

Graduate Assessment

University of Pittsburgh
School of Arts and Sciences

Spring 2009

Process

1. Collect first version of Assessment Matrices for all graduate majors and certificates (64 total*, 58 received), Fall 2007 and provide feedback.
2. Collect second version of Assessment Matrices with row completed for one learning outcome, Spring 2008.
3. A&S Graduate Council members each review 8-9 assessment matrices and provide comments, Jan.-Feb. 2009 (63 received).
4. NC summarizes comments and submits them to departments, Feb. 2009.
5. Revised Assessment Matrices, with completed Results/Action Plan for 2 learning outcomes, May 2009.

6. * Does not include joint programs with School of Medicine. Some departments have MA, MS, PhD, etc.

PROGRAM OR SCHOOL	PhD program, Department of History		
Assessment Coordinator for Program or School	Name: Lara Putnam	Email: LEP12@pitt.edu	Phone: 8-7456
Program or School Mission Statement	To educate students to research and analyze historical change and to make significant original contributions to scholarly knowledge of the human past by writing book-length dissertations that illuminate major historical questions through the use of primary sources.		
Program or School Goals	To enable students to achieve proficiency in appropriate research methods and mastery of the historical literature on selected geographical areas and transnational themes, in order to produce a significant and original book-length dissertation that answers major historical questions through the use of primary sources, and is of potentially publishable quality.		

Learning Outcomes <i>What will students know and be able to do when they graduate?</i>	Assessment Methods <i>How will the outcome be measured? Who will be assessed, when, and how often?</i>	Standards of Comparison <i>How well should students be able to do on the assessment?</i>	Interpretation of Results <i>What do the data show?</i>	Use of Results/Action Plan <i>Who reviewed the findings? What changes were made after reviewing the results?</i>
1. Students will acquire expert knowledge about historical processes in a specific region of the world. They will master a field of scholarship related to their region of interest.	This knowledge is targeted in one of the three fields examined in the comprehensive examinations. A committee of three faculty members will assess a sample of 10 regional field comprehensive exam essays. This assessment will be carried out in spring 2008 and every three years thereafter.	Students' breadth and depth of knowledge of historical processes will be judged on a scale of Competent, Proficient, and Exceptional. 80% of papers will be judged to demonstrate Proficient knowledge.	Eight exams—the totality of those presented since written comprehensive essays were instituted as part of our graduate program reform several years ago—were evaluated. 100% were assessed as demonstrating at least Proficient knowledge; only one was judged to be Exceptional.	The data were presented to the Graduate Committee along with the list of standards created by the Graduate Assessment Committee in order to evaluate the essays. The data will inform the Graduate Committee's ongoing deliberations over how to ensure both equity and excellence across the multiple regional subfields in the graduate program. The Graduate Committee may also circulate the standards developed as part of this exercise among faculty and students as a spur to collective dialogue regarding the goals of the comprehensive exam essays.
2. Students will be able to analyze events and processes in a transnational historical context: as part of global movements of ideas, people, and commodities or as examples of patterned socio-cultural interactions. They will master a field of scholarship related to a comparative or connective theme of interest.	This ability is targeted in one of the three fields examined in the comprehensive examinations. A committee of three faculty members will assess a sample of 10 thematic field comprehensive exam essays. This assessment will be carried out in spring 2009 and every three years thereafter.	Students' ability to analyze events or processes in transnational (comparative or connective) context will be judged on a scale of Competent, Proficient, and Exceptional. 80% of papers will be judged to demonstrate Proficient ability.	To be conducted Spring 2009.	N/A

Learning Outcomes <i>What will students know and be able to do when they graduate?</i>	Assessment Methods <i>How will the outcome be measured? Who will be assessed, when, and how often?</i>	Standards of Comparison <i>How well should students be able to do on the assessment?</i>	Interpretation of Results <i>What do the data show?</i>	Use of Results/ Action Plan <i>Who reviewed the findings? What changes were made after reviewing the results?</i>
3. Students will define a significant topic of historical inquiry, conduct research in primary sources using appropriate methodologies, and write a book-length argument-driven thesis that represents a significant and original contribution to the existing scholarship.	The department will compile data on graduate publications on a bi-annual basis. This assessment will be carried out in fall 2008 and every other year thereafter.	80% of students will publish material from their dissertations in peer-reviewed book or article form within six years of receipt of the PhD.	To be conducted Fall 2008.	N/A
4. Students will be well prepared to teach history at the two-year college, four-year college, or university level. They will be competitive on the academic job market.	The department will compile data on graduate placement on an annual basis.	The percentage of our graduates attaining full-time, multi-year teaching positions within three years of graduation will equal or surpass the current rate of placement of graduates of "top tier" History Ph.D. programs as reported by the American Historical Association. ¹	Of the 18 students who graduated with a PhD from our department between 2001 and 2004, 8 (44%) have attained full-time, tenure-track positions. Of 13 students who received their PhDs within the past three years (in 2005, 2006, or 2007), 9 (69%) have already attained full-time, tenure-track positions. The first figure matches overall placement rates for the top 30 History PhD programs in the United States as reported by the American Historical Association, while the second figure notably surpasses the top-tier average.	These findings were reported to the Graduate Committee. The Committee interprets these figures to suggest that our department's graduate curriculum reform (begun in 2002) and the new procedures put in place to ensure that students receive the support and feedback they need to move expeditiously through the program have had a positive impact and should be continued.

