

Assessment Report for the Graduate Program in History 2012-13

The Graduate program has engaged in two significant assessments during the past year.

1. MA Reform and Second-Year Review

Purpose and Goals

In 2011-12 we amended our department legislation with the aim of moving students more efficiently through the MA phase of the graduate program and improving faculty collaboration as students reach the MA and move on toward their preliminary exams. During 2012-13 we began implementing these revised requirements and have begun working on the mechanics of assessing those changes.

Assessment Strategy

A) The revised MA includes a required research seminar, normally during the second or third semester of enrollment. Our first such seminar is underway, and we are developing a special evaluation instrument for students to guide us in revising the syllabus of the course for future semesters. This survey will be administered anonymously by the Graduate Coordinator and the results will be distributed to and analyzed by the Graduate Council next fall.

B) Second-Year reviews will begin next spring, and we have been developing a survey which we will administer to all participating faculty. We will use this to identify any weaknesses in the conception or execution of the reviews.

Key Findings and Impact

As the initial research seminar is ongoing and reviews and concomitant assessments have yet to take place, we have no direct findings or impact to report.

2. Evaluating the Preliminary Exam

Purposes and Goals

The preliminary exam consists of two parts: a set of written and/or oral examinations based on large reading lists, and a dissertation prospectus. The two parts may be administered together or at separate times, depending on the specific requirements of each sub-program. As the final step before achieving candidate status, the prelim exam is the aspect of the program most likely to produce unhappiness and delay. Many students feel overwhelmed by their reading lists and anxious about the questions they will be asked; some seek to delay their exams for significant periods. Over time, overall student progress through this part of the program has slowed. Meanwhile, faculty are generally less than fully satisfied with student performance on the written and oral parts of these exams. In the fall of 2012, the Graduate Council determined that before putting forward any proposals

to reform the prelim--whether to improve the speed or quality of student work--we should get a clearer sense of students' perspectives.

Assessment Strategy

We began with a Town Hall meeting and survey of current graduate students. The meeting took place on Nov. 7, 2012, and the survey was administered at the same time. Thirty-nine current graduate students responded, all but one submitting their responses online.

Key Findings and Impact

Contrary to some prior expectations, the survey did not reveal any broad dissatisfaction among graduate students about the diversity of requirements across our thirteen prelim areas. The survey did reveal a broad (though not universal) sense of uncertainty about the purpose of parts of the preliminary exam, particularly the very long reading lists on which the written and oral exams are mainly based. Discussion of this finding led to two further actions.

First, in spring 2013 we piloted a new seminar, History 952, aimed specifically at helping students prepare for preliminary exams. We will conduct a special assessment of the seminar at the end of the semester and plan, if results are at all encouraging, to offer it at least once next year.

Second, the Graduate Council determined that student confusion about the purposes of prelim stemmed in part from a similar lack of clarity among the faculty. We are currently developing a new survey instrument, to be administered to faculty late this spring, which seeks to discover how faculty members understand the purposes and parameters of the preliminary exam.

Stephen Kantrowitz
Director of Graduate Studies
skantrow@wisc.edu

L&S ASSESSMENT REPORT SURVEY 2012-2013

This survey may be completed online, by going to:
https://uwmadison.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1KPP5NTbU2acZ6t

Introduction

Dear L&S chairs, directors, faculty, and academic program staff:

Annual assessment reports are due to the college by May 15, 2013.

By completing the survey that follows, you will be submitting your annual report on the assessment of student learning. These reports are needed so UW-Madison can comply with Regent and Federal regulations that require the university to systematically perform this work for all academic programs that lead to a credential (degree, major, and certificate). Your responses will be used to create the L&S Annual Report to the Provost on the Assessment of Student Learning. The college report to the Provost must contain a response for every L&S credential. As you know, this is a huge task - your help is essential.

The following links offer some background on Assessment of Student Learning, from the college assessment plan to some simple "how to" guides. (Some of the survey questions below also provide links to relevant resources.)

- L&S Assessment Plan: <https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/page.php?id=25259>
- L&S Department and Program Plans and Reports: <https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/page.php?id=23837>
- L&S Plan and Report content guidelines / templates: <https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/page.php?id=25242>
- Assessment Tips and Terms: <https://kb.wisc.edu/lis/page.php?id=25287>

This is the first time we are trying to gather this information by asking you to complete an online survey. Because reports are due May 15, 2013, the survey will be open during the Spring 2013 term. This survey has been designed to allow you to start, stop, and revise responses as long as you do so on the same computer where you started the survey, using the original link you were sent to begin the survey, and if you click "next" (which saves your information) before closing the survey. (If this gives you trouble, contact Elaine.) As an alternative to responding online, we will also make the survey available as an MS Word document that can be emailed to us.

If your program provides a formal report on assessment to a professional organization, accrediting agency, board of visitors, or other group, you may share that report as part of your response. Please contact Elaine Klein, the L&S Assistant Dean for Academic Planning (emklein@ls.wisc.edu) to discuss these options. (We will need responses for any programs that are not covered by these reports.)

Finally, we hope to share and use this information across the college, to encourage departments and programs to learn from each other, develop collaborations, and improve practices and learning. You may also notice that the information you provide here will be requested by other entities - the L&S Academic Planning Council, Curriculum Committee, and other groups in the college refer to assessment activities when discussing program reviews, requests for changes to courses and curricula, requests for departmental reconfiguration, calls for proposals for new projects, etc. Understanding how, and how well, our students are performing in our programs is essential to the work we do. The responses you provide will help us know if we're headed in the right direction.

