

Department of History Student Based Outcomes Assessment Plan
Adopted: January 27, 2006

Preamble

The mission of the Department of History at Indiana State University is to provide a high-quality educational experience for all those students who enroll in our courses. Our particular focus, however, is to provide for history majors an experience which will not only lead them to an understanding of the past and an appreciation of the great variety of uses of the past, but will also foster the fundamental skills of critical thinking, reading, and writing. We intend to deepen the students' understanding of the complex world in which they live and to stimulate effective participation in contemporary society.

The History Department's Plan for Assessment of Undergraduate Student Outcomes is designed to measure the extent to which we have achieved the above goals, and to provide substantive information which will guide us both in improving our performance in areas where we may fall short, and in addressing the changing goals of students who choose specialization in history as the main focus of their undergraduate careers. The main elements of the plan are focused on assessing our success in fostering student achievement through several specific steps. Our new objectives have been developed while taking into careful consideration the findings of the American Association of Colleges and Universities presented in their 2004 report on assessment, "Our Students' Best Work: A Framework of Accountability Worthy of Our mission." Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2004.

Objectives¹

I. History majors should develop "strong analytical, communication, quantitative, and informational skills"

II. History majors should receive "hands-on experience with the inquiry practices" of the discipline

¹ Quoted sections within the "objectives" section derived from "Our Students' Best Work: A Framework of Accountability Worthy of Our Mission" (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges & Universities, 2004), pp. 5-6.

III. History majors should develop intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills

IV. History majors should develop "a pro-active sense of responsibility for individual, civic, and social choices"

V. History majors should develop "habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer skills from one setting to another"

Methodology

In order to assess the progress of each cohort of students, the following data shall be collected in the portfolio of each history major:

1. If available, the student's relevant standardized test scores (e.g. SAT I verbal, ACT, etc.) at the time of his/her admission to the university.

2. A sample or samples of work from History 101, 102, 201, and 202. (It is recognized that there are practical difficulties in obtaining this data from all students; some students place out of these courses or declare their major after completing them, etc.)

3. A standardized, in-class writing assignment administered in History 300. This writing sample can be excluded or included as part of the formal curriculum and grading of History 300 at the teacher's discretion. The assignment shall be created by the assessment committee in consultation with the department. This writing sample is intended to provide baseline data on the in-class writing, analytical, reading, and interpretive skills of each cohort of graduates at the beginning of their upper-level coursework.

4. An example of at least one other assignment, preferably research based, from history 300, to serve as baseline data of students' abilities regarding assignments requiring revision and research.

5. Samples of work, preferably both take home and in-class assignments (essays and exams), from 300 and 400 level courses.

6. A list of all history courses taken. If feasible, this list will include grades received.

7. A report from a standardized exit interview conducted during the semester in which the student intends to graduate.

The following data will also be collected by the committee:

8. Graduation/retention rates of declared history majors, including GPA figures (within major and overall),

Portfolio Review

During the fall semester, the assessment committee shall review the portfolios of all majors who graduated during the previous academic year to gauge the **progress of the cohort** based on the goals outlined in this document and other goals that seem relevant to the department. Given the changing nature of history as a discipline, the assessment committee and department shall retain the option to consider outcomes and factors not listed in this document.

There will be variation in the data collected in each portfolio, particularly based on the timing in which a student enrolls in History 300. (The department strongly encourages completing this course as soon as possible after completion of the 101-102, 201-202 sequence.) As a general guideline, items 1-4 shall be used as baseline data to determine the general abilities and training of the cohort as a whole before embarking on upper level work. If the data are sufficient, we can also use these items to help assess the effectiveness of our 100 and 200 level history program.

The committee will focus on the improvement (or lack thereof) demonstrated in the work collected from the students' upper level courses. The list of courses will help the committee to see the range of experiences the students' have experienced within the major. The exit interviews provide a powerful tool for learning the students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of our program.

Item 8 will help us determine our effectiveness in improving student retention, a vital university goal.

Use of data

The most important role of this committee is to report our findings to the overall department and relevant departmental committees. Preferably, this report should be

made in the fall at a departmental meeting and the data should be made easily available to all faculty members. The data can be effectively used by individual professors to understand weaknesses of our students and program and address them, as appropriate, within their classes. Further, the data should be used by the department to help make decisions on a variety of issues, both in terms of the need for change and knowledge of areas in which our current policies seem to be highly effective. When appropriate, the committee shall make specific recommendations to the department. However, the recommendation of specific changes is not viewed as the primary purpose of this committee.

The committee may use the data to help determine nominations for student awards. Otherwise, the data are not intended to be used to evaluate individual students. The data is not to be used for the evaluation of individual faculty members.

The annual reports will be made available to university administrators and NCATE officials. The findings will be made available to the general public as appropriate.

FERPA Statement

In recognition of students' right to privacy as well as the FERPA law, all student portfolios shall be kept confidential.