

Program Assessment Annual Report
MA, History
2010

I. Assessment Activities:

A. Program Goals:

The Department's graduate program allows graduate students to pursue an in-depth course of study that focuses on American, European, non-Western, or Public history. The program is designed for students whose goals include further advanced study in history, the law, and other related fields; employment in teaching, government service and public history areas; and personal enrichment.

Consistent with the mission statements of the University and the College of Liberal Arts, the History Department established the following goals: to produce graduates prepared for, and able to compete successfully in, advanced graduate and professional programs; to produce professional historians committed to the highest levels of historical scholarship; to prepare graduates for careers in a variety of history-related fields; to allow students to develop their historical research skills including archival work and primary source documents; to provide high quality graduate instruction in history for professional educators; to adequately support all graduate faculty in their instructional and research goals; and to continuously revise and update curricula to assure the broadest coverage of history and the most informed instruction possible.

B. Learning Outcomes/Data Collection

The MA Program in History has four Learning Objectives:

1. Upon successful completion of the M.A. program in History, a student will be able to explain and interpret historical events, processes, and patterns.
2. Upon successful completion of the M.A. program in History, a student will be able to produce original research utilizing primary source documents.
3. Upon successful completion of the M.A. program in History, a student will be able to provide evidence of a sophisticated awareness of the interrelationship of the human experience and historical perspective.
4. Upon successful completion of the M.A. program in History, a student should show an understanding of the development of the historical profession and the various schools and interpretations of history.

For this year’s Assessment Report, we will focus on Learning Objective Two, production of original research utilizing primary source documents. Since this is one of the main foci of HST 600, and since all MA students are required to take that course, it is the main source of the data used. Some use will also be made of data from HST 677/678, our new Thesis Writing Seminar, whose students are all engaged in activities directly related to this Learning Objective.

**C. Results:
Learning Outcomes**

Students in HST 600 are required to conceptualize and execute a research paper that addresses a historical topic both historiographically and through the use of research-based interpretation of primary source documents. One of the main parts of a historian’s professional life is the identification, procurement, and interpretation of appropriate primary sources. In HST 600, there are three points at which an MA student’s abilities in these activities are evaluated: in the selection of materials for, and construction of, a bibliography for their project; in the Document Analysis section of the Initial Draft of the paper, and the equivalent section in the Revised Final version of the semester research paper. Here are the data for HST 600:

Student	Bibliography	Doc. Analysis, In. Draft	Doc. Analysis, Final
1	84	87	92
2	93	92	96
3	77	78	78
4	80	77	80
5	86	87	91
6	89	86	87
7	81	78	79
8	79	82	83

These data reflect a generally good fulfillment of this Learning Objective, and most students (7 of 8) show some increase in the evaluation of their abilities in this regard. Of course, most of the students in an MA program carry significant skills in primary source analysis with them from their undergraduate years. Our efforts in HST 600 aim at improving those skills.

This outcome is also emphasized and reinforced in many other history graduate courses inasmuch as virtually every course includes some reading of primary source documents and some writing assignments related to that reading. Only students who have consistently demonstrated proficiency in using primary source documents to produce original research graduate from the program.

Some students in the program gain advanced experience in the analysis and use of primary sources through the process of developing, researching, writing and revising a thesis. Thesis track students must use primary sources in their research, and theses that do not demonstrate a high level of skill in the analysis of primary sources are not approved by advisors and thesis

committees. Here are data related to the evaluation of primary source analysis and use from HST 677/678, our two-part Thesis Writing Seminar, in which drafts of two chapters of the students' theses are evaluated on use of primary source evidence:

Student	Primary Source Analysis 1	Primary Source Analysis 2
1	85	88
2	90	92
3	94	94
4	92	92

Data covering this Learning Objective derived from advanced students researching and writing MA theses should be expected to be skewed toward the top of the scale, and, indeed, these data reflect that expectation. These data do, though, also reflect, inasmuch as these students' skills are at least in part the result of the training in the selection and use of primary sources encountered in our MA program, that the program is performing well in its emphasis on this Learning Objective.

II. Plans for the current year

We are currently engaged in a thorough review of the MA program; this is a continuous effort that to date has resulted in significantly tighter admissions procedures, increased rigor in HST 600, a better distribution of MA courses (particularly at the 600-level) among our faculty, the development of HST 677/678, and the pending inclusion of a certificate program in Public History.

III. Assistance Needed

None.

IV. One important thing the department has learned through this process.

The History Department has long acknowledged the need to monitor and improve its programs, with student skill and knowledge acquisition its primary goal. This effort and the improved outcomes for our students will continue.

As of the coming year's Annual Report, the Department of History is going to move toward a team approach to compiling Assessment Data and composing the Annual Assessment Reports. For that reason we would like to schedule a meeting with personnel from the Assessment Office to present an overview of the purpose and procedures involved in program assessment and to help design out internal process.