

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

DEPARTMENT Sociology **DATE** February, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW Barbara Combs, Eric Johnson and Raina Urton

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

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

Comments:

The Assessment Plan currently posted on the website is not the same as that described in the Annual Report. The Department indicated that the revised plan will be posted this academic year. It appears that several goals in the former plan (goals 3-8) have been collapsed into a single goal (goal 3) in the revised plan. In the Annual Report, the department lists five goals, outcomes for each and describes assessment methods for each—listed under “Assessment Tool”. Goal 1: Develop a professional identity, Goal 2: Adhere to a set of ethical standards in their professional endeavors and Goal 5: Explore career options and find employment in an appropriate setting do not appear to address student learning. Goal 3: Demonstrate basic competence in foundational areas as contained in the core courses of the graduate program addresses student learning. Goal 4: Demonstrate ability to conduct sociological research, culminating in the successful completion of a master’s thesis has the potential to address student learning but the current wording does not describe what is expected other than the successful completion of the thesis based upon a standard format.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

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

Comments:

Assessment methods for each goal were listed most often in the form of actions that students or faculty were to take to document that the goal had been addressed. For student learning goal 3, students were to read a journal article at the beginning and end of their course courses and identify the following: “the sociological question, theoretical orientation, propositions, major concepts, research hypothesis, measurement of concepts, the dependent and independent variables, unit of analysis, data source, kinds of analysis used, statistical tests used and their purposes, the major results, whether the results support the proposition, and the sociological significance of the results”. It is not clear whether the faculty reviewing the paper uses a descriptive rubric or checklist to assess the level at which students accomplish this task. For student learning goal 5, the “standard format” provided to faculty is used to evaluate whether the students meet the standards for a thesis. There is no description of the format or information about the standards are other than a list of levels (does not meet, meets, exceeds expectations). It appears that only direct measures are used.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

- If so, were the results clear in terms of how they indicate need for improvement? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- Were the results tied to goals for student learning? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

The Annual Report included assessment results that focused on goal 3, assessment 3.1. Students were given an article to respond to as a take home assignment. As noted in #2 above the manner in which this assignment was assessed (rubric, checklist, etc.) was not described. Results noted that the majority of students were successful overall with some weakness noted in the following areas: "being able to identify the theoretical orientation of the study; identifying the study's hypotheses; and to a lesser degree, accurately articulating the operationalizations of the variables and articulation of a connection between the results to the research question". The Annual Report also included a statement indicating that that ongoing assessment efforts related to goals 3 and 5 demonstrated that students were less prepared to conduct research than faculty expected.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

- Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____
- If so, do curricular or other improvements/changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning? YES X NO ____ QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

In response to results indicating weakness in students' capacity to conduct research and because 50% of students in the masters are UND undergraduates in Sociology, the newly required undergraduate Capstone Course has been designed to require students to write an empirical research report. As noted in the report, "students who apply to the M.A. program from elsewhere will be asked to submit a capstone project if one was completed, or in lieu of that their best piece of empirical sociology." The undergraduate thesis will serve as a pre-test and the master's thesis will serve as the post-test measuring student's ability to successfully address goal 4.

SUMMARY

Strengths

Areas for Improvement

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

- ____ 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 Department of Sociology has a dynamic assessment plan. It is clear that the department continues to implement the assessment cycle fully and makes changes in the plan, goals and assessment methods which are driven by assessment results.

The Department has indicated that they will submit an updated plan in this academic year and we encourage them to do so. We also encourage them to include more detailed information related to tools of assessment. The Assessment Tool section described in the annual report is more often an action that a faculty member or student must complete (write a paper, examine results) rather than an explanation as to what tool or process is used to assess the product (response to journal article, master's thesis). Such inclusion would help the reader better understand the results of assessment and closing the loop activities. We are not suggesting that the description of the assessment process (or rubric, checklist, etc.) be included in the annual report; rather, that it be described more fully and added to the assessment plan. Finally, we suggest that the

department explore the development of indirect measures such as an exit survey to assess students perceptions of learning related to goals 3 and 5 as well as other goals where appropriate.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual report	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment plan (as posted)
<input type="checkbox"/> Appendices (cited in annual report)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Previous assessment review
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe)	

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

Section 1: ☐Y_____ Section 2: ☐Y_____ Section 3: ☐Y_____ Section 4: ☐Y_____

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 2010 Annual Reports
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT Sociology DATE February, 2011

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

1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

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

Comments:

Three goals and subsequent student learning outcomes were provided. All were well articulated with the exception of Objective b for Goal 1: "Apply the sociological imagination" which may be too vague for students to understand what is expected and too difficult to assess.

