

# **INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT**

## **GENERAL EDUCATION**

**Name of Program/Department: Department of History**

**Year: 2019-2020**

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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 a 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 581 students in 100-level courses took the survey during the 2019-2020 school year,<sup>1</sup> while instructors in the History Department filled out CLA forms for 837 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. In its 2018-2019 General Education report, it met none of these goals. In 2019-2020 it met its goal in every case with the exception of SLO 4.0, and even in that instance it saw significant improvement. These numbers suggest that the measures adopted by the department after the 2018-2019 school year are having an effect. However, more data will be needed to confirm that conclusion.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that only 40 students in the department's lower-level courses took the survey in the spring, which is very small compared to previous semesters. It is unclear if this was the result of student disinterest, a failure of faculty members to announce the survey, or an issue involving Blackboard.

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 Course-Level Assessment (CLA) form that is 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.

<b><i>SLO</i></b>	<b><i>FALL 2019 Midterm</i></b>	<b><i>FALL 2019 Final</i></b>	<b><i>SPRING 2020 Midterm</i></b>	<b><i>SPRING 2020 Final</i></b>
<b>2.1</b>	82.9%	87.9%	76.7%	78.6%
<b>4.0</b>	89%	91.5%	78%	80.5%
<b>5.0</b>	85.7%	91.4%	75.5%	77.5%
<b>5.1</b>	76.3%	84.5%	78%	78.2%

#### **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***

In its 2016-2017 IE report, the History Department established a benchmark of 80% for SLOs 2.1, 4.0, 5.0, and 5.1. The results of the 2018-2019 report moved the department to maintain that benchmark for 2019-2020.

### ***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: 85.7% **Benchmark Attained**  
Course-Level Assessments (Qualitative Analysis). Results: 81.5% **Benchmark Attained**  
**Average: 83.6%** **Benchmark Attained**

#### **SLO 4.0 The student could effectively write an historical essay.**

Lower-division (100-level courses) on-line survey. Results: 74.3% **Benchmark Not Attained**  
Course-Level Assessments (Writing). Results: 84.8% **Benchmark Attained**  
**Average: 79.6%** **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: 85.3% **Benchmark Attained**  
Course-Level Assessments (Critical Thinking). Results: 85.5% **Benchmark Attained**  
**Grand Total: 85.4%** **Benchmark 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: 85.8% **Benchmark Attained**  
Course-Level Assessments (Area Knowledge). Results: 79.3% **Benchmark Not Attained**  
**Grand Total: 82.6%** **Benchmark 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.
- All of them had to use technology in the spring semester after the university transferred all classes on line as a result of the coronavirus.

### ***History Department Action Items***

It is clear from the data that students in General Education courses in most cases are confident in their abilities but, in at least the instances of SLOs 2.1 and 5.1, did not perform as well on their assignments as they thought they would. What is significant is a reversal from 2018-2019, in which student performance based on the CLAs declined between the midterms and finals; in 2019-2020, it improved, in some cases by five percent or more. This suggests that the steps the History Department has implemented over the past year to improve student performance is succeeding. That said, more data will be needed to confirm this conclusion.

#### ***Action Items for 2020-2021***

The data points to positive movement insofar as “closing the loop,” that is, adopting measures that will help enhance student performance. This is not to say the department cannot take additional measures. These measures (action items) are divided into two categories: those that are broader in nature and those that are specific to the four SLOs.

##### **Broader Actions**

- The department will continue to emphasize to students the importance of budgeting time to prepare for tests, especially final exams.
- In light of the coronavirus, the department will urge all professors to be knowledgeable in the use of technology to impart information and deliver assignments.

##### **SLO-Specific Actions**

The measures the department has taken to improve student performance appear to be working. However, the department will continue to monitor and seek means to enhance student learning, including the importance of providing not just narrative but analysis in essays, and the impact of individual persons and groups of people on historical events. Additionally, while the department had seen improvement in SLO 4.0, more can be done there:

**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 a Power Point presentation on essay-writing to improve student performance.

**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- and/or internet-related research project.