

**Template
Degree Program
Assessment of Student Learning Plan
Kansas State University**

FEB 17 2005

- Check the box if your program's student learning outcomes have been modified since November 2003. If so, please email (apr@ksu.edu) or attach a hard copy to this document.

A. College, Department, and Date

College: *Arts & Science*
Department: *History*
Date: *16 November 2004*

B. Contact Person(s) for the Assessment Plans

Professor Michael Ramsay, Department of History Assessment Chair (*on sabbatical, spring 2005*)

Contact, Spring 2005:

Professor Sue Zschoche
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C. Degree Program

M.A. in History

D. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan

1. Student Learning Outcomes

- 1. **Historical Content:** enhanced knowledge of significant people, events, ideas, and developments in history*
- 2. **Awareness of Historical Method:** basic knowledge of the holistic nature of history and the disciplinary tools as used by contemporary historians*
- 5. **Critical Thinking Skills:** ability to critically evaluate interpretations and apply skeptical inquiry and the scientific method*
- 6. **Research Methods:** familiarity with the various methods of research, data collection and analysis in history and understand their relevance to specific research topics*
- 8. **Communication Skills:** ability to communicate effectively through written and oral means*

Special rationale for selecting these learning outcomes

The selected SLOs are central to the production of history, that is, the capacity to perform original historical research and present the findings. The production of history is the ultimate goal of historical study. For most master's students, the production of history takes the form of a master's thesis.

Relationship to K-State Student Learning Outcomes (see table attached at the end of this report)

2. How will the learning outcomes be assessed? What groups will be included in the assessment?

In a profound sense, the selected learning outcomes are already extensively assessed as part of the production and ultimate defense of the master's thesis. However, knowing that the achievement of these outcomes is the ultimate objective of master's study, the department intends to assess students' progress toward these outcomes from the beginning and throughout the course of their master's study. At the annual department meeting dedicated to the discussion of individual graduate student progress, the major professor will assess each of his or her students using a standard rubric (devised by the department as a whole) that defines the various levels of progress/achievement for each of the selected student learning outcomes. The Director of Graduate Studies will maintain a portfolio for each student that will eventually contain all of his or her progress reports during the period of master's study. [Direct measure]

As part of graduate course evaluations, the student will be asked to assess the course in terms of how it advanced their progress toward these selected outcomes, e.g., how it advanced historical content knowledge, awareness of historical method, application of research methods, critical thinking skills, and communication skills. [Indirect measure]

3. When will these outcomes be assessed? When and in what format will the results of the assessment be discussed?

i. Year 1 (2004-2005)

The department will design the "master's student progress rubric" and apply it during the annual department meeting dedicated to the discussion of individual graduate student progress.

ii. Years 2 and 3 (2005-2007)

The annual "individual student progress" meetings, already mandated by the department, will continue. Drawing upon these evaluations as well as student evaluations, the department will commence a discussion of the entire graduate curriculum with the aim of standardizing the aims and projected outcomes for topics courses and research seminars in order to better insure student progress toward these outcomes.

4. What is the unit's process for using assessment results to improve student learning?

As described in the aforementioned plan, the department sees the assessment of student learning outcomes as providing a critical body of data pertinent to the ongoing evaluation, revision, and partial standardization of the graduate curriculum as a whole. An annual department retreat at which assessment of student learning at the graduate level is a major topic will commence in the spring 2005 semester.

History Program SLOs	University-wide SLOs (Graduate Programs)			
	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes and Professional Conduct	Program SLOs conceptually different from University SLOs
1. Historical Content: enhanced knowledge of significant people, events, ideas, and developments in history	X			
2. Awareness of Historical Method: basic knowledge of the holistic nature of history and the disciplinary tools as used by contemporary historians	X			
3. Cultural Diversity: awareness and appreciation of cultural similarity and diversity over time	X		X	
4. Historical Perspective: understanding of historical perspective and how it differs from moral relativity	X		X	
5. Critical Thinking Skills: ability to critically evaluate interpretations and apply skeptical inquiry and the scientific method	X	X	X	
6. Research Methods: familiarity with the various methods of research, data collection and analysis in history and understand their relevance to specific research topics	X	X	X	
7. Historical Theory: understand the major theoretical perspectives and trends in history	X	X	X	
8. Communication Skills: ability to communicate effectively through written and oral means		X		
9. Application: ability to apply historical thinking to everyday life, function successfully in a multicultural world and nation, and make sense of social, political, and economic complexity		X	X	
10. Cultural Awareness: understand the roles played by history, culture and language in shaping world views	X		X	
11. Dynamic Nature of History: understand the study of history as a dynamic process of adaptation through innovation in theoretical perspectives or the development of new sources through time and across the globe	X	X		

Assessment of Learning Outcomes:

Assessment during Coursework.

Writing requirements. Inasmuch as the discipline of history offers few opportunities for quantitative evaluation of specific skills, students are evaluated through repeated qualitative analysis by faculty of their ability to perform analytical tasks through extensive written activities. While specific writing exercises vary from course to course, as a general rule each student can expect to produce 30 to 40 pages of written material in one course.

Some exercises focus on how well the student understands the theoretical or intellectual basis of an historical interpretation, others look at how well prepared the student may be to teach the material to undergraduates, while still others assess the student's ability to conduct basic research in an area relevant to the topic under examination in the course.

Assessment after the Completion of Coursework.

Completion of an approved master's thesis or report or selection of the non-thesis, non-report option.

The master's thesis represents the results of an investigation based largely on primary materials (manuscript and archival holdings, newspapers, government publications, and other published and unpublished contemporary materials) on some historical problem or topic approved by the candidate's supervisory committee. Its purpose is to demonstrate the candidate's capacity to organize and analyze original materials by constructing an historical argument based on these materials, the major tenets and conclusions of which are acceptable to the supervisory committee. The thesis should also demonstrate substantial literary achievement by the attention its author gives to elements of good writing such as proper organization, clarity of expression, and cogency of argument. Normally the length of the thesis should be between 75 and 100 pages (Dept. Minutes, 7 Dec 73). Six hours credit in M.A. Research (Hist 899) are required for a thesis and two hours for a report. A report should in general meet the same requirements as the thesis, but be about half the length. The thesis or report must be prepared in accordance with the Graduate School's Student Guide for master's and doctoral candidates.

Non-thesis, non-report option With the approval of the supervisory committee, the student may be allowed to complete a non-thesis, non-report degree, which requires thirty hours of courses, including Historiography, at least one research seminar, and a total of at least three 900-level courses in History other than readings and problems (M.A. Requirements, 10 October 70). A written final examination is also required. Students who wish to enhance their familiarity with history, but who have no intention of pursuing a doctorate, primarily use this option.