In addition to the Departmental goals, please also consider UND's Institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses).

- | | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| <u> </u> | 1 | Communication – written or oral ("able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience") |
| <u>X</u> | 2 | Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or "be intellectually curious"; analyze, synthesize, evaluate) |
| <u> </u> | 3 | Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or "be intellectually creative"; explore, discover, engage) |
| <u>X</u> | 4 | Thinking and reasoning – quantitative reasoning ("apply empirical data...analyze graphical information") |
| <u> </u> | 5 | Information literacy ("be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use") |
| <u> </u> | 6 | Diversity ("demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...") |
| <u> </u> | 7 | Lifelong learning ("commit themselves to lifelong learning") |
| <u> </u> | 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 alignment among Institutional, Essential Studies and Departmental goals was not immediately clear from the list provided in the Assessment Plan and Annual report. It does appear that Departmental Goal 3, Objective c aligns with Institutional and ES goals 2 & 4. Also, several Essential Studies courses are listed in a chart in the Assessment Plan, but the chart does not provide a clear alignment with the above goals.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODS

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

Comments:

Goal 2, objectives a and b were the focus of assessment reported in the 2010 Annual Report. Each of the objectives was assessed at the course level. Direct measures were used including: multiple choice exams, short essay, true/false qui, essays, and final exams. Although reported as a direct measure, the final exam questions in SOC 346 might have been used as an indirect measure as well because students were to identify and discuss the "five most important things I learned this semester."

There was an expectation that students would discuss targeted sociological ideas but it may also have revealed their perceptions as to what was important in the course.

3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

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

Comments:

The annual report provided assessment results for each course aligned with Goal 2, Objectives a & b. The overall summary statement indicated that the majority of students were able to meet objectives at levels acceptable to the Department faculty. Assessments were administered across course levels (100, 200, 300, 400) and within a range of class sizes.

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

- _____ 1 Communication – written or oral (“able to write and speak in various settings with a sense of purpose/audience”)
- _____ 2 Thinking and reasoning – critical thinking (or “be intellectually curious”; analyze, synthesize, evaluate)
- _____ 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”)
- _____ 5 Information literacy (“be able to access and evaluate...for effective, efficient, and ethical use”)
- _____ 6 Diversity (“demonstrate understanding of diversity and use that understanding...”)
- _____ 7 Lifelong learning (“commit themselves to lifelong learning”)
- _____ 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:

There was no specific discussion of results in relation to institutional or ES goals; however, SOC 110, SOC 253, and SOC 361 were noted as Essential Studies courses in the assessment plan and were courses in which assessment of student learning related to Goal 2 took place. It is possible then that assessment results might address one or more of the above goals, It was not clear though since assessment results reported were taken from multiple choice exams of content learning.

4. CLOSING THE LOOP

Were any actions taken on the basis of assessment results reported?	YES _____	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N <u>X</u>
• If so, do curricular or other improvements/ changes arising from assessment results directly address goals for student learning?	YES <u>X</u>	NO ____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____

Comments:

The Department was satisfied with the results of the assessment of Goal 2, Objectives 1 and 2 and found no need to make changes. The annual report noted two changes based upon assessment conducted in AY 2007-2008. The Department identified a need to improve students' statistical proficiency. The newly developed capstone course addresses this need. In addition, faculty agreed to include greater attention to statistical proficiency in courses and more specifically the revalidation of SOC 326 includes a principal focus on data analysis and interpretation using SPSS.

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 department continues to make ongoing progress in the implementation of their assessment plan and is to be commended.

The annual report clearly ties goals and objectives to assessment methods and results. Multiple measures across course levels provide varied evidence of students adequacy in addressing Goal 2. Goal 1, Objective b seems vague and we suggest that the department revisit this objective and more clearly describe the student learning expected. The Department also notes the need to include indirect measures of assessment in the future and we support this goal.

The Assessment Plan on the web has been recently updated. The goals and objectives are stated and timeline for assessment provided. It would help readers if a brief narrative accompanied the plan. A paragraph or two briefly outlining the mission of the program and the information provided in the charts would set the context for reading the remainder of the plan.

MATERIALS REVIEWED

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual report | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment plan (as posted) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appendices (cited in annual report) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Previous assessment review |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe) | |

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

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
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