

HISTORY/POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT OCTOBER 31, 2007

For Academic Year 2006 to 2007

I. Brief Summary of Assessment Plan

The History/Political Science program's first assessment plan was presented in May, 2004, towards the close of the program's first year in existence. This plan articulated program goals and outcomes for the next three year period (fall, 2004 to spring, 2007). Following a preview of the plan by Sharon Calhoon, Director, Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment; Kathy Ross, Instructional Technologist; and other members of the Assessment Council, these goals and outcomes were readjusted, and submitted in August, 2005 in a revised History/Political Science Program Assessment Plan. The program goals listed in our Program Assessment Plan of 2006 (for the academic year 2006-2007) included: Command of Historical Knowledge, Command of Political Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Communications Skills, Research Skill, and Professional Behavior. In the 2006 assessment plan it was indicated that focus would be on assessing Communications Skills which have been defined as follows for the areas of History and Political Science, with regard to outcomes and components. During the Spring, 2007 semester the Division of Education requested that we assess the basic knowledge of students in the area of history and/or political science to meet their program's assessment needs. A multiple choice test in the area of U. S. history was piloted and administered to students in the capstone history/political science seminar, COAS S400. This test was also a step towards assessing program goal number one, Command of Historical Knowledge, in our list of ultimate program goals. This report will include information regarding the results of this test.

Goals One and Four have been defined as follows:

Goal 1. Command of Historical Knowledge (This goal still needs to be broken down into individual outcomes and components)

The student demonstrates familiarity with a basic body of knowledge in United States and world history, which includes the ability to explain the role of individuals and social groups as creators in history, and to explain the relationship between change and such themes as population and demographic shifts; political, social and economic institutions and organizations; religious movements; scientific and technological developments; industrialization; urbanization; imperialism and post-colonialism; globalization; intellectual and ideological developments; and cultural and trans-cultural currents. The student can compare and contrast historical developments and issues across cultural/geographic boundaries.

Goal 4. Communication Skills

Outcome 1: Students will write effectively
Component 1: Organization
Component 2: Grammar/Mechanics

Outcome 2: Students will develop an effective historical or political argument
Component 1: Recognition of thesis statement in assigned readings
Component 2: Thesis articulation in student's own written work
Component 3 : Supporting evidence in students' own work

Particular Outcomes Assessed, 2006-2007:

Goal 1: Command of Historical Knowledge

Since this was a pilot, quickly developed to meet the immediate needs of the Education Division, no formal benchmark goal was set this year. Additional steps need to be taken to develop particular outcomes, components, and performance criteria.

Goal 4: Communication Skills

Outcome 2: Students will develop an effective historical or political argument

Benchmark goal: 80% of students will achieve a satisfactory level in all components assessed

Component 1: Recognition of thesis statement in assigned readings

Performance criteria:

Satisfactory: Student is able to recognize thesis statement

Unsatisfactory: Student is unable to recognize thesis statement

Component 2: Thesis articulation in student's own written work.

Performance criteria:

Excellent: Student clearly articulates thesis in introduction, skillfully develops it in body of paper, and clearly summarizes it in conclusion

Satisfactory: Student articulates thesis in introduction, adequately develops it in body of paper, and summarizes is in conclusion

Unsatisfactory: Student fails to articulate thesis in conclusion, does not attempt to develop it in body of paper, or fails to summarize it in conclusion

Component 3: Supporting evidence in students' own work

Performance criteria:

Excellent: Student always supports thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

Satisfactory: Student usually supports thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

Unsatisfactory: Student does not support thesis and arguments with adequate supporting evidence

Changes:

In the Spring, 2007, at the suggestion of peers in the Assessment Council, it was decided to abandon the assessment of students' ability to recognize thesis statements in reading assignments (component number one.) It was suggested that the focus instead be on assessing the end product, i.e. the actual research papers submitted by students as opposed to a developmental skill that would lead to the other components. Thus in the Spring semester, assessment was limited to measuring students' abilities to articulate clear thesis statements and to support these statements adequately.

In addition, as noted above, a pilot assessing the goal of Command of Historical Knowledge was implemented, but on a very small scale. The multiple choice exam focused on the area of U.S. history; other areas in history and political science will need to be included in subsequent testing.

II. Assessment Methods

When, Where, and How Students Demonstrated Achievement of Outcomes

The outcomes for Goal 4, Communications Skills, were measured in the Spring, 2006 in History H425: American History and Film, and in the Fall, 2007 in History A314: U. S. History, 1917-1945.

In the Spring History H 425 course, quizzes were given to assess students' skills in thesis recognition. Students were asked to identify the thesis of reading assignments. This was done as a step towards developing students' abilities to articulate a clear thesis in their own research papers and to support these theses with sufficient supporting evidence.

