

Sociology Department Annual Assessment Report, 2012-2013

Department of Sociology
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Assessment Committee:
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1. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented **any changes for your assessment including learning outcomes, assessment plan, assessment tools (methods, rubrics, curriculum map, or key assignment etc.), and/or the university baccalaureate learning goals?**

a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes? b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results? c. If no, why not?

In the last year the department has adopted VALUE rubrics to assess each of our learning goals, which reflect the university baccalaureate learning goals. Using the rubric for assessing our students' written communication skills, we evaluated a key assignment administered to majors in three courses (corresponding to three stages in our undergraduate program). The courses were SOC 1, SOC 101 and SOC 102B. The department agreed that our core courses for the major would include materials that address how to write an argumentative thesis, avoid plagiarism, and how to cite using ASA citation style. We have also made the written communication rubric available on our department webpage.

We plan to administer the key assignment next year to see if the program changes have had an impact on our students written communication skills.

2. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented **any other changes at the department, the college or the university, including advising, co-curriculum, budgeting and planning?**

a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes? b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results? c. If no, why not?

The results of the critical thinking assessment will be addressed at the department's summer retreat in August.

3. What **PROGRAM** (not course) learning outcome(s) have you assessed this academic year?

In the Spring 2013 semester the assessment committee evaluated the critical thinking skills of our majors.

4. What method(s)/measure(s) have you used to collect the data?

The VALUE rubric for assessing critical thinking include the following skills, each rated on a scale of 1 to 4:

6.1: Clearly state the issue/problem that needs to be considered critically, comprehensively describe the issue/problem, and deliver all relevant information (issues, texts and/or numerical data) so it is necessary for a full understanding of the issue/problem

6.2: Thoroughly interpret and evaluate the information taken from source(s) to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis

6.3: Thoroughly analyze their own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluate the relevance of contexts when presenting a position

6.4: Students' specific position (perspective, thesis, or hypothesis) takes into account the complexities (all sides) of an issue. Limits of position and others' points of view are acknowledged and synthesized within position

6.5: Conclusions, consequences and implications are logical and reflect student's informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order

5. What are the criteria and/or standards of performance for the program learning outcome?

The department has established a goal of 70 percent of undergraduate majors having rubric scores of 2.5 or higher.

6. What data have you collected? What are the results and findings, including the percentage of students who meet each standard?

The research papers that are required of all sociology majors in their second upper division research methods course were evaluated using the critical thinking rubric. Three sections of the methods course (SOC 102) were offered and a random sample of papers from all three sections were evaluated by the committee (N=15).

Table 1: Critical Thinking Assessment Results

Criteria	4	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Total
6.1 Explanation of Issues		13%	27%	40%	7%	13%	2.1
6.2 Evidence			27%	47%	13%	13%	1.9
6.3 Context/Assumptions			33%	47%	13%	7%	2.0
6.4 Student's position		7%	20%	53%	7%	13%	2.0
6.5 Conclusions		20%	27%	27%		27%	2.1

The results of the assessment are found in Table 1. Undergraduate majors are not meeting the department standards for critical thinking, with only 27% to 47% achieving a 2.5 score or higher on the 5 criteria (70% is the goal).

- a. In what areas are students doing well and achieving the expectations?

Students were more successful in identifying the limitations to the research methodologies used in their projects. This was found in the conclusion section of their papers and is reflected in the assessment of criterion 6.5.

- b. In what areas do students need improvement?

Students need the most improvement in identifying the debates within the research literature and between theoretical positions. This is reflected in the assessment of criteria 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4.

7. As a result of this year's assessment effort, do you anticipate or propose any changes for your program (e.g. structures, content, or learning outcomes)?

Course content needs to better address the disagreements among researchers and theorists within the discipline. The research papers produced in the research methods courses (SOC 102) need to acknowledge the existence of multiple viewpoints and conflicting findings.

- a. If so, what changes do you anticipate? How do you plan to implement those changes?

At the summer departmental retreat, the department will develop a strategy to promote critical thinking throughout the program.

- b. How do you know if these changes will achieve the desired results?

After the implementation of program changes, the papers from the research methods course will be assessed using the critical thinking VALUE rubric.

8. Which program learning outcome(s) do you plan to assess next year? How?

The key assignment used to evaluate written communication skills will be administered next year. The written communication rubric will be used to evaluate students' writing skills and to see if improvements have resulted from program changes that were implemented.

