

### **Assessment Plan**

History's assessment plan will be linked to the changes in its curriculum, which have been explicitly designed to improve students' success with regards to learning outcomes as stated above. The History Department inaugurates a new major with the entering class of 2012. Beginning with this class, History majors will take a gateway research seminar (History 105s) as soon as or shortly before they declare the major. All majors, except those enrolled in the senior thesis seminar, will then take a capstone research seminar in the senior year (the current 195s-196s courses.) 20%-25% of majors, as is currently the case, will complete a senior thesis instead (197s-198s). The 105s-195s sequence will, when fully implemented in five years, provide a ready made "before-and-after" instructional sequence within which to assess student success in the five learning outcomes for most majors, once students begin to move through the sequence.

**2008:** Our three-year assessment plan begins with a baseline assessment of the learning outcomes among senior majors enrolled in the senior thesis seminar (197s-198s). The departmental committee convened to evaluate the theses will apply a scoring rubric for all five outcomes to all theses (approximately 20% of senior majors) as they evaluate the theses for distinction. They will simultaneously measure student outcomes as they test the usefulness and practicality of the rubric in assessing outcomes. We will use a rubric which scores 0-2 for each learning outcome (0=marginal/no competence, 1=acceptable/minimum competence, 2=sophisticated/advanced competence). We will determine: 1) the success of the thesis program in demonstrating the achievement of student learning outcomes, specifically, whether all students' work scores a "2," as we anticipate and, consequently, 2) whether a more discriminating 4-step rubric should be employed (where 1=acceptable, 2=advanced, 3=honors quality) so that superior work, for example in capstone courses, could be distinguished from distinction-level work. While not strictly necessary for reasons of assessing outcomes across the major, an enhanced rubric may prove to be a convenient tool for simultaneously assessing outcomes and evaluating work for purposes of grades and awarding of distinction, particularly since students outside the seminar are occasionally awarded distinction (and this possibility may increase in frequency under the new major).

The results of this assessment will be reported by the Director of Undergraduate Studies (who chairs the thesis committee every spring) to the Executive Committee of the department, which will inform and recommend action to the department concerning a) the assessment rubric to be applied in future and b) any recommendations to thesis instructors, or to instructors of gateway research courses, arising from the results of the assessment.

**2008-09:** In this year the department undertakes a baseline assessment of the learning outcomes in the new 105s courses and, simultaneously, among senior majors enrolled in "capstone" seminars (195-196s). The assessments, in both cases, will be both indirect and direct. The indirect tools will be the self-reported "appraisal of progress" items #12-

13, 15-18 and 20 on end-of-course evaluations, which will address outcomes 1-5. The direct methods will be scoring a random sample of approximately 20% (or 15 papers from each course level, whichever is higher) of the research papers produced by pre-majors and majors in these courses according to the scoring rubric developed in the spring of 2008. To ensure that no upper-level majors are included in the baseline for 105s (in the first transition years, established majors may still take these courses) we will take our sample from only first-year and sophomore submissions.

An assessment committee made up of two faculty members and two graduate students will evaluate the indirect measures and carry out the direct assessment of randomly selected research papers. Our expectations for these measures are as follows: 1) that the department will score at or above “4” on all indirect measures as reported on end-of-course evaluations; 2) that all research papers in the sample will score a “2” in the rubric, indicating advanced achievement of learning outcomes.

The committee will report to the department at its annual retreat in August regarding its findings. The department will set target goals regarding improvements in learning outcomes in these courses and outline appropriate steps for instructors of these core courses in the upcoming year.

**2009-2010:** In this year the department will begin a system of evaluating direct measures of student learning outcomes in the department’s core research course sequence on an alternating basis. Gateway courses (105s) will be evaluated one year and capstone courses (195s-96s) the next, each time by means of evaluating a random sample of research products via our established scoring rubric. This alternation will mean that in 2001-2012, the senior majors will have been evaluated as sophomores, in their gateway courses, and again as seniors.