

General Education Assessment Plan

5-Year Report

Items in section A should be addressed for every course the department offers in the objective under review; courses may be treated individually or combined into one report if appropriate. Items B and C need be addressed only once for the objective under review.

Objective: 6

Department: History

Representative to Objective Review Committee: Kevin Marsh

Course(s): HIST 1101, 1102, 1105, 1106, 1111, 1112

A. For each general education learning outcome that the course aims to achieve:

1. Describe the specific assessment instrument(s) used to address the learning outcome.
 - a. Include full question text or assignment instructions, which may be included as an appendix.

Each instructor for each section assigned activities to assess the pre-determined competency each academic year. Over the course of the five-year period, department faculty assessed student achievement on each of the competencies. We have added here examples of the assignment questions and guidelines from multiple sections of these classes. Given the wide range of content covered in the department's various courses that satisfy Objective 6, we allowed instructors to each build separate assessment tools based on the materials used in their class, each aimed at the shared competencies.

Assigned questions asked students to provide analytical, written responses to questions about particular historical issues and events studied in that class. These assignments challenged students to demonstrate competence with concepts and tools such as causation, implication, perspective, context, argumentation/interpretation, and evidence (both primary and secondary).

Sample assignments:

In a well written and organized essay, explain how the U.S. became involved in the First World War, and how that involvement affected the outcome of the conflict. Please demonstrate through the use of specific factual support, your understanding of how historians use evidence to develop their conclusions. A superior essay will place American actions in a global context.

Write a 5 paragraph essay on How WWII affected American society and what about American society enabled the United States to be on the winning side of this war. Be sure to make use of the provided documents as well as class notes and readings.

What are our sources for food history and what can they tell us and what can't they tell us. When viewed together, what do the documents in Chapter 9 reveal about the development of Byzantium, Islam, and western Europe as distinctive societies with their own identities in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries?

Increasing criticism of the (Catholic) Church of Rome during the Renaissance led to a growing demand for religious reform (the Reformation). Briefly discuss some of the foremost

complaints against the church, its hierarchy and doctrine (teachings). Use at least three primary source documents to support your answer.

For much of history, only a few, elite members of society could read and write. What, then, can written sources tell us about the lives of everyday people?

List at least 3 differences between popular sources and scholarly/academic sources.

Briefly describe how nostalgia, progress, and tradition can each be used to distort history

In a well written and organized essay, explain the part played by nationalism, imperialism, and the breakdown of the European balance of power in the outbreak of the First World War.

Be sure to include considerable specific factual support."

We've examined a number of ideological developments since the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. Which of the "-isms" discussed thus far do you believe most align with European attitudes in the mid to late-19th century? Are they aligned with particular socio-economic classes? If so, which? Consider Romanticism, nationalism, socialism, utilitarianism, communism, Darwinism, social Darwinism, and imperialism.

In this assignment you will examine maps as evidence of the dynamic interaction of societies as they shape and are shaped by history, culture, institutions, and ideas.

- b. Include a description of the timing of the assessment and the groups that were assessed.

Instructors gave the assessment activity at various times in the semester during their course, usually in the later stages of the semester in order to better measure learning and achievement from the course. Selections from those assessment results were gathered in shared folders at the end of each semester. All students submitted responses to the activities, and the instructors chose a random sampling of 10 examples or 10% from each course section.

Although these activities allowed students to engage with each of the five outcome competencies of Objective 6, department faculty assessed student achievement on one of those competencies each year. Assignment questions changed somewhat in each class year to year to provide better measurement of the specific competency under review that academic year.

- c. Describe the criteria used to evaluate each assessment instrument, and how this evaluation was performed.

Tenured and tenure-track, full-time faculty in the department with experience teaching in the relevant field assessed submitted student work from all sections of a particular course for the prior academic year. Reviewers considered the course syllabus and the range of assignments in that class along with the students' written responses. Faculty ranked each response in one of 3 categories: exceeds expectations, meets expectations, or below expectations. They submitted a report to the department that provided the quantitative results of student achievement along with a qualitative assessment of how well the course cultivated successful student achievements for the outcome competency under review that year, including suggestions for course improvement. These written reports were submitted to GERC and retained in a shared department Box folder for further collaborative review of findings.

- d. Describe the application of this or comparable assessment to any students earning credit for the class via early college program or test credit.

All ECP sections of History Objective 6 classes were considered with the same procedures, format, and expectations as classes taught by campus faculty. ECP instructors had access to the shared Box folders to upload materials from their sections. Only tenured and tenure-track faculty conducted the assessment reviews of materials each year.

2. Describe the findings regarding the learning outcome, and overall conclusion as to the effectiveness of the class in achieving the learning outcome in question.

Review of student work found that between 3% and 12% of students were below expectations in their written responses to analytical questions. Thus, over 90% of students in History classes achieve or exceed competency in the outcomes for Objective 6.

There were concerns raised about the materials submitted from some ECP courses in terms of sources assigned and the difficulty of measuring collaborative work samples.

3. Describe any changes made or proposed to better meet learning outcomes.
Feedback has been provided to specific instructors when reviewers observe specific issues in how students are being assessed in those classes and how well course materials emphasize to students the competency outcomes of an Objective 6 class.
4. Describe any changes made or proposed to assessment procedures themselves.

History faculty have initiated efforts to develop a more collaborative process of assessing each General Education course it offers. Changing from the pattern of individual faculty reviewing the results of a particular course for the prior year, department faculty in that field will collectively meet to review and discuss findings in an annual “assessment day.” Through this process, we feel this process is more likely to generate clear, actionable changes to improve classes and student performance. It also will more clearly highlight areas of improvement for ECP courses in this objective. Rather than simply filing assessment reports to comply with procedures, we seek to make those reports an element of a broader, more active department assessment process.

Department faculty also have initiated an effort to develop a more holistic and more efficient set of tools for assessing its General Education classes. Student writing is a critical part of each of our classes, but essays are time consuming for assessment review at this scale. We plan to develop measurement tools and can be applied in a wide range of department classes of a given Objective and allow for more efficient, quantitative and qualitative analysis of student performance.

- B. Do you see any incongruities between the learning outcomes and the spirit of the objective? If so, how would you suggest the learning outcomes be modified?

No concerns.

- C. Do you believe that the objective currently serves an optimal role in the broader general education program? If not, how could its contribution be improved?

Yes. Students should develop awareness of fundamental aspects of social science inquiry and analysis. The range of courses is spread quite thin, beyond the social sciences, however. Classes in technology and education seem to dilute the student experience with social and behavioral sciences.