

Analysis of Assessment Results:
History and Social Science Programs

Procedure:

Evidence was collected from all seven of the History graduating seniors (there were no Social Science graduating seniors) for the purpose of conducting summative assessments. Faculty collected papers and exams from these students in the spring semester.

Since we have such small groups of graduating seniors (four in 2011-12 and seven in 2012-13), we take the following steps to compensate for the limited reliability of our small sample sizes: 1) we collect multiple pieces of evidence for each student; 2) we assess all three Program Learning Outcomes each year; 3) the assessment results from each year will be added together every third year in order to create a larger sample size and should enable the HPS faculty to make a more reliable judgment about what program changes are needed.

All of the faculty (other than the one on sabbatical) gathered at the end of the school year, in May 2013, to assess the graduating seniors' papers and exams using analytic rubrics matched to each Program Learning Outcome.

For each of the rubric criteria, the goal is to have a minimum group average of 2.75 out of 4.

TABLE 1

PLO 1: Conduct historical research, including analyzing primary and secondary sources, using appropriate citation methods, and constructing historical arguments.				
Rubric Criteria	Types of Evidence Assessed	No. of pieces of evidence assessed	Group Average (out of 4 points possible)	Group Average (out of 4) for previous year 2011-2012
Argument	research papers; historiographical essays; book reviews	10	3.00	2.8
Structure & Writing Style	research papers; historiographical essays; book reviews	10	3.40	2.8
Citations	research papers; historiographical essays; book reviews	10	3.40	2.5
Analysis of Sources	research papers; historiographical essays; book reviews	10	3.50	2.75
Use of Sources (research papers only)	research papers	7	3.14	3

TABLE 2

PLO 2: Identify and analyze change over time in various regions of the world.				
Rubric Criteria	Types of Evidence Assessed	No. of pieces of evidence assessed	Group Average (out of 4)	Group Average (out of 4) for previous year 2011-2012
Identification	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	9	3.22	2.58
Analysis	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	9	3.33	2.58
Focus	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	9	3.44	2.75
Evidence	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	9	3.33	2.5
Structure & Writing Style (written work only)	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	9	3.33	2.88

TABLE 3

PLO 3: Critically evaluate systems around the world in their historical context.				
Rubric Criteria	Types of Evidence Assessed	No. of pieces of evidence assessed	Group Average (out of 4)	Group Average (out of 4) for previous year 2011-2012
Critically Evaluates	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	13	3.62	2.46
Context	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	13	3.62	2.77
Focus	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	13	3.69	2.85
Evidence	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	13	3.54	2.77
Structure & Writing Style (written work only)	research papers; historiographical essays; exams	11	3.36	2.67

Analysis of Results:

Our group averages in every category were slightly higher this year than last year, but because of our small sample sizes, it is hard to determine whether that is the result of better student performance, or simply a larger group of students in 2012-13 (seven, as opposed to four the previous year). In a group of four, even one student has a significant impact on the group average.

Nevertheless, these group averages all well surpass our minimum goal of 2.75 out of 4. The lowest average (3.00 out of 4) was for the “argument” category in PLO 1 (Table 1), which indicates to us that we need to continue to work on helping students develop unique and thoughtful arguments.

We saw large improvements in the two categories that were weakest last time: “citations” for PLO 1 (table 1) and “critically evaluates” for PLO 3 (table 3). In response to last year’s results, we put increased emphasis on teaching these skills, and the 2012-13 results suggest that may have paid off. However, until we add all of the results together after the third year of assessment to accumulate a larger sample size, we will not be able to draw more extensive conclusions from this data.