

College of Letters and Science
2002 Annual Survey and Report of Departmental Assessment Practices

Please return to Dean Certain by May 24, 2002
 c/o Associate Academic Planner Elaine Klein
 307-E South Hall, 1055 Bascom Mall, Madison WI 53706

Department Name: History of Science

I. Assessment Plan

Q1. The department has an assessment plan for the undergraduate program.

Y N

Q2. The department has an assessment plan for the graduate program.

Y N

Q3. The assessment plan/s is/are linked to articulated outcome goals for your majors.

Y N

Please identify the types of tools in the assessment plan(s); if possible, indicate the academic years in which they have been or are intended to be employed:

Tools used to directly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
National Exams		
Local Exams		
Capstone Courses	1996 2001 (Seniors)	
Embedded Testing		
Student Portfolios		
Theses, Dissertations		MA paper (2nd yr), Dissertation
Performance Evaluations		1st yr; 2nd yr (in connection w/ MA paper)
Pre & Post Testing		Prelim exams
Tools used to indirectly assess student learning:	Undergraduate Program	Graduate Program
Student Surveys		
Exit Interviews	Major exit survey (written)	
Alumni Surveys	every 5 yrs, '01, '06'	
Employer Surveys		
External Reviews		

Q5. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?

nd yr/performance eval
 MA Paper assessment is most useful b/c all faculty read all MA papers to assess the student's progress and suitability for PhD program.

Q6. Of the tools used to directly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

We do not use multiple tools.

Q7. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the most useful information?

Q8. Of the tools used to indirectly assess student learning, which provide the least useful information?

Q9. Please elaborate on any of the responses given above (please attach additional pages as needed).

Not enough information provided to be very useful, though we do get the general sense that students feel well served by the major.

II. Assessment Processes

Q10. Responsibility for assessment has been assumed by an individual

a committee

If responsibility is delegated to an individual, this person is:

the chair / tenured faculty / untenured faculty / academic staff / short term staff / other: _____

If responsibility is delegated to a committee, this group is:

Specially constituted to address assessment of student learning	Y	N
Part of the Curriculum Committee	Y	N
Part of the Executive Committee	Y	N
Part of the Undergraduate/Graduate Education Committee	Y	N
Other: _____		

Q11. The department has requested funds from the University Assessment Council (UAC) to help the department assess student learning.

Y N

If "yes", did the UAC award the department funds?

Y N

Were those funds useful?

Y N

Q12. The department has sought professional assistance to conduct assessment.

Y N

If "yes": from whom has the department has sought professional assistance? (For example, the LEAD Center, the Office of Quality Improvement, the UW Survey Center, etc.)

LEAD Ctr (1998); UW Survey Ctr (2001, informally)

1 Additional Information

1. Please attach a brief description of any changes in curriculum, advising, or procedures that were the result of your assessment findings so we may include this information in our annual report to the Provost. If your department has received funds from the University Assessment Council, you may attach the assessment report submitted to the UAC in compliance with its funding support requirements.

In the interest of streamlining our requests for assessment information, please identify an assessment contact person: Lynn Nyhart

3. Do you have any suggestions for workshops or learning opportunities in the area of student outcomes assessment? _____

Department of the History of Science

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Further comments:

Graduate Program Assessment:

Assessment of our graduate program is largely an ongoing, informal practice; following our assessment plan, this informal self-assessment is to be punctuated by a formal self-study at five-year intervals. In 1998, this self-study mainly took the form of an in-depth survey of graduate alumni by Sarah Pfattheicher of the LEAD center, along with a review of their employment situations and their publishing productivity. A major departmental self-study was then undertaken in 2000-01, in conjunction with the formal 10-year review required by the College. This has led to an ongoing discussion among faculty and graduate students about how best to speed time to degree. We have identified the third and fourth years as a particularly slow period in students' graduate careers, when they are studying for their preliminary examinations, completing minor requirements, and preparing a dissertation proposal. Several different proposals have been floated at faculty meetings in 2001-02 for how to change the requirements at this stage to keep students moving, but the faculty has been unable to come to a consensus on what to do. We will continue to discuss this in the fall, with the aim of making a concrete change in the graduate program and testing it out.

Undergraduate Program Assessment:

Our undergraduate assessment plan calls for an assessment committee to review the papers in the department's capstone seminar every 5 years, and to review surveys collected annually from those graduating from the program. According to our schedule, we should have conducted these reviews in May 2001, but they were superseded by the Departmental review, which included extensive discussion on the part of the review committee with our majors. We did conduct a survey of all our undergraduate alumni majors in Summer 2001, covering those who had graduated from the earliest possible records through those who had just graduated. The survey was intended to elicit information about individuals' retrospective experience of the major and its connections to their current life. Since none of the respondents went on to graduate school in the history of science, it is not surprising that the major had little direct bearing on their lives; however, almost all of them had positive things to say about the major. In particular, given the stress in the undergraduate mission statement of fostering strong historical critical and writing skills, it is gratifying to see many spontaneous comments crediting the program with teaching respondents to write well and argue persuasively. Numerous comments also attested to the importance of the breadth of perspective respondents gained from the major (especially those—who were in the majority—who also majored in a science).

Because we did not review the capstone papers in 2001 or 2002, we will plan to do this in spring 2003.

Lynn K Nyhan
6/11/02