

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

GENERAL EDUCATION

Name of Program/Department: Department of History

Year: 2018-2019

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PROGRAM MISSION

The mission of the History Department is to train the intellect of and to prepare students for lives of personal enrichment and constructive achievement. The study of History comprises the elements of liberal education: the acquisition of knowledge, the nurturing of understanding, and the development of perspective of oneself and one's society. The reconstruction of the human past conveys an appreciation of cultural contexts and traditions, and it enhances critical thinking and communication skills. The major in History provides a broad understanding of the development of various cultures throughout the world. Through their History courses, FMU students gain a better understanding of contemporary events, a knowledge of people in various times and places, critical thinking skills, and the ability to express themselves effectively in oral and written communication.

GENERAL EDUCATION – HISTORY-RELATED STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

There are three goals of the General Education curriculum that are related to History:

- Goal 1: The ability to write and speak in English logically and coherently.
- Goal 3: The ability to use technology to locate and document information and ideas.
- Goal 7: The ability to recognize and analyze the variety of factors that have influenced world history.

To measure its performance in meeting these three goals, the History Department relies on four of its eleven Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

- SLO 2.1: The student can effectively offer analysis that supported the thesis statement.
- SLO 4.0: The student could effectively write an historical essay.
- SLO 5.0: The student could accurately explain how people have existed, acted, and thought in particular historical periods.

- SLO 5.1: The student would be able to demonstrate an understanding of cause and effect with a broad knowledge of the general chronology of historical developments in a variety of civilizations.

While all four of these SLOs contribute to meeting Goal 1, the clearest connection with that goal comes from SLO 4.0. The other three SLOs are essential to meeting Goal 7.

The department does not have an SLO specifically designed to satisfy Goal 3. However, the overwhelming majority of 100-level History courses have requirements designed to do so.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key goal of the Department of History at Francis Marion University is to offer a balanced curriculum of courses in U.S., European, and world history. The department offers five courses that non-majors may take to complete their General Education requirements at FMU: HIST 101 (U.S. History to 1877), HIST 102 (U.S. History since 1877), HIST 103 (European History to the French Revolution), HIST 104 (European History since the French Revolution), and HIST 105 (Introduction to Modern World History). To assess student success in meeting the goals listed above, the History Department has adopted indirect and direct methods. The former is addressed through a survey given once a semester to students in 100-level courses. To directly assess students' abilities, the department uses a "Course-Level Assessment" (CLA) form that is filled out twice a semester for each class and that relies on a rubric to judge students' written work. A total of 862 students in 100-level courses took the survey during the 2018-19 school year, while instructors in the History Department filled out CLA forms for 1354 students for those classes during the same time period.

The department set for itself benchmarks of 80% to meet the four SLOs listed above and, by extension, the General Education goals. It failed to meet that benchmark in all cases, both in the indirect and direct measurements. For this reason, the department has begun to implement a number of changes to improve students' ability to analyze and write about the past.

The department has not set itself a benchmark for the use of technology, but nearly every member requires students to be familiar with technology. That said, there is more the department can do on this score.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Methods of Measurement

To measure those SLOs related to the General Education goals, the department relies on one direct and one indirect measurement.

Direct Measurement

The department utilizes a CLA is a form filled out twice for each History course, first at midterm and then again at the end of the semester. This form assesses students' writing and analytical skills, with the professor indicating the number of students who exceeded, met, or did not meet expectations. This is very similar to Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio that is used by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. Lawshe's Ratio relies on a judging panel to determine if the content of a particular assignment is "essential," "useful but not essential," or "not necessary."

The following table shows the results of the CLA forms for the fall and spring for each of the four SLOs. The percentage reflects those students who "met" or "exceeded" expectations.

| <i>SLO</i> | <i>FALL 2018 Midterm</i> | <i>FALL 2018 Final</i> | <i>SPRING 2019 Midterm</i> | <i>SPRING 2019 Final</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 2.1 | 74.7% | 76.6% | 74.4% | 73% |
| 4.0 | 78.8% | 71.1% | 75.4% | 71.5% |
| 5.0 | 75.3% | 77.4% | 76.1% | 68.4% |
| 5.1 | 69% | 73% | 74.5% | 72.5% |

Indirect Measurement

Around the middle of each semester, the department gives an on-line survey to students in all History classes. There are two such surveys, one for lower-level courses and an expanded survey for upper-level classes. The former consists of 23 questions and asks students a variety of questions, including several related directly to SLOs 2.1, 4.0, 5.0, and 5.1, such as whether: 1) they can write an essay that supports a thesis statement with evidence; 2) they feel prepared to write a historical essay; 3) they can discern the relationship between cause and effect at particular time periods; and 4) they can see connections between historical events, ideas, and values over time.

