

#2. Executive Summary: Undergraduate Program Assessment: Student Outcomes

To be completed by Departments and submitted by the Department Chair to the Assessment Blackboard Site.

Department: History, Geography, Criminal Justice	Date:
5/18/17	
Members involved with analysis of artifacts: Matt Phillips, Tobin Beck, John Hink, Joel Helmer	
See #1 Undergraduate Program Assessment Plan: Student Outcomes for: a) Student Outcome; b) Background; c) Question(s); d) Methodology	
Analysis of artifacts: 1). PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* - How was data analyzed? (attach rubrics/scoring tools if used). Data was analyzed using the attached rubric.	
Summary of RESULTS*: 1). Restate the assessment question(s) (from the Assessment plan): Can students analyze information relating to a specific topic/thesis? 2). Summarize the assessment results. A narrative summary is required. Charts, tables or graphs are encouraged but optional. In the PS 211 course 50% of students achieved the goal of "Excellent" or above in each category. In the Hist 434 course only 20% did. Goal: 80% of the students at the "Excellent" level for each category on the rubric. For the Departmental Assessment in the 2016-2017 school year, which focused on communication, the department of History, Geography, and Criminal Justice chose to assess the question: "Can students analyze information relating to a specific topic/thesis?". The student were scored on a four-part rubric under the categories: Declarative Sentence, Scope, Effectiveness, Support. Each of these categories had an Excellent, Proficient, Adequate, and Poor level. The department goal was that 80% of students would perform at the Excellent level in each category on the rubric. We applied our rubric to papers completed in two courses; PS 211: Global Studies and Hist 434: The Medieval Crusades. PS 211: Global Issues Overall results: Ten student essays were chosen to be representative of the range of essays from 27 members of the spring PS211-02 Global Issues class. Five of the 10 achieved 80 percent excellence or higher (a 3.2 out of 4 average or higher) in all four categories, and one achieved a perfect 4 in all categories. (*However, it's important to add a note about application of the rubric: the rubric called for one declarative sentence as the thesis statement, while many students are taught that a thesis statement may be made within the opening paragraph in more than one sentence. The PS211 essays were evaluated based on thesis paragraphs rather than the stricter thesis sentence standard. None of the essays evaluated met the standard for single declarative sentence thesis statements). The other categories: scope, effectiveness and support, were evaluated as stated in the rubric. Average Results Within Categories: Declarative: (3.0 out of 4*, or 75 percent) Scope: (3.0 out of 4, or 75 percent) Effectiveness: (3.05 out of 4, or 76 percent) Support: (3.05 out of 4, or 76 percent)	

50 percent of students (5 of 10) achieved at the level of 80 percent of excellent or higher in each rubric category (3.2 or higher out of 4 in each category). The overall mean for achievement was 81 percent (3.25 out of 4) as measured by the mean of the sum of individual student scores, and 76 percent (3.03 out of 4) as measured by the mean of the sum of individual category scores.

Hist 434: The Medieval Crusades

Overall Results:

Only 2 of 10 students achieved Excellent level on all four categories of this rubric. Therefore, a cursory examination of these results demonstrates that the HGCJ department fell well below our stated goal of 80% of students achieving at the Excellent level in every category. However, if we examine the averages for each category, more data are significant. For example, the average overall score = 11.8 out of a possible 16 points.

Average Results within categories:

Declarative Sentence: 3.5 (out of 4)

Scope: 3.4

Effectiveness: 3.2

Support: 3.1

Overall: 11.8 (out of 16)

Students' performances dropped from the Declarative Sentence category to the Support category by .4 on average. The evidence suggests that crafting a Declarative Sentence does not mean it will retain the same level of effectiveness or be supported well throughout the entire paper.

3). **INTERPRETATION*** - *Discuss how the results answer the assessment question(s).*

One possible reason for the students not meeting the 80% goal is that we did not place enough emphasis on the writing process in these courses. We often expect students to be equipped with the writing skills necessary to complete college-level writing assignments. Therefore, we often do not spend enough time on the writing process, including forming a clear thesis statement. Our focus tends to be on teaching content via writing assignments instead of assisting students with the actual writing process. Also, as mentioned below, more emphasis on writing during the freshman year would prepare students for writing assignments in their intermediate and upper-level courses.

PS 211: Global Issues

Conclusion:

Student performance fell just short of the department goal of 80 percent overall excellence. Students were adequate or above in writing their essays, and wrote adequate thesis statements within their opening paragraphs. Those thesis statements were adequate or above in scope, effectiveness and support, but fell short of excellence.

Hist 434: The Medieval Crusades

Conclusion:

While technically the department fell far short of its overall goal, the average scores suggest we are moving in the right direction pedagogically.

4). *Observations made that were not directly related to the question(s). (i.e. interrater reliability of the scoring tool was low)*

Sharing of Results:

When were results shared? Date: 5/12/17

How were the results shared? (i.e. met as a department) Via email and face-to-face

Who were results shared with? (List names): Joel Helmer, Tobin Beck, Matt Phillips, John Hink

Discussion of Results –Summarize your conclusions including:

1. ACTION*- *How will what the department learned from the assessment impact the teaching process/course/program etc. in your department starting the next academic year?*

After reviewing these results our goal next year is to spend more class time intentionally discussing a thesis, including its purpose, stating one clearly, and supporting it in an essay. Sharing with students a writing sample (preferably from a past student) with a clear and well-argued thesis is one approach we plan to implement to improve student results.

This assessment suggests that as an institution we would do well to place more emphasis on essay writing skills in English and other classes for freshmen, so that by the time they get into the intermediate and upper level classes, they can build and polish those skills to the excellence level.

While in PS211 we do work extensively on student writing, that is not the principal goal of the course, and an earlier focus on basics of student writing would be give students more of a framework on which to build using the topic material covered in the Global Issues course.

That being said, we will continue to place emphasis on building strong writing skills in our courses.

2. IMPACT*- *What is the anticipated impact of the ACTION* on student achievement of the learning outcome in the next academic year?*

With intentional focus on writing skills at the start of the writing process, we should see improvements in student essays, especially in relation to the formation and support of thesis statements.

3. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS – *Indicate budget requirements necessary for the successful implementation of the ACTION* (i.e. an additional staff person, new equipment, additional sections of a course).* na

If action is taken – it is recommended that the same learning outcome and assessment plan be used for a second assessment cycle.

What assessment questions related to the learning outcome would the program like to investigate in the future? na

**Submitted by: Joel Helmer
5/19/17**

Reviewed by the Assessment Committee (date):

Department Chair notified/additional action needed: na

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS – Assessment Committee Chair notified appropriate Dean: na

Approved & Posted to Assessment site: 5/19/17