

**Petition from the UW-Madison Religious Studies Program for Authorization to Implement a New Academic Program, April 26, 2000, [pp. 10-11]**

4.4 - Method of Assessment or Evaluation

The Program will assess the degree to which it is accomplishing its academic objects (see *supra*, 4.1) in at least three ways:

1. Course evaluations by students: As mandated by the Program's Legislative Code (II.1.1.1), all instructors must conduct a course evaluation every semester. Such evaluations provide detailed data concerning instructors' performance—and hence the degree to which students believe they have been satisfactorily informed about religious traditions and approaches to the study of religion.
- b. Student exit surveys (see Appendix 3): Each semester, graduating seniors will be asked to respond to a survey about their experience within the major. The short answers will indicate how students feel the Program achieved each of its five stated objectives, and the written comments will spotlight strengths, reveal weaknesses, and suggest improvements.
- c. Faculty evaluation of student achievement: Every Religious Studies major must take the seminar, a capstone course prerequisite for the individual research essay. Enrollment is limited to fifteen, and students must write at least one substantial paper. Every semester the Program will collect a copy of each student's essay. A random sample of the papers will be distributed to the Steering Committee, with one going to every two members (the Director will be included if necessary to make an even number of members). Each two-person “team” will rank its essay on a scale of 0 to 4 on how well it 1) to assesses scholarly literature on religion, 2) develops a cogent argument based on research into the assigned paper topics, and 3) presents its conclusions clearly—the three measures cited in paragraph 5 of the Program “Mission Statement.” Once all the papers have been ranked, the Steering Committee shall discuss the results and take appropriate action.

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4.1 - Objectives

The proposed baccalaureate degree of the Religious Studies Program at UW-Madison offers an integrated curriculum in the academic study of the world's faiths that covers the subject comprehensively, providing courses on both classical and popular traditions across six continents and five millennia.

The Program Mission Statement encapsulates the major's central academic objectives:

“The Program in Religious Studies is designed to cultivate a knowledge of religion in all its aspects by bringing a range of analytic vocabularies to bear. Students earning a degree in Religious Studies are expected to:

1. examine a variety of the world's religious traditions;
2. understand at least one tradition in depth;
3. become familiar with manifestations of religious awe in such things as texts, rituals, social institutions, and personal expression;
4. understand different methodological approaches to religion;
5. assess scholarly literatures on religion, conduct their own research into the subject, and present their conclusions clearly in speech and writing.

Accordingly, a baccalaureate degree in Religious Studies requires students not only to complete a series of courses, but also to acquire the skills to analyze religion and to communicate their findings cogently.”