

**UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in 2012-13 Annual Reports**  
**UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT** Sociology **DATE** 4-10-14

**PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW** Bachelor's in Sociology

**COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW** Joan Hawthorne, Paul Drechsel

**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>x</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u> |
| • Do goals address student learning?  | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u> |

**Comments:**

*The Sociology program does a nice job of articulating goals for undergraduate learning in short, direct, clear language, focused explicitly on student learning. Furthermore, they have mapped their goals against their courses to ensure that all goals are addressed in the curriculum in appropriate places and an adequate number of times.*

In addition to the program goals, please also consider UND's institutional and Essential Studies goals for student learning (shown in alignment within parentheses) and identify which goals are similar to program 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)  
       3 Thinking and reasoning – creative thinking (or “be intellectually creative”; explore, discover, engage)  
  x   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 program goals and alignment with institutional and Essential Studies goals:**

*Program goals include “applying theoretical concepts to an issue,” which appears to require critical thinking. Other goals align quite directly including “analyze data statistically” (quantitative reasoning) and “use discipline-specific conventions to convey sociological information in writing” (communication).*

**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>x</u> | NO <u>    </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>    </u> |

**Comments:**

*The program uses course-based assessments, including analysis of test items and a pre/post defining features matrix for knowledge level goals. They also use various writing assignments to assess a number of the other goals, along with a senior survey regarding student perceptions. The program uses a timeline with all methods used and all goals assessed over a six year-period.*

### 3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Were any assessment results reported?	YES_x____	NO____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• If so, were the results clear in terms of how they specifically affirm achievement of goals?	YES_x____	NO____	QUALIFIED Y/N ____
• 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:**

*As might be expected given the clarity and thoroughness of the assessment plan, the assessments scheduled for use in 2012-13 were implemented and results were reported. Assessments indicated, e.g., more than 90% (percentage varying somewhat by course) of students assessed in four different classes were able to use SPSS software for analysis of statistical data. The knowledge questions assessed in the capstone yielded results showing that 91% of seniors completed the course with the knowledge goals with which the questions were aligned. The survey reinforced findings about the statistical data goal, with all of the students expressing a high degree of confidence in their skills with statistical analysis.*

In addition to program goals, some assessment results may be applicable to institutional and Essential Studies goals. Indicate any goals for which the program presents findings, and, for indicated items, describe findings 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)
- \_\_\_x\_\_\_ 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 program, institutional, and Essential Studies goals:**

*As noted above, both direct and indirect data show students are achieving intended quantitative reasoning outcomes.*

### 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:**

*The department made a significant loop-closing action, effective in 2012-13, in response to data from earlier years of assessment. They had found that students were not achieving some of the higher order goals, most particularly around statistical analysis, and they added a “tiered-structure” to the program which included requirements for more 400-level classes – where they now emphasize data analysis.*

*More minor changes to specific classes were cited as resulting from this year’s data.*

### SUMMARY

#### **Strengths**

- \_\_\_x\_\_\_ A specific plan for assessment is in place.
- \_\_\_x\_\_\_ Student learning goals are well-articulated.
- \_\_\_x\_\_\_ Assessment methods are clearly described.
- \_\_\_x\_\_\_ Assessment methods are appropriately selected.

#### **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 well-implemented.  
☒ Direct and indirect methods are implemented.  
☒ Results are reported.  
☒ Results are tied to closing the loop.  
 (Decision-making is tied to evidence.)

☐ 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:

*Faculty for the BA program in Sociology appear to have been quite successful in implementing an assessment strategy that is yielding useful data, judging by the curricular change stemming in part from assessment findings. The strength of the work seems to be rooted in a plan that is exceptionally thorough, specific, and simple (resulting in significant work, no doubt, but very straightforward with clear tasks on the docket every year).*

## MATERIALS REVIEWED

☒ Annual report  
☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)  
☐ Other (please describe)

☒ Assessment plan (as posted)  
☒ Previous assessment review

Reviewer(s):	Name	Joan Hawthorne	Paul Drechsel	
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Section 1: ☒ Y Section 2: ☒ Y Section 3: ☒ Y Section 4: ☒ Y

