

Template:
Summary of Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in General Education

Report of the IF Oversight and Assessment Committee for American History

This template, a slight revision of a form that was originally developed as part of the SUNY Assessment Initiative, can be used as a guide for maintaining summary records of the assessment of student learning outcomes in general education.

Year of Previous Assessment	Year of Current Assessment	
2009	2017	
American History		

1. Describe program improvements made as a result of the previous assessment of General Education.

A. Referring to the 2009 SUNY General Education American History Assessment, there have been some changes as to the “Recommendations of the American History Study Group” on pp. 6-7:

--As to Recommendation 1.), there has been a number of efforts by SUNY Buffalo State to establish programs offering study skills help to students, which would include skills needed for students taking IF history courses. No dedicated workshop for those courses has been established, however.

--As to Recommendation 2-1), there has been some effort to provide a greater number of smaller classes that satisfy the IF History requirement, although a good number of larger classes still exist. In an extreme need to offer such classes this Fall, 2017 term, one ECO 103 class expanded to 300 students!

--As to Recommendation 2-2), there has been one new course, ANT 250 Historical Archeology, that has been approved to satisfy the IF History requirement. A few other courses have applied for IF American History designation, but have not stood the test of providing a basic narrative of American History, a rather restrictive requirement.

B. There has been much less change as to the other recommendations: most classes meeting the IF American History requirement have included the placement of SLOs on their syllabi, and the committee did not see this recommendation (rec. 3) as an important one for this assessment. There has been little emphasis placed on revision of syllabi to include in the assessment a significant portion of “active and collaborative learning opportunities,”(Rec. 4), and little movement of the professors involved in teaching American History to hold meetings to discuss material taught in the American History courses.

Principal reasons for the inaction on these latter points probably result from budgetary constraints, the loss of a number of faculty on the 2009 assessment, and an unfortunate diminution of fervor to carry out these loftier and more expensive goals.

2. In the course of conducting this cycle of assessment, were there any significant deviations from the plan that was approved by the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group? If so, please comment on why the campus felt that it was necessary to make these changes and how these changes may have affected findings, if at all.

A. The Oversight Committee members were comfortable with most of the methodology employed in the 2009 assessment, particularly with the retaining of the learning outcomes/objectives as SLOs, development of assessment instruments, the administration of the assessment, and the assessment criteria.

B. There were two major changes in the 2017 assessment, however: The first was an assessment of each of the three SLOs by themselves, according to the “Exceeds/Meets/Approaches/Does not meet” criteria. Thus the students’ performance on the SLOs can be compared across the classes assessed.

C. The second major change in 2017 in methodology was in the sample selection, where all sections of courses satisfying the IF American History requirement were assessed, and not just a smaller sample. The Provost requested this change, perhaps in large part because of the problems encountered in the 2009 study, when a number of the classes’ assessments were discarded after problems in the assessment process.

D. A minor change is that the **Learning Outcomes/Objectives, or SLOs**, have been condensed to three principal statements of 2009, which were the principal three statements (of nine) in the 2009 report.

SLO 1: Students will demonstrate knowledge of a basic narrative of American history: political, economic, social, and cultural, including knowledge of unity and diversity in American society.

SLO: Students will demonstrate knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.

SLO: Students will demonstrate understanding of America’s evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

E. Sample Selection (2009 report) again, was not a factor, since we assessed all sections satisfying the IF American History requirement

For course sections and CRNs, numbers of students per course, distribution of scores according to SLOs, see Table 1, **Table attached.**

F. Development of Assessment Instrument (2009): the American History Oversight committee met a couple of times in the Fall, 2016, where we agreed on similar assessment instruments used in 2009.

ANT 250 used essay instruments included as part of the midterm and final exams to assess the American History IF to coordinate with the assessment instruments for the course.

The Economic History (ECO 103) course sections used the following assessment: A single standardized test was given at the end of the semester, which included questions—normally on the exam, but—grouped together to address the 3 SLOs. On the 50 question exam, a total of 40 (13 for SLO 1, 17 for SLO 2, and 10 for SLO 3) evaluated the students on the three learning outcomes.

The History Department courses retained their two sets of 30 multiple choice questions, each HIS 106 and HIS 107 having their own questions, developed for the 2009 Assessment. For HIS 106, 12 questions assessed competence in SLO 1, 11 questions assessed competence in SLO 2, and 7 questions assessed competence in SLO 3. For HIS 107, 11 questions assessed competence in SLO 1, 12 questions assessed competence in SLO 2, and 7 questions assessed competence in SLO 3. Both sets of 30 questions are found **Attached HIS questions.** Some professors infused some questions in exams throughout the course, and then included them all in the final exam, while other professors waited until the final exam week to give the 30 questions in a stand-alone exam. There were two professors who gave essay

assessments, however (CRN 2808 and 1878). All of the end of the semester questions were weight-bearing, and counted about a 5% share of the students' grades.

