Department of History  
Annual Assessment, 2006-07  

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in the AY ending June 30 (e.g., 2006, 2007, 2008?)

The Department’s student learning objectives for the standard History BA are:

1) They shall be able to write a clear expository essay in which they develop a consistent argument and marshal evidence to support an interpretation.

2) They shall develop adequate reading skills, oral communication skills and collaborative skills.

3) They will develop basic mastery of a significant body of historical knowledge in one or more fields of their choosing. Students will be aware of the achievements of more than one civilization.

4) They shall be able to access historical information through traditional (printed) and new technology sources including electronic databases, bibliographies and text storage sites; students shall be able to make qualitative distinctions among history sites posted on the web.

5) They shall develop basic critical skills in history; be able to identify and analyze fundamental problems of historical interpretation; and be familiar with at least some of the “schools” of historical analysis.

6) They shall achieve a basic mastery of research techniques in history, including the use of primary historical sources both printed and electronic to compose a history research paper; they shall use citation standards acceptable in the discipline of history.

7) They shall show their ability to place research findings in a context of broader categories of analysis, historical schools of thought, and other contexts established by the secondary literature of the discipline of history.

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?  
a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered?  
(Description, date administered, results)

In the Spring semester of 2007 the History department conducted its annual assessment. The departmental assessment is done in two parts; papers are collected from the writing seminars, and departmental evaluations are solicited from the graduating seniors. The writing samples are saved, for comparison with other years’ work, to assess any changes in quality of final papers. The
graduating seniors are given two opportunities to evaluate the department and the organization of the major: oral exit interviews and written surveys.

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

In general, the written surveys make it clear that while the department is providing an excellent intellectual experience for our students, we are not adequately meeting their advising needs. It is worth noting that students’ feel that this is a problem across the university, and not limited to the History department. The department is in the process of revising and clarifying its advising policies and procedures, and it is clear from the students’ comments that these improvements must be implemented as soon as is possible. Students also seem to want more personal, one-on-one interaction with professors, both in the classroom and during office hours, and are appreciative of the extra time that many history professors spend with them. The faculty must make more of an effort to provide students with that kind of attention and guidance, and must be more effective at explaining how the History programs operate.

c. In what areas are students doing well and achieving expectations?

We continue to place heavy emphasis on clarity of writing and development of research skills. By examining the quality of papers in our senior research seminar series, Hist 197, and comparing these papers to writing in our introductory seminar, Hist 100, we see that students are developing their research and writing skills while progressing through the History major.

d. What areas are seen as needing improvement within your program?

As noted above and described more fully below, we are placing particular emphasis this year on improving our advising system which also relates to improved student-faculty contact.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?
   a. If so, what are those changes?

The department is aware that its advising system has not responded as well as it might to our majors, but we also recognize that our major has grown considerably during the last five years with about 450 majors in the Fall of 2007. During AY 2006-07, Professor Chloe Burke received an Assigned Time Faculty Senate Advising Initiate Grant in order to systemically study the department’s advising system, design advising guideline booklets for both faculty and students, recommend changes to the department’s advising system, and create new advising forms. She accomplished these tasks and presented them to the faculty at our faculty retreat prior to the beginning of the semester. We are in the process (Fall
2007) of printing the new advising guidelines for faculty and students and printing the new advising forms.

b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

We expect to see positive results in our next annual assessment which will directly address student feedback about the changes we have implemented in our advising system.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics, course alignment?

As a result of recommendations in our Program Review, we are currently in the process of developing assessment plans for each of our individual programs (we administer a total of 9 undergraduate and graduate programs), as in the past we had only one assessment plan for our standard History BA program. Our Assessment Committee is currently developing the new assessment plans this year and investigating rubrics, course alignment and assessment matrixes.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

The department Assessment Committee is currently working with each of our program coordinators to devise the most useful assessment plan for their respective programs. We expect to have assessment plans in place by the latter part of Spring 2008 for these programs.