

Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving Student Learning in Degree Programs

Unit: Department of Anthropology

Unit Head approval:

Date:

SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Brief description of changes or improvements made in your unit as the result of assessment results since 2000.

As a result of the initial self-assessment in 2000, the department has taken several concrete measures to attempt to better serve the needs of students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The most substantial of these changes has been a complete reconceptualization and reimplementation of both the undergraduate and graduate curricula. The old undergraduate major has been supplemented with a cultural anthropology track, which should be shortly joined by a biological anthropology counterpart. Many undergraduates regarded the full breadth of the old anthropology major as scattered and unwieldy and the new tracks promise to bring a new degree of focus to undergraduate studies to better prepare them for either graduate education or a range of career options.

We are also addressing lack of 300-level courses in our course scheduling in order to ease the transition between lower division and advanced seminars. Previously, most upper division courses were at the 400-level, which led to a sub-optimal classroom environment whereby undergraduates were intimidated by graduate students and graduate students felt that the course material had to be diluted to accommodate undergraduates. Having an upper-division space that is exclusively for undergraduate students will provide a transitional experience that will ready undergraduates for more rigorous materials and a seminar setting.

In addition to curricular changes, a large number of faculty members are taking advantage of new online teaching technology with the goal of implementing full blended learning in our larger classes. The head of the department has committed to several graduate student research positions to help develop material for the transition to blended learning.

We are also in the midst of a revision of the graduate curriculum whereby we have completely restructured the course requirements to prepare our doctoral students for the changing challenges of being a professional in a dynamic and progressive discipline. The new curriculum is intended to provide students with the opportunity to quickly acquire the theoretical and methodological tools necessary to begin research projects immediately and allow them to round out their knowledge of the discipline through their two or three years of coursework.

The addition of several new faculty members with laboratory research programs that require substantial amounts of undergraduate research assistance has substantially increased the range of educational experiences that our undergraduates can have during

their time at UIUC. Likewise, these new faculty have broadened the range of courses that the department now offers.

These changes require the maintenance and the broadening of the departmental outcome assessment plan to ensure that it keeps pace with our growing and developing program.

SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN

(a) PROCESS: Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.

Preparations for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Anthropology (in the 09/10 academic year) have been the impetus for a considerable amount of reflection about the history of the department, our current state, and the next fifty years. The anniversary, combined with our recent efforts to revise the undergraduate and graduate curricula and various focused committee discussions were the means by which we developed the new plan. All of these discussions have identified a series of new challenges brought on by changes in the department that must be addressed.

(b) STUDENT OUTCOMES: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes).

Undergraduate Student Outcomes.

Outcome 1. In general, we seek to foster effective learning, reasoning, writing, and critical thinking skills in our students.

Outcome 2. Students should develop a level-appropriate competence in one of the subfields of anthropology (archaeology, biological anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, or linguistic anthropology) and a familiarity with the whole of anthropology.

Outcome 3. Students should have a holistic sense of the evolution and diversity of humanity.

Outcome 4. Students should develop a strong declarative knowledge base on the worldwide diversity of human societies, or humans' relationships to other living things, core concepts and language of anthropology appropriate to their chosen subdiscipline, and have an appreciation of anthropology in general.

Outcome 5. Students should be able to critically and reasonably evaluate and formulate claims about social and cultural issues, language, or human and primate biological diversity. They should be able to identify research problems, approach these problems with appropriate methods, and effectively communicate the results.

Outcome 6. Students should adopt an attitude that promotes cross-cultural awareness and understanding in their studies and future careers. They should also be aware of and abide by accepted ethical standards of professional anthropological conduct.

Graduate Student Outcomes

Outcome 1. In general, graduate students should acquire professional-level research skills and reasoning abilities to identify important research problems and then to design, execute, and clearly report the results of independent research programs. They should also develop

Outcome 2. Graduate students should develop an in-depth understanding of the differences and similarities of people and/or the whole of the primate order through a combination of technical skills, language abilities, theoretical approaches, and an firm command of a body of knowledge relevant their chosen expertise.