In the Fall, assessment of History A314 the measurement of students' ability to recognize thesis statements in reading assignments was abandoned, at the suggestion of peers in the Assessment Council. It was suggested that the focus instead be on assessing the end product, i.e. the actual research papers submitted by students.

In both the Fall and Spring semesters, students were assessed in their ability to articulate a thesis and to support their thesis adequately. Students were evaluated for this in the first draft of their research papers for the course, as well in the final version of their research papers.

In April, 2007 students participating in the COAS S400 seminar were given a brief multiple choice test which tested for basic knowledge in the field of American history (Goal 1). This was done at the request of the Education Division, to provide information that they needed for assessment and accreditation purposes, and also served as a small pilot for our program's assessment endeavors.

Who Assessed Students' Work and Methods and Procedures Used

Professor Allen Safianow assessed students' work in his History H425 course and in his History A314 course. As noted above, he used in-class written exercises, or quizzes, to measure success in recognizing thesis statements in History H425. After each quiz, there was class discussion regarding the assigned reading's thesis and how the author supported the thesis. At the suggestion of peers in the Assessment Council (see above section) assessment of thesis recognition was abandoned in the History H314 course. However, writing exercises involving thesis recognition were still employed, and there continued to be discussion and guidance in class concerning thesis articulation and development.

Professor Safianow also assessed thesis articulation and thesis support in both History H425 and in History A314. Each student was asked to do a research project. This included submitting a proposal (in which they had the option of submitting a hypothesis) and a first draft in which they were expected to articulate and support a thesis. Students were asked to highlight with markers their thesis statements as they were presented in the paper's introduction, and again to highlight the reiteration of the thesis in the paper's conclusion. These first drafts were assessed. The instructor made extensive comments on the first draft, which included observations concerning how well the student had presented and developed a thesis as well as suggestions as to how this could be improved. Students were asked to submit a final draft several weeks later, and they were again assessed in the categories of thesis articulation and support of thesis.

Professor Safianow also developed a short multiple choice question exam that was taken by students participating in the COAS S400 seminar, which measured basic knowledge in the area of United States history.

Changes in Assessment Methods

As indicated above, at the recommendation of members of the Assessment Council who reviewed assessment efforts, it was decided to discontinue in the fall, 2006 assessing quizzes or writing exercises in which students were asked to identify thesis statements in class reading assignments. Instead the focus would be on assessing the outcomes in their research papers in the areas of thesis articulation and thesis support. In addition, we piloted the use of a multiple choice test in the capstone seminar as an initial effort to assess Goal 1, Command of Historical Knowledge.

III. Description of Assessment Results

Goal 4: Communications Skills

History H425, Fall, 2006

Recognition of Thesis in Two Quizzes

First quiz (18 participants)

Satisfactory 16 (88.9 %)

Unsatisfactory 2 (11.1 %)

Total 18 (100%)

Second quiz (20 participants)

Satisfactory 16 (80%)

Unsatisfactory 4 (20%)

Total 20 (100%)

Articulation of Thesis:

On Draft:

(Sixteen students submitted a draft)

Excellent 0 (0 %)

Satisfactory 6 (37.5 %)

Unsatisfactory 10 (62.5 %)

Total 16 (100%)

On Final Term Paper:

(Fifteen students submitted a final term paper)

Excellent 3 (20 %)

Satisfactory 9 (60 %)

Unsatisfactory 3 (20 %)

Total 15 (100%)

Support of Thesis:

On Draft:

Satisfactory	1	(6.3 %)
Unsatisfactory	15	(93.7 %)
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Total	16	(100%)

On Final Term Paper:

Excellent	3	(20%)
Satisfactory	7	(46.7 %)
Unsatisfactory	5	(33.3 %)
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Total	15	(100%)

In our assessment plan an 80% satisfactory performance level was set as the targeted benchmark for each of the stated outcomes. If these benchmarks are applied to the above results, it appears these benchmarks were partially attained in the spring semester. There needs to be improvement in the component of “support of thesis.”

Recognition of Thesis 88.9 % on first quiz; 80 % on second quiz.

Expectations met or exceeded.

Articulation of Thesis 80 % excellent or satisfactory on final term paper

Expectations met

Support of Thesis 66.7 % excellent or satisfactory on final term paper

Expectations not met

History A314, Spring, 2007

Articulation of Thesis:

On Draft:

(10 students submitted a draft)

Excellent	1	(10 %)
Satisfactory	4	(40%)
Unsatisfactory	5	(50%)
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Total	10	(100%)

On Final Term Paper:
(10 students submitted a final term paper)

Excellent	1 (10%)
Satisfactory	6 (60%)
Unsatisfactory	3 (30%)

Total	10 (100%)
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Support of Thesis:

On Draft:

Excellent	2 (20%)
Satisfactory	3 (30%)
Unsatisfactory	5 (50%)

Total	10 (100%)
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On Final Paper:

Excellent	3 (30%)
Satisfactory	4 (40%)
Unsatisfactory	3 (30%)

Total	10 (100%)
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The assessment results for the fall semester were somewhat below the 80% benchmark.

