

## Graduate Biennial Program Assessment Report

Program Information:	
Degree/s Assessed	MA and PhD in History
College or Administrative Division	College of Letters & Science (CLS)
Department/School	History & Philosophy
Report Submitted By	Catherine Dunlop, Associate Professor and DGS
Date Submitted	September 15, 2020
Assessment Period:	2018-2020

### Program Description

The Department of History and Philosophy provides quality education in History for two graduate degree programs: the MA and the PhD.

Master's students in history are required to complete:

- 30 credits of coursework
- Submit *either* a professional paper of 30 pages in length *or* a master's thesis of 50-70 pages in length
- Pass written and oral examinations.

PhD students in history are required to complete:

- 36 credits of coursework in history on top of their previous post-baccalaureate credits
- A foreign language exam
- Written and oral comprehensive exams
- Dissertation of 200-300 pages in length
- Defense of Dissertation

### Program Learning Objectives (PLOs)

1. Demonstrates mastery of existing historical knowledge in their area of study
2. Generates new historical knowledge through primary source research
3. Demonstrates effective written communication skills
4. Demonstrates effective oral communication skills

5. Achieves professionalization
6. Engages the public meaningfully and ethically with historical ideas

**Threshold Values**

At least 75% of students will be rated “Acceptable” or higher on every category of the scoring rubrics (PLOs #1-6).

**Methods of Assessment**

Assessment data for PLOs #1-3 was comprised of 5 randomly selected artifacts of student work, including professional papers (2); master’s theses (2); and dissertations (1) completed during the 2018-2020 biennial cycle.

Assessment data for PLOs #4-6 was comprised of 7 randomly selected CVs from 2<sup>nd</sup> year graduate students or above at the end of the 2018-2020 biennial cycle.

*The H & P Graduate Committee, comprised of the DGS, Associate DGS, and 3 other TT History faculty analyzed the assessment data in a manner consistent with the assessment plan.*

**MAJOR LEARNING OUTCOMES RUBRIC**

<b>PLO</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
#1: Demonstrates mastery of existing historical knowledge in their area of study	The paper does not engage with or make use of relevant historical literature.	The paper cites relevant historical literature but does not engage meaningfully with it.	The paper cites relevant historical literature and engages with it.	The paper cites relevant historical literature, engages with it meaningfully and effectively.
#2: Makes an original contribution to historical knowledge	The paper is not based on any primary source research.	The paper includes primary source research.	The paper uses primary source research to reach a novel conclusion.	The paper uses primary source research to reach a novel conclusion that will have a major

				impact on the field.
#3: Demonstrates effective written communication skills	The paper is poorly written; has no argument; has major stylistic and grammatical errors.	The paper is logically organized; the paper has a clear argument; the paper uses evidence to back up its argument.	The paper reads and is organized well; demonstrates flow in its narrative; effectively backs up its argument.	The paper is virtually error free; shows evidence of original voice and narrative excellence; is well organized and strongly argued.
#4 Demonstrates Effective oral communication skills	Student did not participate in any public presentations on campus, in the region, or nationally.	Student made 1 public presentation on campus, in the region, or nationally.	Student made 2-3 public presentations on campus, in the region, or nationally.	Student made 2-3 public presentations on campus, in the region, or nationally, that exhibited a high standard of excellence.
#5 Achieves professionalization	Student does not engage in any activities outside of coursework	Student participates in at least 1-2 of the following: a conference, workshop, public outreach activity, or professional training.	Student participates in 3-5 of the following: a conference, workshop, public outreach activity, or professional training.	Student participates in over 5 of the following: a conference, workshop, public outreach activity, or professional training.
#6 Engages the public meaningfully and	Student does not participate in public outreach in	Student participates in 1-2 public outreach	Student participates in 3-5 public outreach	Student participates in over 5 public outreach

ethically with historical ideas	the Bozeman area.	activities in the Bozeman area.	activities in the Bozeman area.	activities in local, state, national, or global communities.
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**What We Learned in 2018-2020: Results**

