

Appendix A

Assessment of Student Learning Department and Program Report

Please enter the appropriate information concerning your student learning assessment activities for this year.

Academic Year of Report: 2011-12

College: College of Arts and Humanities

Department: History

Program: Master of Arts in History

1. What student learning outcomes were assessed, and why? M.A. students were assessed during their capstone experience, consisting of either a written exam and oral defense, a thesis and oral defense, or a project and oral defense. The department created a five-part assessment rubric with a tripartite scale as follows: exceeds expectations; meets expectations; and does not meet expectations. The five categories in the rubric are: (1) Writing; (2) Research Skills/Sources; (3) Analysis; (4) Documentation; (5) Logical Organization. Some of those categories apply only to theses and projects. In particular, category 4, Documentation, is not applicable to written M.A. exams. These five categories, together, assess mastery of the field of history.
2. How were they assessed?
 - a. What methods were used? Five-part assessment rubric with three possible responses to each part (exceeds expectations; meets expectations; does not meet expectations). In the final category, the criteria for thesis students differs from the criteria for exam students. See attached rubric for definition of “exceeds expectations,” “meets expectations,” and “does not meet expectations” for each part of the rubric. Ideally, all M.A. students will “exceed expectations” in each part.
 - b. Who was assessed? All M.A. students who completed degree requirements in 2011-12. Seven M.A. students from 2011-12 took and defended written exams. One wrote and defended a thesis.
 - c. When was it assessed? Each student is assessed at the time they complete the M.A. via oral defense of thesis, project, or written examination.
3. What was learned?

Total M.A. students graduated, 2011-12	8
M.A. exam option	7
Project option	0
Thesis option	1

	2010-11	2011-12
Category One: Writing		
Exceeds expectations	4	5
Meets expectations	7	3
Does not meet expectations	0	0
Category Three: Research Skills/Sources		
Exceeds expectations	1	1
Meets expectations	10	0
Does not meet expectations	0	0
Category Four: Analysis		
Exceeds expectations	1	5
Meets expectations	10	1
Does not meet expectations	0	2
Category Five: Logical Organization		
Exceeds expectations	2	4
Meets expectations	9	3
Does not meet expectations	0	1
Category Five: Content (examinations only)		
Exceeds expectations	NA	4
Meets expectations	NA	3
Does not meet expectations	NA	
Category Five: Documentation (thesis or project only)		
Exceeds expectations	2	1
Meets expectations	6	0
Does not meet expectations	0	0

Concise interpretation of results: This year's cohort of matriculating M.A. students did better than last year's, though neither cohort performed at ideal levels in any category. Students from 2011-12 on the whole performed better than those from 2010-11 in writing, analysis, and logical organization. Logical Organization and Documentation continue to need improvement. Despite good performance in analysis on average, moreover, two students did not meet expectations in that category. This might be due to the problems ensuing from the department's loss of several faculty members in 2009-10, which forced some students to seek new advisors and prolong their graduate careers.

4. What will your department or program do as a result of that information? As more students take the examination route, however, we find more flaws in the process, as indicated by the data. The department will consider later this year whether examinations are too unfocused. It may be wiser to require students to specialize in only one field, rather than requiring both a major and a minor field.

5. What did the department or program do in response to last year's assessment information? After considering last year's assessment results, the department changed the rules for the project. We no longer allowed substandard theses to satisfy the requirements for the M.A. project. As a result, it seems, more students opted for the examination option. We had only one student write a thesis (her performance was rated "exceeds expectations" in every category).

As a result of assessments over the past three years, the department has also made these changes:

- a. Thesis/Project Prospectus. The department instituted a requirement for a prospectus from those seeking to write an M.A. thesis or project. The prospectus—a thorough description and evaluation of the research question and the sources to be used—must be turned in to the student's thesis advisor by the end of the third week of the fourth quarter, or upon completion of 30 credits (whichever comes first). The student then defends the prospectus before his/her committee. If the student either fails to produce the prospectus or fails to defend it adequately, he/she may be asked to pursue the exam option rather than the thesis option. The objective is to steer underperforming students into a more manageable option and thereby speed time to completion of degree.
- b. Field Specialization. For purposes of M.A. examinations, students must choose a first field and second field. The second field must be in a country and/or topic outside the scope of the first field. Requiring field specialization requires students to master content and historiography that they can then use in their own teaching.
- c. Field Bibliography. The department instituted a "field bibliography" course to help students acquaint themselves with the broad historiography in his/her field. The field bibliography is taken as an independent study (History 596) but may be substituted for a research or reading seminar (History 515 and 512, respectively). The objective is to familiarize PhD program-bound students with historiography.
- d. Changes to foreign language requirement. The department made the foreign-language requirement for students writing theses optional. It may be deployed at the discretion of the advisor. This means that students who do not need to master a foreign language in order to write the thesis no longer have to fulfill the foreign language requirement. The objective is to speed time to completion while maintaining high language standards for students specializing in non-U.S. subject areas.
- e. Minimum GPA for Teaching Assistants. The department set a baseline GPA of 3.5 for teaching assistants who wish to be continued for a second year. All teaching assistants may reapply for a second year, but only those with a 3.5 GPA or above in CWU's M.A. program can expect to be renewed (though the graduate committee does reserve the right to deny them for other reasons, including poor performance as assistants). The objective here is to improve the quality of teaching assistants and to motivate assistants to maintain high grades. In previous years, all first-year teaching assistants could expect automatic reappointment for a second year.

6. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University. Department members have repeatedly found the quality of M.A. examinations to be subpar. Some faculty want students to show better understanding of historiography. Others want students to show better understanding of content (dates, people, trends, social movements, legislation, and the like). To get a better grasp of the quality of examinations and to diagnose what needs changing, the department has adopted a special assessment form for the exam.