

New Mexico State University

Detailed Assessment Report 2015 - 2016 History Undergraduate

As of: 12/07/2016 10:10 AM MDT

(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked **One-Time, Recurring, No Request**.)

Mission / Purpose

The Department of History, in accord with the Land Grant mission of New Mexico State University, prepares students for citizenship and careers with a knowledge of historical events, skills in research and analytical thinking, including the understanding and use of primary and secondary sources, and the ability to write clear expository prose presenting arguments based on evidence.

Goals/Objectives

G 1: To develop understanding and appreciation of primary and secondary sources.

Students will develop the ability to use both primary and secondary sources in research and writing. They will understand the difference between primary sources, of all types, and works of secondary scholarship based upon such sources.

G 2: To write clear expository prose, with argumentation based on evidence.

Students will develop the ability to write research based papers or essays. They will be able to use clear expository writing, and to present arguments based on their research and analysis, citing evidence to support their claims.

G 3: Develop an awareness and understanding of historiography.

Students will develop an understanding of how historical argument and styles of presentation have changed and developed over time. Students will be able to identify major schools of historical thought and interpretation, and relate their own work to existing historiographic discourse.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

S 1: A paper using primary sources to present a contextualized historical argument.

Students in designated upper division courses will produce a substantial research paper using primary sources, developing an argument based on those sources, relating that argument to existing secondary scholarship, and situating the state of the field and the current research project within a historiographic discourse.

Relevant Associations:

General Education / State Common Core Associations

- 5.1 Analyze and critically interpret significant primary texts and/or works of art (this includes fine art, literature, music, theatre, and film).
- 5.2 Compare art forms, modes of thought and expression, and processes across a range of historical periods and/or structures (such as political, geographic, economic, social, cultural, religious, intellectual).
- 5.3 Recognize and articulate the diversity of human experience across a range of historical periods and/or cultural perspectives.
- 5.4 Draw on historical and/or cultural perspectives to evaluate any or all of the following: contemporary problems/issues, contemporary modes of expression, and contemporary thought.

Baccalaureate Experience Learning Objectives Associations

- 1 Academically Prepared - Students have discipline-specific and broad general education knowledge and are intellectually prepared for entry into a professional field and/or graduate studies.
- 2 Life-Long Learning - Students are self-motivated, active, intentional and habitual consumers of new learning experiences and take responsibility for their own learning.
- 4 Self-Awareness - Students are keenly aware of their own biases and the biases of others, and regularly take into account these biases when processing information and forming judgements.
- 6 Information Literacy - Students consistently, successfully and efficiently find and evaluate information and use it in appropriate and ethical ways.
- 9 Critical Thinking - Students are in the habit of being purposeful and forward-thinking when forming judgments, solving problems or making decisions; they regularly evaluate, analyze and interpret situations before acting, and are skillful in using inference in decision-making processes.

Strategic Plan Associations

Arts and Sciences College

- 1.1 Goal 1: Provide students with a high quality education in the arts, humanities, social sciences and sciences, at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels.
- 1.2 Goal 2: Promote discovery through scholarship and creative activity, encourage innovation and dissemination, spark economic advancement, and inspire a culture of excellence.

Related Measures

M 1: Research Paper

Students will be assessed on their skills in using primary sources in history through an evaluation of their final research papers in History 398: Historians and History. Students will be evaluated on three aspects of how they use primary sources in their papers: 1) the adequacy and relevance of the primary sources used in the paper, 2) the contextualization of the primary sources in the paper, 3) the use of the primary sources to support the historical argument(s) presented in the paper. History 398 is the only course required for all history majors. The main requirement in this course is a major research paper based on primary sources. For the assessment, all papers completed by the students in all sections of this course were used. The assessment will be conducted by two faculty members who did not teach these sections.

Source of Evidence: Written assignment(s), usually scored by a rubric

Target:

The assessment will use the final research papers from History 398: Historians and History. The target achievement is a score of 6.0 on the scale of 1.0-10.0. [1.0-2.0 = beginning; 3.0-5.0 = developing; 6.0-8.0 = satisfactory; 9.0-10.0.0 = mastery]. We want at least 75% of the students assessed to achieve this target level.

