

Bergen Community College

ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM FOR History AA

Assessment Period: 2015-2016 cycle

Department/Program: History and Geography

Department Chair: Keith Chu

Department Assessment Liaison: Sarah Shurts

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❖ Program Description or mission/goal statement of the Department/Program:

The mission of the department of history at Bergen Community College is to create a first-rate teaching and learning community where students acquire historical knowledge covering all periods and geographical concentrations. We seek to maintain high standards of civic engagement, instruction, and scholarship including investigating and interpreting primary and secondary historical sources by various methods. We affirm a commitment to help students develop an appreciation of history, both western and non-western, through an understanding of the past and its impact on the present. Recognizing that the discipline of history holds a central place in the liberal arts and general education curriculum, we wish to impart to students critical reading, analytical thinking, and effective writing skills which are essential for further study in all majors and success in a wide-range of careers. Equipped with this historical training students are better prepared to become productive and responsible citizens. The department strengths include courses in Western Civilization, United States History, European History, and Latin American History.

❖ Program Learning Goals/Outcomes:

Students who complete courses in the History Program will be able to:

1. Demonstrate, in both written and oral discussion, the ability to consider a diversity of viewpoints, construct and defend a thesis, and revise it effectively as new evidence demands.
2. Read and comprehend a variety of primary and secondary sources, evaluate their perspective and bias, and contextualize them with appropriate detail.
3. Develop a methodological practice of identifying, gathering, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and citing historical evidence.
4. Narrate, in written or oral form, an event from the past in a way that recognizes different perspectives and multiple causation and rejects inevitability.
5. Recognize the important political, intellectual, social, and cultural forces that have shaped our past.

6. Identify examples of historical change and continuity over time and evaluate their historical significance.
7. Temper moral judgment in historical interpretation with an understanding of historical perspective and the significance of changing cultural context.

SEMESTER 1: CREATING PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT PLAN

1. Program Learning Outcome(s) to be assessed (from the above section):

Identify examples of historical change and continuity over time and evaluate their historical significance.

2. Means of Assessment:

In our effort to assess student learning, we as a department have agreed not to use any quantitative tests that determine whether students have remembered a collection of facts or accumulated points of knowledge. We instead assess qualitative assignments that speak to the analytical skills, competencies in reading and written expression, and historical thinking that students have learned in the courses we teach. We have also agreed that it is detrimental to student learning and to our own academic freedom to assign a standardized, homogenized task for this assessment. We have instead decided to apply the same generic grading rubric to our individual, course specific written assignments. This cycle, all history faculty were asked to use the attached rubric to grade end of Fall term papers. The rubric is designed to specifically address program learning goal number 6 which concerns students' ability to recognize change over time, an essential historical thinking skill. Inherent in this learning goal is the expectation that students will be able to ask a good historical question about change over time, analyze the reasons for these changes from a variety of perspectives, and approaches this question by using historically sound methodology. All history essay assignments at the introductory college level, by their very nature, ask students to consider change over time and ask a historical question about it so this general requirement worked for all our history faculty's specific course paper assignments.

▪ Feedback from Dean:

SEMESTER 2: DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT TOOL (s) and TIMELINE

3A. Describe or attach assessment tool (s), including sources of data, timeline for data collection and how data will be analyzed.

Data was collected from entry level (100 level) history courses taught by full-time faculty members in the History & Geography Department. 5 full time faculty members scored a total of 177 papers for this common assessment. One set (20 papers) of those submitted was from an online course.

Each essay was graded on this common rubric designed to test a variety of competencies within the larger program learning goal. The various competencies included: recognition of change over time, analysis of change that recognizes multiple causation and perspectives, asking a good historical question, using and citing evidence in a methodologically sound way, and clear well organized written expression. Each of these competencies was graded on a scale of 1 to 4 with 1 indicating inadequate skills in the area and 4 reflecting mastery of the skill.

Data was collected during the months of January and February 2016 for papers that had been submitted and graded by professors in December 2015. The data was compiled and statistics run in February and results shared and discussed at the March and April department meetings.

History AA Program Learning Goal 6

Identify examples of historical change and continuity over time and evaluate their historical significance.