¹ The most recent survey, conducted in 2005 and encompassing more than 11,000 History Ph.D.s, found that combined placement rates for the top 30 programs in the country had remained steady for all cohorts since 1990, with 41% to 43% of each cohort of top-tier graduates attaining employment in History Departments. By contrast, placement rates for mid-tier and bottom-tier programs ranged from 33% to 20%.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Professor William Chase, Chair, Department of History
Professor Alejandro de la Fuente, Director of Graduate Studies

FROM: Nicole Constable, Associate Dean, Graduate Studies and Research

DATE: February 24, 2009

SUBJECT: Graduate Assessment Matrices

The School of Arts and Sciences Graduate Council Committee has reviewed all of the assessment matrices for graduate degree programs and certificates. I am sending you a summary of our comments and suggestions for improvement. Please forward these comments to the faculty member or members in your department who are responsible for completing the assessment. I hope that you will find this feedback useful.

The committee noted that most common point of confusion for many programs is the distinction between how we assess the progress of *individual students* according to the milestones we have already established for them versus how we assess the *program* and its ability to create worthwhile milestones that successfully train our students to meet our programmatic goals. While milestones and grades can be an important element of assessment, it is important that such elements are assessed as well. If we simply take an “A” grade or a passed overview as an indication that all is well, then we are not really evaluating the program and its ability to accomplish the learning goals and outcomes that it has set out for itself. Given that one goal of most programs is to train students to have the necessary skills in their discipline to succeed and compete in a particular job or career, it would be useful to make job placement an assessment measure. Other useful external measures include success in acquiring external funding, publishing scholarly articles, etc.

Thank you for all the effort you have put into this. As you know, the revised matrices, with two learning outcomes assessed (all columns filled out) are due by May 8, 2009. Please refer to Dean Cooper’s memo of January 12, 2009 for further information. Revised graduate matrices should be sent to me at ncgrad.pitt.edu. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HISTORY EDUCATION MA

- Very good matrix.
- Learning outcome #4 is not worded in terms of what students will learn, but it is important to include. Could Learning Outcome #4 and Assessment Method #4 be deleted, but ADD the Standards of Comparison for LO4 to Standards of Comparison for LO3?
- Have you thought about how to track alumni?
- When did you begin enrolling students? Can any data and plan be included by May 2009? If not, please add a note indicating that it is too new to have data and results.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR HISTORY Ph.D.

- This is very good.
- Can Learning Outcome #4 be reworded so that it reflects what students are expected to learn?
- Should learning to teach at Pitt be part of the assessment of Learning Outcome #4?
- Would it be useful to add Conference Paper presentations as part of the Assessment for Learning Outcome #3?
- Any additional Plans to report in relation to Learning Outcome #1?

Most Common Problems

- **Learning Outcomes** are based on curricular outcomes not student learning; have more than 5; are too generic or not specific to the program.
- **Assessment Methods** do not include when, how often, who will assess.
- **Assessment Methods** are based on course grades or course completion alone (without qualification), or are based on GPA, milestones (qualifying exams, comprehensive examinations, dissertation defense, etc.). Unclear whether rubrics or objective reviewers are being used for assessing a sample of comps, theses, dissertations, or course materials.
- **Standards of Comparison** do not specify how many or what percent of students should achieve stated outcome.
- **Interpretation of Results and Action Plans** are not connected to learning outcomes.

ASSESSMENT MATRIX



PROGRAM OR SCHOOL			
Assessment Coordinator for Program or School			
Program or School Mission Statement			
Program or School Goals			

Assessment Schedule

Learning Outcomes <i>What will students know and be able to do when they graduate?</i>	Assessment Methods <i>How will the outcome be measured? Who will be assessed, when, and how often?</i>	Standards of Comparison <i>How well should students be able to do on the assessment?</i>	Interpretation of Results <i>What do the data show?</i>	Use of Results/Action Plan <i>Who reviewed the findings? What changes were made after reviewing the results?</i>
1. First year students will have passed their qualifying exams.	Students must take three of the four core courses in each of the sub-fields of the discipline.	Students must earn 3.00 GPA or better and receive a 1A+ rating in the annual review of all graduate students in the program	The data show that first year students in each of the sub-disciplines earned a 3.5 or higher GPA and all students received a 1A rating in the annual review.	In each sub-discipline a committee of the whole conducted the annual review and provided an assessment report. No change made or recommended.