### Coding Key:

Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well (bearing in mind the kind of program(s) reviewed and recognizing that assessment is a cyclical process, i.e., with additional kinds of data to be collected and analyzed in other years)  
 Q = qualified yes as action or progress is apparent; however, evidence is lacking that this is completely and appropriately done  
 N = no, this is not done at all, or it is not done in relationship to student learning  
 NA = no information reported and it's unclear whether it was done

Revision 9/25/13

**UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Feedback to Academic Departments on Assessment Activities Reported in \_2012-13\_ Annual Reports**  
**GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**DEPARTMENT** Sociology **DATE** 4-10-14

**PROGRAM(S) COVERED IN REVIEW** Master of Arts in Sociology

**COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) CONDUCTING REVIEW** Joan Hawthorne, Paul Drechsel

**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>x</u> | NO <u>  </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>  </u> |
| • Do goals address student learning?  | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u>  </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>  </u> |

**Comments:**

*The plan for assessment of the graduate program was updated in 2013, although the annual report is based on assessments conducted under the old plan. The goals in the new plan are very well articulated – a clear improvement from the previous goals. One strength of the new goals is that the goals themselves describe the kind of task that will be used for assessment, e.g., “create a sociological research question, including an argument....” “utilize existing sociological literature to build a case....” “analyze data at the multivariate level.”*

**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>x</u> | NO <u>  </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>  </u> |

**Comments:**

*The tasks “built in” to the new goals make evident what the assessment method should be. And those methods are designed to be built directly into student learning experiences, with assessment of all goals and implementation of all methods occurring on a four-year cycle. This will include indirect as well as direct assessments.*

*In the meantime, since the new assessment plan had not yet been implemented in 2012-13, program faculty continued to collect assessment information using previous methods. In some cases, they had recognized that better methods were available than those specified in their old plan and they used those new methods. Overall, a number of assessment methods were used during the transition year, including both indirect and direct.*

**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 <u>x</u> | NO <u>  </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>  </u> |
| • Were the results tied to goals for student learning?   | YES <u>x</u> | NO <u>  </u> | QUALIFIED Y/N <u>  </u> |

**Comments:**

Sociology faculty have tied learning outcomes to learning experiences and assessments in very direct ways, with the result that assessment results bear a clear relationship to program goals. Sample results include the following:

- On a survey, the four program graduates indicated their degree of agreement with questions about learning goals, e.g., “My graduate education has helped me to form a professional identity,” “I am able to follow ethical guidelines when conducting research,” “I am able to formulate a sociological research question.” There was strong agreement that students had achieved the ethical goal, but mixed responses to the other two examples.
- Four out of ten graduate students were not able to satisfactorily complete all aspects of an assignment requiring them to compile a literature review based by examining published research. Three of the ten completed all aspects of the review at an exemplary level – demonstrating full achievement of goal 8(which stated that graduates would be able to reach judgments concerning the merit and value of the findings in published research).
- Goal 5 (stating that students would be able to use sociological theories to explain/interpret sociological questions) was assessed by scoring a paper using a rubric that delineated various aspects of the goal at which students were expected to demonstrate competency. Of the five students from whom data were collected, four demonstrated successful use of theory and one did not.

#### 4. CLOSING THE LOOP

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

YES ☒ NO ☐ 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 the new goals and new assessment plan are being implemented this year, faculty were able to identify a number of minor tweaks to courses and pedagogy through the assessments. They noted, e.g., that faculty need to require texts rather than recommending them, meet multiple times with individuals who are working on big projects, spend more time on “the practical aspects of statistics” and less time on some of the more complicated statistical techniques and theory. They also noted that students don’t know what a good literature review looks like, and future student groups need more opportunity to see good models.

#### 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:

Although Sociology faculty were doing a good job of implementing the previous assessment plan, as demonstrated by the data collected in 2012-13, it appears likely that the new plan is a significant improvement – and hence the strengths regarding the articulation of goals, selection of methods, etc. as indicated above. It’s good to see that you have systems in place that work, and even better to see that you are continuing to improve them even as you make use of findings from the old system.

#### MATERIALS REVIEWED

☒ Annual report  
☐ Appendices (cited in annual report)  
☐ Other (please describe)

☒ Assessment plan (as posted)  
☒ Previous assessment review

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Coding Key:

- Y = yes, this is done appropriately and well (bearing in mind the kind of program(s) reviewed and recognizing that assessment is a cyclical process, i.e., with additional kinds of data to be collected and analyzed in other years)
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