The SLOs

The History Department established a benchmark of 80% for SLOs 2.1, 4.0, 5.0, and 5.1 for its 2016-17 and 2017-18 IE reports. The results of those reports moved the department to maintain that 80% benchmark for the 2018-19 school year.

Results

The results that follow are for General Education (100-level) courses only:

SLO 2.1 The student could effectively offer analysis that supported the thesis statement.

Lower-division (100-level courses) on-line survey. Results: 77% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Course-Level Assessments (Qualitative Analysis). Results: 74.7% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Grand Total: 75.9% **Benchmark Not Attained**

SLO 4.0 The student could effectively write an historical essay.

Lower-division (100-level courses) on-line survey. Results: 63.5% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Course-Level Assessments (Writing). Results: 74.2% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Grand Total: 68.9% **Benchmark Not Attained**

SLO 5.0 The student could accurately explain how people have existed, acted, and thought in particular historical periods.

Lower-division (100-level courses) on-line survey. Results: 77.5% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Course-Level Assessments (Critical Thinking). Results: 74.3% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Grand Total: 75.9% **Benchmark Not Attained**

SLO 5.1 Would be able to demonstrate an understanding of cause and effect with a broad knowledge of the general chronology of historical developments in a variety of civilizations.

Lower-division (100-level courses) on-line survey. Results: 75.5% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Course-Level Assessments (Area Knowledge). Results: 72.3% **Benchmark Not Attained**
Grand Total: 73.9% **Benchmark Not Attained**

Use of technology. The department does not have an SLO specifically related to this item. However, of the ten members of the department:

- Nine require the use of Blackboard to post syllabi, Power Points, readings, or other material relevant to in-class lectures or discussions.
- Two use Blackboard to give quizzes to their students.
- Four require students to use the library catalog and/or databases to acquire materials related to class assignments.

History Department Action Items

It is clear from the data that students in General Education courses struggle with writing and analysis. Indeed, with the exception of SLO 4.0, students' confidence in their abilities largely

reflected their work in class. Furthermore, the data from the CLA forms shows that students' performance on their finals declined compared to their midterms. This could be the result of any number of factors, among them: 1) the need to study for multiple final exams at or about the same time; 2) cramming prior to the final in question; 3) the fact that some final exam essays are comprehensive in nature. What is clear is that while the majority of students did well throughout the semester, a sizeable minority had difficulty grasping how best to express their ideas clearly, and in ways that met the requisite levels of narrative and analysis as required by their professors.

Action Items for 2019-20

There are a number of action items the History Department will adopt to "close the loop," that is, measures that will help enhance student performance. These action items are divided into two categories: those that are broader in nature and those that are specific to the four SLOs.

Broader Actions

- Emphasize to students the importance of budgeting time to prepare for tests, especially final exams.
- Expand the CLA form to include assessments for additional SLOs, thereby allowing for more data to determine students' performance.

SLO-Specific Actions

SLO 2.1 The student could effectively offer analysis that supported the thesis statement.

- Create a video/Power Point presentation on essay-writing that will be required viewing of all students in History courses. This will help students learn how to prepare for and write an essay, one that includes the component parts (introduction, thesis, supporting evidence, conclusion).

SLO 4.0 The student could effectively write an historical essay.

This has proven one of the biggest challenges facing the department. The department will take the following measures to improve this SLO:

- Require students to visit the Writing Center for all history courses.
- Potentially require students to purchase a writing guide such as *The Elements of Style*.
- Use the above-mentioned presentation to help students better understand how a strong essay is written.

SLO 5.0 The student could accurately explain how people have existed, acted, and thought in particular historical periods.

This has been one of the greatest surprises facing the department, as History is by its very nature the study of people, what they did, and when and why they did it. The department will take multiple measures to improve its outcome on this SLO:

- Emphasize in the above-mentioned video/Power Point presentation that students must make sure to include in their writing the actions of individuals or groups at particular time periods. This means not just what they did or when they did it, but why, as well as the impact they had.
- Potentially provide journal articles for students to read in class. As these articles are highly analytical, they will show students how professional historians examine the past.

SLO 5.1 The student would be able to demonstrate an understanding of cause and effect with a broad knowledge of the general chronology of historical developments in a variety of civilizations.

- Emphasize in the above-mentioned video/Power Point presentation that history is not just analysis but a narrative based on linear time. Hence, in their writing, students must be cognizant of the importance of maintaining chronology. In so doing, they can see (and help the reader understand) the connections between actions and events that take place at one period of time, and those that occur subsequently.

Students will be able to use technology to locate and document information and ideas.

- As historians rely heavily on computerized library catalogs and databases for their work, require all History professors to assign their students some form of library-related research project.