Articulation of Thesis: 70 % excellent or satisfactory

Expectations not met

Support of Thesis: 70 % excellent or satisfactory

Expectations not met

Goal 1 Command of Historical Knowledge

RESULTS OF PILOT TEST ASSESSMENT OF COMMAND OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE May 1, 2007

On April 25, 2007 a pilot examination was administered to the five students enrolled in the S400 capstone seminar, taught by Professor Todd Bradley, for the History/Political Science program. The exam was constructed at the suggestion of Dean Dean Cantu, of the Division of Education, who indicated the need for an assessment instrument for students pursuing licensure in secondary social studies education. In addition, it was believed by the faculty of the History/Political Science program that this would be a good opportunity to pilot an instrument to evaluate the “command of knowledge” goals listed in the program’s assessment plan.

The particular instrument used was a 25 multiple choice question exam devised by Professor Allen Safianow that covered basic factual information in the area of U.S. history. The hope is that ultimately similar exams can be administered in the areas of political science and world history. Students who took the exam were asked not to give their names, but rather their areas of concentration in the program, i.e. history, political science or secondary education. The score results are as follows:

1. History	68%
2. History	92%
3. Political Science	72%
4. Secondary Education	92%
5. Concentration unidentified	64%

Since this was a pilot, no formal benchmark targets were set. The faculty of the History/Political Science program will be meeting to discuss the results and plans for future assessment of the “Command of Knowledge” goal.

B. Interpretation of Results

The data above would suggest that with regard to the component of thesis recognition (which was assessed in the Fall, 2006) students were attaining the set benchmark of 80%, but that they were having more difficulty articulating or supporting their own thesis statements. At times they fell somewhat below the 80% benchmark. The data also indicates, however, that overall students do benefit from submitting first drafts which can be critiqued, and that there is a significant improvement in their final papers.

Only five students (the students enrolled in the COAS S400 seminar) took the test to assess command of knowledge in the area of American history. The results were mixed—two of the five students (40%) did rather well, achieving scores of over 90%. The other three had mediocre performance. Students were given the test without any prior warning or preparation, so scores in the 60 and 70 percent range might be seen in a more favorable light than in the case of course-related tests where students are given advance notice so that they might prepare.

IV. Using Assessment for Program Improvement

The History/Political Science program continues to be in a state of transition. We have only three resident faculty members, and one of them resigned in December, 2005. This meant that our courses in western civilization and upper level non-U.S. history courses during the 2006-2007 academic year were taught by adjuncts as well as a visiting instructor from the IU Future Faculty Fellowship program. In the Spring, 2007 semester a full-time faculty member, Dr. Andrew McFarland, was hired to teach western civilization and upper-level non- U.S. history courses, and this individual began his teaching assignments in the Fall of 2007.

Dr. Safianow, who teaches course in American history, will be retiring at the end of December, 2007. A Future Faculty Fellow has been acquired to teach an introductory and an upper-level U.S. history course in both the Fall and Spring semesters of the 2006-2007 academic year. The program is now in the middle of a search for a replacement for Professor Safianow, with hopes of filling the vacancy in the Fall, 2007.

With the resignation of Professor Safianow, Dr. Bradley will be assuming responsibilities for submitting program assessment plans and reports, and in preparation for this he is now attending meetings of the Assessment Council. One of his biggest challenges will be working with the new faculty to implement and to modify the program's assessment efforts. Related to this challenge will be the smoother integration of history and political science assessment efforts.

In the future, work might be done to develop a more inclusive instrument to assess Goal 1 , Command of Historical Knowledge, as well as Goal 2, Command of Political Knowledge. This instrument might be employed in the next capstone seminar, which is tentatively scheduled for the 2008-2009 academic year. The development of this instrument should probably be done in consultation with members of the Education Division involved in assessment of their secondary education degree in social studies.

The program assessment plan for the year 2007-2008 envisions assessing Goal 5, Research Skills. The plan breaks down the goal into separate outcomes and components.

The steps that are being taken to assess Goals 1, 2 and 5 are in line with the recommendations made in the previous History/Political Science assessment report for 2005-2006, and will mark a significant advance towards assessing all six goals that have been singled out for ultimate assessment.

V. Dissemination of Results:

This report will be disseminated to the faculty of the history/political faculty, to the chair of the Social and Behavioral Science Department, and to the Assessment Council's Program Assessment Reports Subcommittee. We will continue the practice of making a summary of the report available to students, staff and others through the Center for Teaching, Learning and Assessment's "Web Resources for Assessment" which can be reached via Oncourse. This year we will also endeavor to add a link allowing those who consult the summary to see the full report.