Finding (2015 - 2016) - Target: Not Met

We assessed student papers from both the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters. The assessment was performed on the final research papers for students enrolled Hist 398 for the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters. The assessments were made by two faculty members not responsible for these classes and the results were averaged. Three aspects of the use of primary sources in these papers were assessed: 1) the adequacy and relevance of the primary sources used in the paper, 2) the contextualization of the primary sources in the paper, 3) the use of the primary sources to support the historical argument(s) presented in the paper. The target is for 75% of the students to score 6 or higher for each of the three aspects. Please note the following circumstance: For Hist 398, every semester a number of students enroll in the class but either drop out or do not complete the final paper. These students are not included in this assessment. The assessment is only for students who handed in a complete paper. HIST 398 FA15-SPR16: A total of 16 papers were assessed. 1. 5.0 5.0 5.5 5.17 2. 6.0 6.0 6.0 6.0 3. 7.5 6.5 6.5 6.83 4. 4.0 4.5 4.5 4.33 5. 4.5 4.5 5.0 4.67 6. 6.5 7.0 6.5 6.67 7. 6.5 6.5 7.0 6.67 1. 4.5 5.0 5.0 4.83 2. 4.5 5.0 5.0 4.83 3. 5.5 6.0 6.0 5.83 4. 5.5 5.5 5.5 5.5 5. 6.0 6.0 6.0 6.0 6. 4.5 4.0 4.5 4.33 7. 5.0 4.5 5.0 4.83 8. 5.0 4.5 5.5 5.0 9. 6.0 5.5 5.5 5.67 A total of 5 of 16 achieved a score of 6.0 or higher, or 31%.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

For full information, see the *Details of Action Plans* section of this report.

Action Plan for Research Papers in Hist 398

Established in Cycle: 2014 - 2015

The results from the assessment for the research papers from students in Hist 398 were discussed in several departmental meeting...

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Action Plan for Research Papers in Hist 398

The results from the assessment for the research papers from students in Hist 398 were discussed in several departmental meetings and sessions of the departmental curriculum review committee during the 2015-2016 academic year as well as at the August 2016 faculty meeting. The faculty members decided to continue using research papers from Hist 398 and to assess the same components in order to use the baseline results as markers for assessing the use of primary sources, which is at the core of the historical method. The department will work to develop additional ways to emphasize the proper use of primary sources in Hist 398. In addition, the faculty will work to include pertinent aspects of writing research papers in other classes in order to better prepare all students for Hist 398. In addition, the history faculty has established a Writing Center staffed by selected history graduate students. The history faculty discussed the results of this past year's Outcomes Assessment and decided that an appropriate way to improve writing on the research papers being assessed would be to have each student in Hist 398 be required to consult with the staff of the Writing Center at multiple times while writing their research papers. This should not only assist in helping the weaker students with their writing but all students.

Established in Cycle: 2014 - 2015

Implementation Status: In-Progress

Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome):

Measure: Research Paper | **Outcome:** A paper using primary sources to present a contextualized historical argument.

Implementation Description: The department decided to continue assessing the research papers from Hist 398 . The department asked the faculty members who teach this course to emphasize the proper use of primary sources in the research papers written by the students.

Responsible Person/Group: Nathan Brooks

Additional Resources: None.

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

1. Engagement: How did you engage faculty, administrators, staff, students and/or other stakeholders in discussing results of the assessment and determining the effectiveness of the assessment in measuring the identified outcome(s)? Include meeting dates, topics of discussions, audience and any decisions made.

The faculty members in the history department discussed the Outcomes Assessment results for the 2015-2016 academic year at the August 2016 meeting. Also, the faculty discussed the ongoing assessment during that academic year (fall 2015-spring 2016). The faculty discussed the results of the UG assessment that used the papers from Hist 398: Historians and History for both the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semesters. The faculty discussed whether to continue using the papers from Hist 398 and it was decided to continue this practice as these papers are the best vehicle for determining how history majors can actually do history. The faculty members recognized that the basic questions and assessment categories are the same for both UG and Grad students, as the skills needed to be historians are common to both UG and Grad students. The faculty simply expects Grad students to show these skills at a more developed and refined level. The faculty decided to require that students in Hist 398 consult with the History Department Writing Center at multiple times prior to depositing their final papers. This requirement is to ensure that students be able to revise their papers throughout the writing process rather than do an overall revision.