1= insufficient, 2= developing, 3=adequate, 4= excellent

- A. The response shows a recognition of change over time by identifying shifts in policies, attitudes, beliefs, ideas, etc.**

1 2 3 4

- B. The response provides analysis of this change that recognizes multiple causation, human agency, historical context, and/or multiple perspectives**

1 2 3 4

- C. The response asks and/or attempts to answer a good historical question about the significance of this change for history**

1 2 3 4

D. The response argues in a methodologically sound way by using evidence from the past and/or scholarly interpretations and citing that evidence appropriately

1 2 3 4

E. The response is well written (clear, concise, well organized, grammatically correct)

1 2 3 4

Total: (Please add all 5 numbers you circled and write the total here)

3B. Desired results faculty would like to see.

In previous assessment cycles, we have evaluated different program learning goals so we do not have a baseline of expectations for program learning goal 6. However our previous assessments looked for a “pass rate” of 60% so we determined that 60% was a suitable expectation for this new goal.

“Passing” would mean that students scored 15 or higher out of a possible 20 on a component of the rubric or on the total score. The compilation of the data will be done both for the total paper score out of 20 and also for each individual component of the rubric out of 4. This decision to consider 15 as a passing score for the total paper was based on the idea that this would indicate that a student had “met” each of the requirements for a strong paper or had shown a weakness in one area that was compensated by exceeding expectations in another. The use of a 3 as a pass rate for each individual element of the rubric was also based on the idea that with a 3 the student would have “met” the expectations for the rubric element being assessed.

The breakdown of the scores and our expectations for each are listed below:

- 60% of the students will score a total of 15 or above out of 20 possible points on the departmental essay rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the “recognition of change” category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the “analysis of change” category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the “asking a good historical question” category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the “methodology” category of the rubric
- 60% of the students will score 3 or 4 on the “written expression” category of the rubric

- **Feedback from CIE:**

SEMESTER 3: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA

4. Summary of Results (attach aggregated data table, survey tool, etc., to support the summary)

177 papers were collected

- Total papers with scores 15 or over – 102 (57%)
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “recognition of change” – 121 (68%)
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “analysis of change” – 112 (63%)
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “asking a good historical question” – 112 (63%)
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “methodology” - 109 (61.5%)
- Total papers with scores of 3 or 4 on “written expression” – 122 (69%)

See the attached compilation of paper scores

The overall goal of having 60% of our students achieve a score of 15 out of 20 on their paper was not met in the fall of 2015 although it was very close at 57%. However, all of the sub-goals of achieving scores of 3 or 4 on each of the competencies and skills associated with the program learning goal were met.

5. Recommendations for Improvement:

The department met in April to explore the results of the study. After some discussion it was decided that the sample size was too small to be definitive. The recommendation was that we look at the same learning goal in the next cycle and utilize a larger collection of papers. Next year the department as a whole plans to submit 3 classes of data rather than one or two.

However we also had a discussion of the more general changes we would like to start seeing. In general it would be helpful to set aside time to talk as a department, both full time and part time instructors, about what our expectations are for learning in our introductory courses. What do we want our students not only to know (content) but also understand (concepts) and be able to do (competencies/skills)? As we define these expectations and how they align with our stated program outcome statements, we can reconsider the assignments we give in our individual courses and how those assignments could be adapted to better assess these expectations for learning.

- **Feedback from Dean:**

SEMESTER 4: CLOSING THE LOOP AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

6. Use of Results:

When discussing how to "use" these results to create tangible change, we discussed the possibility of history workshops that could bring together adjunct and full time faculty in joint discussions of history education, expectations for learning, pedagogical strategies, best practices, and refining assignments. This workshop would not be designed for full time faculty to dictate terms to adjuncts but rather for collegial exchange of ideas and observations. Our adjuncts would benefit from a greater sense of connection to the work of department and we would benefit from their exposure to other history programs in the area.

This discussion of expectations for learning in the 100 level courses would also benefit from dialogue with our four year college transfer partners. Opening lines of communication here would give our department a better sense of the expectations that our students will face as junior level transfers and may indicate certain changes we could make at the cc level (for example, a 200 level methods seminar for those interested in a history major) to help our students be more successful after graduation/transfer.

▪ Feedback from CIE:

Last Updated: February 2015