Outcome 3. Graduate students should develop their intellectual skills such that they may contribute to the growth and development of anthropology as a discipline. Further, they should be able to formulate novel research problems and design and execute research on these problems.

Outcome 5. Graduate students should adopt an attitude that promotes cross-cultural awareness and understanding in their studies and future careers. They should also be aware of and abide by accepted ethical standards of professional anthropological conduct.

(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:

Undergraduate Student Measures and Methods

Completion of coursework: Students must complete the core courses as specified by the curricular requirements of their chosen track in the degree program. These differ among the sociocultural anthropology track, the standard anthropology track, and the proposed biological anthropology track but they all include a series of 100- and 200-level courses that teach the fundamentals of a track. Students must also complete a specified amount of upper division coursework to increase the breadth and depth of their knowledge.

Departmental distinction: Exceptional students are eligible for departmental distinction. To be eligible for departmental distinction, students must complete one of the anthropology bachelor's degrees, achieve a minimum GPA of 3.6, take two hours of Anth 291 and Anth 293 (honors seminars), and have an honors thesis approved by the departmental honors board.

Survey and standardized examination results: The results of the UIUC Senior Survey and GRE scores for the graduating seniors will be compared to other graduating seniors from UIUC, that cohort's scaled SAT or ACT scores, anthropology majors from other

institutions, and the GRE scores of graduate students accepted to the UIUC graduate program.

Survey of graduating seniors: Each graduating senior will write an essay on his or her experiences in the anthropology department and specify those aspects of the program that he or she would like to change and those that were most effective.

Focus groups at departmental 50th anniversary celebrations: In conjunction with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the department's founding in the 08/09 academic year, we will be making panels of graduates from different time periods over the department's history to place the results of our self-review in historical context.

ICES questionnaires: ICES questionnaires will continue to include items that gauge the extent to which anthropology courses promote cross-cultural understanding and associated ethical issues.

Surveys of alumni and prospective employers: The department will sponsor surveys of alumni every three years after graduation to determine whether training in the UIUC Department of Anthropology is sufficient to guarantee career success. Likewise, a survey of potential and likely employers will be undertaken every four years to ascertain whether training at the UIUC Department of Anthropology is meeting employer expectations.

Graduate Student Measures and Methods

Core courses: All students must successfully complete their subdiscipline-specific core courses. These vary among the sociocultural/linguistic, archaeological, and biological subdisciplines but generally consist of one or more courses that expose students to the breadth and depth of their subdiscipline.

M.A. thesis/research paper: Successful completion of a master's thesis or an extensive research paper instead of a thesis is demonstration of an intermediate level of professional competence and serves as a major benchmark to be met before engaging in Ph.D. exams and a dissertation.

Ph.D. examinations and dissertation: Students seeking a Ph.D. degree demonstrate their competence at the appropriate level by completing the M.A. thesis or research paper (as above), passing verbal and written preliminary examinations administered by the student's Graduate College approved examination committee, demonstrate proficiency in languages or technical skills, and successfully designing, implementing, writing, and defending a Ph.D. dissertation.

Scholarly Productivity: We will record the number of publications and presentations at professional conferences published or presented by graduate students.

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SECTION 3 : PLANS FOR USING RESULTS

(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.

The Courses and Curriculum Committee will review the results of these measures annually. A summary of these reviews will be discussed in open department meetings (all students and faculty are expected to attend) and faculty meetings. Feedback from the students and faculty will be referred back to the Courses and Curriculum Committee who will then prepare and submit a series of recommended changes to the graduate and/or undergraduate programs to the Head of the department.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Focus groups and historical panels will take place at the Anthropology Department 50th anniversary celebrations during the 08/09 academic year. Results of all metrics will be analyzed and reported to the department by the Courses and Curriculum Committee on an annual basis. The first graduates of the new Cultural Anthropology track will be graduating in the coming years and their performance and exit surveys will merit particular scrutiny.