Again, thank you for your response.

Gary Sandefur, Dean, College of Letters & Science
Elaine M. Klein, Assistant Dean for Academic Planning

Contact Information

Q2.1. If we have questions about the responses provided, it would be useful to be able to discuss them with you. Whom should we contact?

Stephen Kantrowitz, DGS
Leslie Abadie, Graduate Advisor

Q2.2. Address

3211 Humanities

Q2.3. e-mail contact

skantrow@wisc.edu, abadie@wisc.edu

Q2.4. Telephone

3-1844, 3-1961

Program Information Validation

Q3.1. List all of the academic programs this response addresses. Remember to include undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as certificate programs. For your convenience, we provide here links to the lists of approved UW-Madison programs.

- Majors, options and degrees: http://registrar.wisc.edu/documents/85_Majors_Options_Degrees.pdf
- Certificates: http://registrar.wisc.edu/documents/85_Official_Certificates.pdf

MA, PhD

Q3.2. Are the names and levels of the programs, as you understand them, consistent with the official lists?

- Yes**
- No
 - Academic program not listed
 - Academic program should not be listed

Q3.3. If an academic program name needs to be updated, you may need to request a change to make the working name consistent with the official name. This will require approval by the department/program, the L&S Academic Planning Council, and the University Academic Planning Council. If you think you would like to change an academic program name, please contact your associate dean and the Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, Elaine M. Klein (emklein@ls.wisc.edu).

- Information on changing program names: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=20052>

Should we let Elaine know you'll be contacting her about this?

- Yes
- No

Q3.4. If an academic program isn't listed, and if it should be formally recognized by the university, the department/program needs to seek approval through the College and University Academic Planning Councils. Please alert your department chair and associate dean that you wish to begin this process. If you have questions, contact the L&S Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, Elaine Klein (emklein@ls.wisc.edu).

- For Information on creating new academic programs: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=20049>

Should we let Elaine know you'll be contacting her about this?

- Yes
- No

Q3.5. If you have an academic program that should not be listed in these official documents (because the faculty have closed or suspended it), that action must be formally approved and implemented by the university. The department/program needs to seek approval through the L&S and University Academic Planning Councils.

Please alert your department chair and associate dean as soon as possible that you wish to begin this process. If you have questions, contact the L&S Assistant Dean for Academic Planning, Elaine Klein (emklein@ls.wisc.edu).

- For Information on suspending or discontinuing academic programs: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=23316>

Should we let Elaine know you'll be contacting her about this?

- Yes
- No

Assessment Plan

Q4.1. Please review the assessment plan on file for your program(s).

- L&S Department and Program Assessment Plans: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=23837>

Is it current?

- Yes
- No

Q4.2. If the plan on file is not current, and if you have a current plan, please send a copy to Elaine Klein (emklein@ls.wisc.edu). **Revised Assessment Plan (spring 2013) attached.**

If the plan on file is not current, and you need to update your plan, please provide a statement below explaining your plans to undertake that work. Your updated plan should be sent to the Dean (c/o Elaine Klein) by June 30, 2013. (Please contact Elaine if you need to discuss an alternative deadline.)

You may find the following documents useful as you undertake this work:

- L&S Plan and Report content guidelines / templates: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=25242>
- Assessment Tips and Terms: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=25287>
- L&S Department and Program Plans and Reports: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=23837>
- L&S Assessment Plan: <https://kb.wisc.edu/ls/page.php?id=25259>

Q4.3. Do you have other programs on which you can provide an assessment report? (Please understand that we must provide some report on every academic program and credential we offer.)

- Yes
- Nope, I'm done here.

Recent Assessment Activity - SEE ATTACHED ASSESSMENT REPORT

Q5.1. Assessment Purpose. Please describe the purpose of the assessment activity (e.g., to conduct a curricular or program review, to assess learning across a sequence of courses, to solve a problem with student performance, to honor MIU or other obligations, etc.)

Q5.2. Learning Outcomes or Goals Assessed. Referring to the list of student learning objectives/goals expressed in the program assessment plan, please identify the learning outcome(s) that were the focus of the assessment activity: what did you study about what you want students to know, value and/or do?

Q5.3. Assessment Strategy. Please describe your most recent assessment project. What did you do to try to better understand student learning across this program, in the context of the learning goal discussed in your response above? Feel free to describe the tools, strategies, methods, and analysis used (e.g., graduating student surveys, standardized tests, grades on embedded questions on exams, alumni surveys, focus groups or interviews, evaluation of student work on papers, portfolios, capstone assignments, etc.)

Q5.4. Key Findings and Impact. Please summarize the key findings (evidence/results) and how the department or program plans to use this information (e.g., no curricular changes, program enhancements, program redesign, etc.). This may include to whom results were reported to effect change (if needed), whether the results suggested other areas of inquiry, plans for continued attention to assessment (including "tweaking" the assessment plan), and/or deadlines for achieving milestones related to the above activities.

The Future

Q6.1. Please let us know what your next steps for assessing student learning will be.

Thank you!

Please email this document to emklein@ls.wisc.edu.
If you prefer, hard copies may be sent to Elaine Klein, Rm 307D South Hall

We'll be in touch if we have any additional questions.