UWP History Program
Annual Program Assessment

Mission and Purpose:
Our program provides majors with a solid grounding in American, European, and non-Western history. In learning about the historical past, our students understand the complexity of the factors and forces that cause communities and nations to arise, decline, and change; they are also able to analyze and evaluate historical narratives. Students develop skills in reading, writing, analysis, and logic. History majors learn to do research, to assess arguments, and to interpret economic, social, political, cultural and technological change in a variety of contexts. The History Program enables its majors to become broader in perspective, more literate, intellectually more astute, ethically more sensitive, to apply historical understanding to the present, and to participate wisely in society as knowledgeable citizens.

Goals and Objectives:

(1) Write historical essays with a clear and focused thesis, developed by a logical argument, and substantiated with factual detail.

(2) Undertake historical research projects based on primary and secondary sources in both print and electronic formats. Formulate historically significant questions, gather appropriate sources, and apply an appropriate method of analysis and synthesis.

(3) Critically analyze works of history. Understand a work's assumptions, method, sources, and point of view and evaluate its argument.

Multidimensional Tools of Assessment:

Written assignments from UWP history courses will provide the base for our assessment. In order to provide multidimensional measurement, these written assignments are quite varied. They include:

Essay exams
Short papers analyzing a written primary source, photograph, or graphic
Research papers (10 or more pp.)
In-class essays
Written responses to documents or images
Reviews of historical books, web sites, and films
Essay exams
Annotated bibliographies
Assessment Plan:

At the beginning of the fall semester, faculty members will determine which students in their upper-level classes have taken at least 24 hours of history (6 courses).

Faculty members will choose an assignment which should meet one of the history goals. For example, they could select an essay exam or short paper to assess goal 1; for goal 2, a research paper or annotated bibliography; for goal 3, a written response, review, or in-class essay. They will photocopy the work that the students produce for the assignment (or assignments). Student names will be removed. In order to ensure variance among assignments, the faculty will consult with one another before choosing and making copies.

During the spring semester, each faculty member will review the papers that she or he has photocopied and will identify three for each assignment:

1) one of the best.
2) one that fairly represents the average work done by history majors.
3) one of the least satisfactory.

Numerical scales will not be used because they are not appropriate measurements of historical skills. Instead, faculty will assess assignments using the criteria listed for "Goals and Objectives," above. For example, to qualify as a fairly representative research papers, the student's work must formulate a question of historical significance and present an answer in the form of a clear, focused thesis. Those that do not qualify as unsatisfactory. The best research paper will not only meet the basic criteria, it will also demonstrate historical effort, creativity, and knowledge that far exceed the representative work.

Sharing of assessment results
On the last Wednesday of April, an assessment meeting will be held. Faculty members will present their findings, pointing out evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of our majors. For example, a faculty member might report that based on her evaluation of short essays, our majors are having trouble critically reading historical sources.

After each presentation, the faculty will discuss teaching techniques or assignments that we might use to better ensure that our majors can satisfactorily meet our three basic objectives. For example, to hone our students' critical reading skills, we might decide to give students a tendentious primary source and ask them to write a short essay explaining in detail the source's bias or slant. Another example: if students research papers show inadequate organization, faculty might "model," that is, demonstrate how historians organize their working thesis and notes into an outline before they begin writing.

Use of assessment results: As these examples make clear, we plan to use assessment on an annual basis to determine whether or not our goals are being met and to revise our assignments as needed in order to improve student performance. Each year, the faculty reports, student papers, and a summary of recommendations will be placed on file.
UWP History Program  
Appendix to Annual Program Assessment

Student Learning Outcomes:
A  analyze and evaluate historical narratives and arguments  
B  conduct historical research  
C  interpret economic, social, political, cultural and technological change in a variety of contexts.

Assessment Tools:

1. Essay exams  
2. Short papers analyzing a written primary source, photograph, or graphic  
3. Research papers (10 or more pp.)  
4. In-class essays  
5. Written responses to sources  
6. Reviews of books, web sites, etc.  
7. Essay exams  
8. Annotated bibliographies

Correlation of Student Learning Outcomes with Assessment Tools.

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