<b>PLO</b>	<b>Results from Committee Assessment</b>
#1	Faculty evaluator #1: 1 Unacceptable; 1 Acceptable; 2 Good; 1 Excellent Faculty evaluator #2: 3 Acceptable; 2 Good
#2	Faculty evaluator #1: 1 Unacceptable; 1 Acceptable; 2 Good; 1 Excellent Faculty evaluator #2: 1 Unacceptable; 2 Acceptable; 2 Good
#3	Faculty evaluator #1: 1 Acceptable; 4 Good Faculty evaluator #2: 5 Acceptable
#4	Faculty evaluator #1: 2 Unacceptable; 5 Excellent Faculty evaluator #2: 1 Acceptable; 1 Good; 5 Excellent
#5	Faculty evaluator #1: 4 Good; 3 Excellent Faculty evaluator #2: 6 Good; 1 Excellent
#6	Faculty evaluator #1: 3 Good; 4 Excellent Faculty evaluator #2: 3 Good; 4 Excellent

The enclosed analyzed assessment data was received by the program faculty in a Department Meeting in September 2020 at the conclusion of the biennial cycle.

The report to the Department in September 2020 was the following:

*Graduate Students in History met the threshold value of 75% acceptable rating in all PLO categories. At the same time, there is room for improvement.*

- a) Areas of strength**
  - Strong evidence of professionalization

- Students are engaging in local, national, and global community outreach
- Some students are doing an excellent job of presenting their research orally
- Some students are doing a good or excellent job in historical research and writing

**b) Areas that need improvement**

- Primary research thin in some MA papers
- Historiography and historic context sometimes lacking in MA research; need for appropriate secondary sources
- Theses need more extensive editing and argument-tightening; professional paper less so; theses were rushed (though Covid-19 shutdown circumstances may have impacted)
- More oral communication skill-building needed for some students.

**How We Responded:**

*Based on the faculty responses, will there be any curricular or assessment changes?*

**YES.** The graduate curriculum will be revisited in Fall 2020 to make sure that it is meeting student needs and improving learning outcomes. Graduate courses may need to do a better job of preparing students for primary research, particularly at the MA level. Students may need more grounding in historiography. Further, committee chairs need to encourage students to plan ahead so their final written work is well edited and argued. Thus far, the assessment criteria seems to be working well for program needs.

**Closing the Loop:**

*Specific recommendations and proposals for closing the loop include:*

-Implementing a required research seminar where students test a portion of their theses or drafts of professional papers. This would ensure an early start, knowledge of primary research, selection of an appropriate historic context and historiography, and first rounds of learning how to edit their own writing.

-In graduate reading seminars, make overt the connection between the scholarly historiography and student research. Perhaps this is already done in the methods course or could be strengthened there.

-Emphasize that theses must begin much earlier in grad program to allow sufficient time for editing and revision. Perhaps a few departmental deadlines would help. For instance, students must give a thesis/paper prospectus to their advisors by the beginning of the second semester.

-Look into creating a more formalized schedule to finish a thesis for faculty and students. This could be the simple creation of a check sheet with expectations laid out and dates noted (but non-binding to allow for flexibility).

-In terms of oral communication skills, students can be made more aware of local, state, and national opportunities to present their research orally (though opportunities may be limited by the pandemic for 2020-2021).

#### **Timeframe for Collecting and Analyzing Data for the next biennial Assessment in 2022:**

- Copies of PhD dissertations, MA theses, and MA professional papers will be submitted to the Graduate Committee Chair (DGS) and the Department Student Services Coordinator for digital recordkeeping (ie, placed in a Box folder) **by May 15<sup>th</sup> of 2021 and May 15<sup>th</sup> of 2022.**
- CVs of PhD and MA students who have graduated will be solicited and submitted to the Graduate Committee Chair (DGS) and the Department Student Services Coordinator for digital recordkeeping (ie, placed in a Box folder) **by May 15<sup>th</sup> of 2021 and May 15<sup>th</sup> of 2022.**

#### **Future Use of Assessment Data and Faculty Input:**

- The DGS will write up a brief summary of the assessment results and present them to the faculty of H & P in a Department Meeting.
- The faculty will review the assessment results and make decisions about how to respond.
- If threshold values are being met, the faculty may conclude, based on assessment, that the program is achieving its goals in certain areas.
- If an acceptable performance threshold (as outlined in the plan) was NOT met, the faculty will develop strategies for improvement. These strategies include, but are not limited to:
  - Deepening the assessment process to ascertain if further/distinguishing assessment markers are needed to figure out answers to more questions. Gathering additional assessment data will help to verify or refute the result.
  - Working with faculty to change/update curriculum to meet PLOs, especially PLOs #1-3.
  - Working with students to increase awareness of the Writing Center, the Career Center, local nonprofits, and professional organizations to improve professionalization, oral communication, and public outreach PLOs #4-6.