

MA in Applied Anthropology Proposal Review #3

In view of the short time remaining to submit my review, I will be very brief. If there are questions, please contact me for further explanation. In general, the IUPUI Anthropology Department is ideally suited to offer an MA in Applied Anthropology. Faculty accomplishments and the range of expertise they collectively represent offer a strong foundation for this program. There is a demonstrated need within the region and strong ties between the department and relevant agencies within the city and beyond. Productive partnerships have been established. The larger mission and presence of the University, especially its commitment to community engagement, further enhances the suitability of this program and its potentially valuable contribution to the larger goals of IUPUI.

1. Appropriateness of curriculum:

The proposed requirements are quite appropriate, but I have a few concerns.

The number of electives is relatively large, especially in view of the limited number of courses available. The special topics option permits development of new courses that can establish more choice, but these should be relatively quickly formalized into predictable offerings that cohere around defined specializations, if not tracks. In the early stages of the program the large number of electives will pose problems in creating individual programs that can deliver all of the needed courses within a reasonable time frame. A directed readings/individual research course option should be included in the curriculum so faculty can develop individualized courses for students that meet elective requirements.

A great deal of effort by advisors, along with careful coordination among faculty who are working with students, will be required to make workable plans for students. This need will cause added burdens in the early stages, but the limits on enrollment should make it workable.

The capstone requirement is somewhat ambiguous. The internship option is very sensible, but the role of agency supervisor is not well defined, and the final product of this option is similarly unclear from the document. Will there be an agency report that has academic integrity, but is also useful to the sponsor? Is there an inherent research requirement associated with internship, or are reflections on practice and recommendations to the program/agency sufficient?

Will the thesis option be specifically based on original research? Similarly, with the publishable research option, does this require original research, or could the student write a review article of publishable quality? If original research is the goal, what process will be in place for faculty advisement and proposal approval? Will students have committees? If so, what roles will the committee play?

2. Rigor of program:

The small size of the faculty at the present necessitates courses that combine undergraduates and graduate students. Extra effort will be needed to ensure distinctions in effort and evaluation of graduate students.

Given the quality of the faculty involved, there is no reason to doubt that the program will be rigorous. Detailed procedures for monitoring and evaluation have been developed.

Faculty research cannot be allowed to suffer from the extra effort that will be required to launch this program. These activities are critical to the quality of the program. Further, external research grants can provide financial support for graduate students and opportunities for direct involvement in research. The administration should provide incentives and release to aid in the maintenance and expansion of faculty research programs

3. Adequacy of faculty resources:

The faculty have excellent credentials and provide an appropriate diversity of specialties. The number of faculty is low in relation to the demands that the MA program will place on them. High priority should be given to recruiting new faculty for Anthropology. Additionally, graduate assistantships will provide help for faculty, important training for students, and support for the timely completion of their programs. The administration and graduate school should also give high priority to making these available.

4. Adequacy of physical plant and equipment:

The offices, labs, and storage/curation facilities for Anthropology are woefully inadequate. Graduate students need a space to gather and work space for graduate assistants.

5. Other comments and observations:

The recruitment strategy outlined in the proposal is both innovative and appropriate. Bringing undergraduates into the program early and marketing to working professionals in the city are sensible choices. One caution, however, with transitioning the undergraduates involves fulfilling their need for electives. It is likely that they already will have taken many of the eligible courses, now combined for graduate enrollment. How will this redundancy be addressed? Will they retake augmented versions? In appealing to working professionals, what provisions have been made for those whose BA degrees are not in anthropology? Establishing a shortened path to meeting deficiencies in undergraduate training would aid in this recruitment. Students with different backgrounds also can enrich courses and bring interdisciplinary perspectives.