The Political Science course sections used the following assessment: Four sections of five offered of PSC 102: Introduction to American Government and Politics for 2017, J and Spring terms were assessed. Three of the four offered were either hybrid or full on-line courses. Instructors were instructed to tally SLO scores by the individual SLO category. All four sections utilized either short answer or essay based questions to assess student engagement with the three established IF American History SLOs. Short answer and essay questions, grading rubrics, and scoring were reported to the Curriculum and Assessment Chair of the Political Science Department. Questions were assigned by instructors through various grading experiences. One course assessed SLOs over the course of the entire semester; another over the course of two exams; two utilized final exams to assess all three SLOs.

G. The **Administration of Assessment** in 2017 was very similar to that of 2009:

- 1.) Almost all of the classes were administered in the week before, or the week of Final exams, Spring, 2017.
- 2.) No specific time amount was allotted, since professors had a choice of administering the assessment as a stand-alone exercise, or as a section of the final exam. Essay questions would, naturally, take more time to administer.
- 3.) All assessments were to make up a portion of the student's grade, and were not to be administered as a review or extra credit.

H. The **Assessment Criteria/Standards** remained the same:

Exceeds standard: 90 – 100%

Meets standard: 75 – 89%

Approaches standard: 60 – 75%

Did not meet the standard: 59% and below

3. Describe the major findings of this assessment.

A. There was great variability across course prefixes. Compared with contemporary results across the Buffalo State campus as to the Exceeds, Meets, and Approaches standards, there were excellent results in PSC 102, and then ECO 103, with good results in ANT 250. A handful of HIS 106 and HIS 107 courses had good results, but a somewhat larger number of those courses had poor results (see **Table Attached**). The **Attached Figures** also demonstrate the different results across course prefixes.

B. The overall percentages for those students exceeding, meeting or approaching the standard were good in comparison with similar Buffalo State assessments in SLO 1; SLO 2 results were even better, and then results in SLO 3 came back to the level of SLO 1.

From the **Anthropology** professor: ANT 250 used essay instruments included as part of the midterm and final exams as well as one reading response to assess the American History IF.

SLO 1—assessed based on question 4 of the midterm

SLO 2—assessed based on questions 3 & 4 of the final

SLO 3—assessed based on question 5 of the midterm and question 2 of the final

In ANT 250, SLO 1 –69.5% met or exceeded expectations

SLO 2 –73.9% met or exceeded expectations

SLO 3 –69.5% met or exceeded expectations

From the **History** professor: to explore large and small classes, multiple choice and essay tests, this author would also pull out among the large sections:

--the highest achieving large section of HIS 106 (CRN 1868)—used multiple choice weekly quizzes per chapter, with a midterm and final, the 30 questions embedded in the final for the first time,

-- the lowest achieving large section of HIS 106,(CRN 2229)--used 4 exams, and the questions embedded for the first time in the final exam)

--versus a medium size but multiple choice, high achieving assessment of HIS 107, CRN 1880,

--versus a medium size online survey that was a lower achieving HIS 107 assessment, CRN1877

--versus a medium size but essay exam with a higher achieving HIS 107, CRN 1878.

This author will come back to the high achieving large 106 CRN 1868 at the end (section 5), since it appears to be a possible real help in reinforcing the information to the student in 3 activities-- reading the chapter, taking the quiz (24 hour time limit), and the lecturing on that material in the next week. The professor of this class thinks the student thus retains the information. The 30 questions were not embedded in the quizzes or the midterm, but the healthy scores apparently resulted from the students knowing more of the material, which helped them do relatively well on the assessment. This approach is designed for larger classes taking multiple choice exams, and it would avoid a professor teaching to the test. The results with this approach were much better than other large, multiple choice exam sections, but the two sections (1868 and 1869) did have a significant number of “Did not Meet” scores—possibly because of the trend to place mostly freshmen, from all majors including “undecideds,” and many times accepted into Buffalo State in the final stage (all characteristics that would tend to result in poorer prepared students, particularly in a larger lecture class).