2. Impact: Discuss the impact of your assessment. Does the data collected answer the question you had about the intended outcome? If not, why? Did you learn anything about the intended outcome you did not anticipate? If so, what? Did the assessment provide sufficient information about the outcome that you can now make informed decisions about programs/practices or specific, directed improvements to programs/practices?

The assessment results show that the UG students for the 2015-2016 academic year needed substantial help to improve their writing. While all of the students who submitted papers met the minimal requirements, only a relatively small percentage of students achieved a satisfactory level. This results tends to confirm the widely held belief by history

department faculty members that our students need significant help and assistance to improve their writing. The history dept. faculty have long been stressing the importance of requiring research papers in upper-division classes, not only in Hist 398. It is hoped that continued stress on this requirement will gradually lead to improvements in the papers submitted for Hist 398. In that regard, the history faculty believe that the mandatory requirement for Hist 398 students to consult with the staff of the History Department Writing Center at multiple times prior to submitting the final version of their research papers should have a positive effect on the quality of the final papers.

3. What specifically did your assessment show regarding proven strengths or progress you made on outcomes/objectives? (Strengths)

The results of the Outcomes Assessment for UG students showed that these students had weaker skills in writing than did the Grad students. While the faculty recognized that the UG students would have weaker writing skills, the extent of this weakness was surprising to many. The faculty believe that this weakness can begin to be addressed through consultations with the staff of the Writing Center. In addition, the faculty decided to make multiple meetings with the staff of the Writing Center a requirement for Hist 398 students. In this way, the Hist 398 students will have the opportunity to develop their writing over the span of the whole semester rather than doing a quick revision at the end of the semester.

4. What specifically did your assessment show regarding opportunities for improvement. Describe how you intend to address those issues over the next year. If you met all targets, what specifically do you intend to do in the next assessment cycle to promote continuous improvement in your area?

As discussed in the previous sections, the Outcomes Assessment for UG students showed considerable weakness in different phases of historical writing. The faculty decided to make it mandatory for Hist 398 students to consult with the staff of the Writing Center at multiple times prior to turning in the final version of their research papers. This should help improve different aspects of the students' writing. Furthermore, this requirement should assist the instructors for Hist 398 to be able to offer more guided assistance to students in this class.

5. Specifically, what have you learned about your program, and/or your students' learning?

The history department faculty believe that the results of the Outcomes Assessment for UG students continue to demonstrate how important it is for the faculty to stress the importance of writing research papers. While the UG students might have developed a skill at answering essay questions on exams, the real measure of being an historian is writing sound research papers. Thus, while the department's faculty believes that the outcomes are clear, we also need to improve how we as a faculty act to make sure our students have the requisite skills to accomplish this requirement. The main OA vehicle is the research papers in Hist 398, but shorter papers in other classes could assist in preparing students for the capstone requirement in Hist 398.

6. Provide a brief summary of your program, department, or unit's activities in the current assessment cycle. You might want to describe a major accomplishment or explain how your area contributed to Baccalaureate Experience learning, or to Vision 2020. Alternatively you may want to discuss how your program is using this assessment to inform decisions and actions for improvement. This summary should be appropriate for broad audiences.

The history department faculty discussed the format of the Outcomes Assessment for both UG and Grad students at various meetings of the faculty during the regular faculty meetings and at meetings of the curriculum committee. The faculty discussed what was the best vehicle for conducting the assessment and what questions should be asked. These discussions contributed to wider discussions of what the history faculty wanted our students to be able to do with a history degree and what skills we wanted our students to exhibit. The faculty believe that integrating the new History Department Writing Center into the structure of the paper-writing process in Hist 398 will act to improve the quality of the research papers produced for this course.