made. Visually, it might help if there were more space inbetween paragraphs. The paragraphs are not very distinguishable right now.
  - <u>About the Exam</u>: This link contains a lot of information. I think the information should be divided into separate, distinct links. The current subcategories are:
    - General Information (students have to click on the link to access this information, which then takes students the Assessment Office's website)
    - Exam Day Instructions
    - University Exit Exam Schedule
    - Rescheduling an Exam
    - Missed Exams
    - Sample Exam Questions
    - Information for International Students
    - Information for Students with Disabilities
  - <u>Frequently Asked Questions</u>: List of current FAQ's:
    - Do I have to take this exam?
    - What does the exam cover?
    - When will my degree audit and transcript show that I have completed GEN 499?
    - How and when can I get my exam score?
    - How are the exam scores used?
    - Will I get a grade for GEN 499?
  - <u>Help</u>: This link takes students to a help page for issues related to Blackboard.

Task 5: Observe Exit Exams

I have observed one Exit Exam section. My main observations were that when there are 200 students in the room, passing out and collecting exams becomes a lengthy process. Taking attendance also takes a while. If it doesn't conflict with policy, already having exams on the desks, and then telling students they must sit where exams are located, would be a better solution. Also keeping all papers and surveys inside test booklets would save time, as Ryan already does. The script, however, asks students to pass any surveys to the left or right for separate collection.

Issues to Consider

Task 6. What issues need to be considered for the transition?

- There are several webpages that direct students to the Assessment Office for any information regarding Exit Exams. These pages need to be updated.
- Kelly is listed as the instructor for the Exit Exam on the registration page. We should list a new instructor.
- We need to switch over Blackboard administration.
- Susan responds to student inquiries and sends out reminder e-mails. Who is going to take over this task?
- Proctors' timesheets are approved by Susan. A *Time Entry Approver* form needs to be submitted to the Payroll office to allow a new approver.

Task 7. What needs to be done if moving to unproctored and online?

- Students already enrolled in GEN 499 this semester would need to be notified of the change.
- Instructors of GEP 101, advisors, etc. will need to be aware of the change, since they might be discussing Exit Exams with their students.
- The Financial Aid office has started asking us to pass out information sheets to students about paying students loans. Maybe they could have senior capstone instructors pass it out to students instead. They could also e-mail this sheet to students.
- Students could take the exam whenever they wanted—how often would we update grades in Banner to show they passed GEN 499? Could Banner automatically do this?
- When would exam scores be uploaded in Banner? We currently do this at the end of the semester, the day before the next semester begins. Students have that much time to take the exam and still graduate in the same semester.
- We will need to create courses soon for GEN 499 for the summer and fall. Will we want to do multiple sections, sections by block, or just one session?
- The West Plains campus will need to be contacted. They usually administer the exam once a semester.
- Proctors are also need to be considered. They are hired for the entire spring semester.

Updating Blackboard:

The Welcome Page: We should address the change to moving online, how it helps students, makes the process more convenient for them, etc.

About the Exam
- *General Information*: this is just a link that takes students to the Assessment's webpage and gives exam information, without any information included. This needs to be changed/updated. A quick fix would be just deleting the hyperlink and adding the actual information under this heading.
- *Exam Day Instructions*: this should just be deleted. We could change this section to "How to Take the Exam." We could have instructions listed here for taking the exam. I am looking at other university's websites who offer the ETS Proficiency Profile online, and examining their instructions.
- *University Exit Exam Schedule*: this can be deleted.
- *Rescheduling an Exam*: this can be deleted.
- *Missed Exams*: this can be deleted.
- *Sample Exam Questions*: this is still relevant. Keep.
- *Information for International Students*: This section should probably be kept, but updated. Students have complained in the past that the exam is unfair since it is in English. We can't do anything about that, though. Usually international students are advised to do the math section first, and return to the more difficult questions later. We could just replace the current sections with the instructions and advice international students would usually be given during their section. **Correction Susan noted in this section: Exam is 40 minutes long, not 45.**
- *Information for Students with Disabilities*: this should be kept verbatim.

Revised FAQ
- Do I have to take the test on campus/can I take the exam at home on a personal computer?
- What do I do if I don't have a personal computer?
- What if I am unable to take the exam online and need to take it with paper and pencil?
- I accidentally closed the browser when taking the exam. What do I do now?
- Do I have to pass the exam to graduate?
- Can or do I need to study for the exam?
- How do I take the exam?
- Do I have to take this exam?
- What does this exam cover?
- **When will my degree audit and transcript show that I have completed GEN 499?** Since this will be online, when will we make these updates? Will we just run monthly reports, or make updates at the end of the semester? Is the system able to automatically report this? Students will want to quickly know that they have successfully completed this component.
- **How and when can I get my exam score?** Will this information stay the same? Will students still have to wait until after the end of the semester? Or will we receive scores faster now?
- How are the exam scores used?
- Will I get a grade for GEN 499?

Discussion Board: This does not exist yet. This addition would allow students to discuss technical problems, questions about the exam, etc. without having to e-mail.