From the **Economics** professor: Economic History (ECO 103) course sections, as stated above, used the following assessment: A single standardized test was given at the end of the semester, which included questions—normally on the exam, but—grouped together to address the 3 SLOs. On the 50 question exam, a total of 40 (13 for SLO 1, 17 for SLO 2, and 10 for S”LO 3) evaluated the students on the three learning outcomes. The results for these two sections were very good for multiple choice exams. The professor suggests that the two sections may have been higher achieving for larger classes, with the students having greater mastery over the material, in part because of a number of possible factors, such as higher than freshman student class, majors, versus last minute registrants.

From the **Political science** professor: the assessment data suggests that PSC 102 students on the whole are doing well in meeting SLO expectations. The data would suggest a trend in larger classes having more students in the exceeding and meeting expectations, though the lack of data here prevents us establishing causation. On-line vs. traditional approach does not appear to matter in terms of success rates with SLOs.

4.Describe the actions to be taken to address these specific findings, showing the relationship between the findings and the response.

A.--ECO 103 and PSC 102 and ANT 250 appear to do well in having students exceed, meet or approach the standard.

B.From the **Anthropology** professor: the results for the ANT 250 resulted in approximately 70% of the students meeting or exceeding expectations for the SLOs. Students in ANT 250 are unlikely to be first year students and, based on informal polling, take the class for reasons other than to fulfill the IF requirement. As such, they are more likely to be successful students.

C.From the **Economics** professor: the variability of outcomes suggest the need for more detail about the student population and test instruments. For example, do majors do better, or are essay exams more or less likely to elicit/reveal mastery of the subject?

D.From the **History** professor: 1.) those HIS classes that were smaller and used an essay format did rather well in exceeding, meeting, or approaching the standard (CRN 1878)

2.) great variability in the assessment scores in the Department of History break down in a number of ways that do not provide immediate answers. For example, larger classes may be expected to have poorer scores, since a number of their seats are held for later registrants who might not be as ready for college level work as others. Not all large sections have a poor record, however, while some smaller sections do.

Notably: HIS 106 CRNs 1869 and 1868 had the best scores in that course, and CRN 1880 with a larger classroom and the second highest 107 number of students (42) had the best scores of HIS 107.

3.)All of the History sections giving multiple choice assessments used the standard set of objective questions that were established in 2009. There were a number of unsolicited comments by these professors that those questions were outdated in their phrasing or in the objective to be learned. These questions should thus be reviewed.

E.From the **Political Science** professor: While the data suggests a solid performance from students in PSC 102, there is always room to grow and improve. Given the variability of SLO scores between courses, it might be prudent to meet as a department to discuss strategies to bring all section up to the same performance levels, while recognizing class dynamics and populations do vary from section to section.

5.As applicable, describe what has been learned that could be helpful in your next assessment cycle.

A.For all courses:

1.)For the standardized tests with a number of objective questions, it would be advantageous to look at the item analysis of the various questions to determine the percentage missed by the class, and the discrimination factor of that question.

Based on this analysis, a committee of the professors could meet to revise the poor questions to improve the validity of the question

2.)It would be helpful to know the SAT scores of freshmen taking these classes, to compare them with the scores generated on the standardized exams.

3.) It would also be helpful in general to know the major of the students doing well on these assessments, compared with the majors of the students doing a poor job. Normally larger blocks of HIS 106 and 107 are reserved for students coming in later in the registration process, who would not normally be as devoted to the subject matter as the greater number of majors in other fields in which their major lies.

B.For the various disciplines:

1.) In Anthropology: based on the findings the Anthropology professor will add additional assessments to ensure that the students engage with the material in a timely manner. Also to be included could be objective assessments to ensure that students are completing reading assignments in a timely manner. These could be included in the next round of assessments.

2.) In Economics, it would be helpful to know more about the population, which would inform results. For example, are there differences in mastery based on whether the students are freshmen or junior, campus residents or commuters, declared majors in the field or undeclared and/or last minute registrants in the course, in small or large sections of the course. It seems obvious that since there is variability in student outcomes within a class, we need to know more about variability among students.

3.) In History: a.) as to better scores for smaller classes using an essay format, this practice could be continued, as essay exams could produce higher retention of knowledge.

b.) As to the larger classes having high scores, the History Department could perhaps experiment with the practices of the professor (CRN1868 and 1869) whose scores appeared to result from one quiz per week, per chapter, thus on smaller increments of knowledge, and more intensive exposure to the material (reading, quiz, then lecture). This method thus does not require a “teach to the test” method, which many professors find objectionable.

IF Oversight and Assessment Committee for American History, 2016-2017):

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Note by the Chair: The conducting of this assessment and writing of this report was helped immeasurably by the gifted and devoted Associate Dean of SNSS, Karen O’Quin. All members of the Committee thank her sincerely for her guidance, expertise and hard work in the past year.