

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in _____ Annual Reports
GRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT _____ History _____ **DATE** _____ March 14, 2011 _____

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW _____ Eric E. Johnson, Barbara Combs, Raina Urton

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|---------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced? | YES <u>X</u> _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |
| • If so, were goals well articulated? | YES <u>X</u> _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |
| • Do goals address student learning? | YES <u>X</u> _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |

Comments:

Learning goals for the M.A. program and for the D.A./Ph.D. Program were well-articulated.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced? | YES <u>X</u> _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>X</u> _____ |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? | YES _____ | NO <u>X</u> _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |

Comments:

The annual report states that mandatory courses, plus the degree's research product (thesis, project, or dissertation) will be used for assessment data, but the annual report does not describe how or what assessment data is gathered from these sources. The annual report also states that “[p]ortfolio construction and review is our preferred methodology.” It is relatively easy to see how this methodology might lend itself to grading and tracking fulfillment of degree requirements, but it is not obvious how such a methodology evinces assessment, per se. The annual report states that “[f]or each piece of work placed in the portfolio a very simple assessment tool will be utilized. It will indicate four basic categories: 1) outstanding; 2) meets expectations; 3) falls slightly short of expectations; 4) falls significantly short of expectations.” A copy of this tool is not included in the Annual Report or assessment plan, so it is not clear whether the tool is completely developed with each of the categories fully described (What are the elements of an outstanding product?). Also, it is not clear whether the assessment tool has been aligned with learning goals. Without these two elements in place, the assessment measure is likely to have more value.

According to the annual report, the “main form of assessment” used by the History Department for graduate students is committee-level meetings among the student, advisor, and committee to discuss progress, strengths and weaknesses. This would appear to be a form of assessment that is informal and unstructured, a kind that exists outside of the formalized assessment program as articulated in the 2005 assessment plan. By contrast, current standards call for formalized assessment.

The annual report does not disclose specific evidence of indirect assessment methods.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- | | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Were any assessment results reported? | YES _____ | NO <u>X</u> _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |
| • If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals? | YES _____ | NO _____ | QUALIFIED Y/N _____ |

- If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement? YES____ NO____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- Were the results tied to goals for student learning? YES____ NO____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

The annual report did not disclose evidence of assessment results tied to measures articulated in the 2005 assessment plan. They did refer to discussions about students at committee level meetings as noted in 2 above.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?

YES____ NO_X__ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

- If so, do curricular or other improvements/ changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning? YES____ NO____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

Although no closing the loop actions were taken on the basis of assessments as articulated in the 2005 assessment plan, the annual report states that discussions within departmental meetings concerning progress of students has led to a decision to restructure the M.A. program.

SUMMARY

Strengths

- ☐ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☐ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- ☐ Assessment methods are clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
- ☐ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
- ☐ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
- ☐ Results are reported.
- ☐ Results are tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

Areas for Improvement

- ☐ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
- ☐ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
- ☒ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
- ☐ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
- ☒ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
- ☒ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
- ☒ No results are reported.
- ☒ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
(Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The History Department has very well-articulated learning objectives; however, there is a lack of evidence of assessment of achievement of those objectives. The assessment plan as written and as enacted appears to be very different. It is possible that the more formalized plan utilizing the portfolio contents and accompanying rubric, may not be developed enough to be useful to the department and so more informal discussions have filled the void. The History Department might benefit from revisiting the 2005 plan and revising it to include multiple measures (direct and indirect) aligned with student learning goals. We encourage the department to work with Joan Hawthorne or any of the assessment consultants listed on the assessment web page at <http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/datacol/assessment/Plan/Assessment%20Consultants.pdf> as needed to revise their plan.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- ☒ Annual report
- ☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)
- ☐ Other (please describe)
- ☒ Assessment plan (as posted)
- ☒ Previous assessment review

Reviewer(s):	Name	_____	_____	_____
	Department	_____	_____	_____
	Phone Number	_____	_____	_____
	e-mail	_____	_____	_____

Section 1: _____ Section 2: _____ Section 3: _____ Section 4: _____

Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well
- N = no, this is not done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning
- NA = no information available
- ? = action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done

UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE
Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in _____ Annual Reports
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT ___History_____ **DATE** ___March 14, 2011_____

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW _Eric E. Johnson, Barbara Combs, Raina Urton

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|--------|-------------------|
| • Were any goals referenced? | YES <u>X</u> ___ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___ |
| • If so, were goals well articulated? | YES <u>X</u> ___ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___ |
| • Do goals address student learning? | YES <u>X</u> ___ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___ |

Comments:

The history department lists three broad areas for goals (affective, behavioral and cognitive) in their 2005 assessment plan and each area has 3-7 learning outcomes.

In addition to the Departmental goals, please also consider UND's Institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses). Use 'U' (undergraduate) to identify UND/Essential Studies goals which are similar to the referenced departmental goals.

- X___ 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
X___ 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
X___ 3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
____ 4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
X___ 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
X___ 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
X___ 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
X___ 8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding departmental goals and alignment of departmental goals with institutional and Essential Studies goals:

The History Department's undergraduate education goals were clearly articulated and encompassed subject matter for all Essential Studies goals except quantitative reasoning.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

- | | | | |
|--|------------------|--------|----------------------------|
| Were any specific assessment methods referenced? | YES <u>X</u> ___ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___ |
| • If so, were specifically chosen assessment methods appropriately aligned with individual goals? | YES _____ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>X</u> ___ |
| • Were both direct and indirect assessment methods used as components of a “multiple measures” approach? | YES <u>X</u> ___ | NO ___ | QUALIFIED Y/N ___ |

Comments:

As per the Annual Report, the History Department uses a direct method of assessment consisting of two rubric-evaluated writing assignments for assessment in its freshman-level survey classes, each involving as many as 150 students. For upper-level core courses for majors, the assessment methods employed by the History Department are not entirely clear. The annual report states that the “classes are assessed utilizing a rubric,” and it appears that the product being assessed is a written argument but it is unclear whether it is an in-class essay, an out-of-class writing assignment, the original research paper that is described, or some other written product. The annual report does disclose both direct and indirect methods of assessment; however, the only mode of indirect assessment employed appears to be university-standard USAT student evaluation forms.

While the History Department goals are wide-ranging, the assessment methods seem to concentrate solely on critical thinking. Other goals did not appear to be assessed.

Methods of assessment referenced in the History Department assessment plan were not referenced in the annual report. For instance, the assessment plan includes direct measures such as a pre-post course quiz, papers, presentations, etc. all gathered into a portfolio and an exit interview and alumni survey as indirect measures, but none of these were referenced in the annual report.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
• Were the results tied to goals for student learning?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

Assessment results were reported in a conclusory way. The annual report says that the results of the rubric-evaluated in-class writing assignments in the freshman survey courses show “marked improvement in critical thinking skills.” The annual report did not, however, provide any supporting detail explaining how this conclusion was reached. Similarly, the annual report said that USAT data illustrates that students’ critical-thinking abilities are being expanded, but no supporting detail or examples were provided.

With regard to the core courses for majors, the annual report discloses a “disconnect” between skills learned in one course and the application of those skills in another course. The report did not, however, explain that disconnect with reference to articulated goals.

In addition to departmental goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Use ‘U’ (undergraduate) to identify those results which are applicable to institutional/Essential Studies goal achievement. For indicated items, please describe findings in the appropriate section below. .

<input type="checkbox"/>	1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning (“apply empirical data...analyze graphical information”)
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
<input type="checkbox"/>	8 Service/citizenship (“share responsibility both for their communities and for the world”)

Comments regarding results and the application of results to departmental, institutional and Essential Studies goals:

As noted in item 2 above, only critical thinking was addressed in assessment results.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>
• If so, do curricular or other improvements/changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning?	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QUALIFIED Y/N <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

The annual report indicates that in the current academic year the department's Undergraduate Committee has been charged with, among other things, rethinking the two core courses. It is not clear from the annual report what goals for student learning, if any, are addressed by this process.

Additionally, the annual report discloses a rethinking of assessment activities. The annual report states that the Undergraduate Committee is exploring ways to expand assessment. Additionally, the annual report states that there is a need to better define Department's learning outcomes, which are perceived as very broad and requiring too much time and effort to be completely assessed. It may be that the department would benefit from assessing separate goals over a period of years rather than every goal every year.

SUMMARY***Strengths***

- ☒ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
☒ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
☐ Assessment methods are clearly described.
☐ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.
☐ Assessment methods are well-implemented.
☐ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.
☐ Results are reported.
☐ Results are tied to closing the loop.
 (Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

Areas for Improvement

- ☐ No specific plan for assessment is in place.
☐ Student learning goals are not well-articulated.
☒ Assessment methods are not clearly described.
☐ Assessment methods are not appropriately selected.
☐ Assessment methods are not well-implemented.
☐ A single type of assessment methods predominates.
☐ No results are reported.
☐ Results are not clearly tied to closing the loop.
 (Decision-making is not directly tied to evidence.)

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The History Department has a well articulated assessment plan for its undergraduate education.

There appears to be a disconnect between the assessment plan reported in 2005 and that enacted in the Annual Report. It may be that the department's 2005 plan is too complex or cumbersome to implement as written. It may be that three broad learning goals: writing skills, research skills, and the development of the historical imagination (also described in the assessment plan) may be at the heart of student learning goals and assessment. We suggest that developing clearly articulated goals and objectives in these three areas may lead to a more workable plan.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- ☒ Annual report
☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)
☐ Other (please describe)
- ☒ Assessment plan (as posted)
☒ Previous assessment review

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Section 1: ☐ Y ☐ N Section 2: ☐ Y ☐ N Section 3: ☐ ? ☐ NA Section 4: ☐ ? ☐ NA

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