College of Arts and Sciences
Annual Assessment Report

Part 1. General Information

Program(s) Discussed: History

Current Semester: Fall 2017

Date of Assessment Meeting(s):   August 24, 2017

Participants in Assessment Meeting(s):   Matt Berg, Roger Purdy, Daniel Kilbride, Rodney Hessinger, Anne Kugler, Maria Marsilli, Jim Krukones, Paul Murphy, Marcus Gallo.

> All Annual Assessment Reports are available to the appropriate Associate Dean, Dean, and the Provost, as well as to other administrators for institutional effectiveness and accreditation purposes. Please indicate the degree to which your program would like this information more widely shared.

On-Campus Users	Off-Campus Users
☐ Freely available	☐ Freely available
☐ Available upon request	☐ Available upon request
☐ Unavailable	☐ Unavailable

Part 2. Assessment Process
2A. Learning Goals

Prompt: Paste your program learning goals here, then, address the following questions in a sentence or two: Did you gather data on all of your program's student learning goals? If not, which student learning goals did you measure in this assessment cycle?

Students will:
Think Critically:
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of historical arguments;
- Critically interrogate primary and secondary sources;
- Employ these sources properly in fashioning their own historical arguments.
  Research: Become competent researchers who can discover pertinent primary and secondary sources.
  Write: Become effective writers who can clearly and elegantly express a complex, thesis-driven historical argument.
  Speak: Develop skills in public speaking and oral presentation.

The history department did **not** gather data on all of these learning goals. Rather, we gathered and analyzed data on the first three: critical thinking, research, and writing.

2B. Measuring Learning

Prompt: In one or two paragraphs, describe your assessment process. What tools did you use to attempt to measure student learning? Where and how were they administered? Who scored them?

The department collected student essays from six courses: HS 201/202 (World Civ. I and II); HS 211/212 (US History I and II); HS 300 (Historical Methods); and HS 490 (Senior Seminar). We included all of the essays in HS 300 and 490 and a sample of essays from 201, 201, 211, and 212. For the latter four courses, we divided the essays into those written by non-history majors and history majors. We struck names and other identifying marks from all of the essays. Instructors placed their essays in a google drive folder accessible to the entire department.

To assess these essays, we employed the history department writing rubric (attached), which scores essays on a five-point scale in the following categories: thesis; organization; evidence analysis; style; documentation. Each member of

the history department was charged with reading the essays from one or (usually) two courses. They entered their scores on a shared google drive spreadsheet.

Part 3. Findings

Prompt: Describe, in words**, what your program learned about student learning during this assessment cycle. What were your strengths? In what ways did students fail to meet the goals you set for them? Along with this report, please submit the data charts the program used during the assessment meeting.

**In words? Did somebody once describe their findings in emojis?

In its 2016 assessment report, the history faculty reported frustration with students' inattention to proper methods of documenting sources (the proper method in history being the one found in the *Chicago Manual of Style*). The department also found students' development of theses to be wanting. To help address the first concern, the department developed a uniform style sheet to be distributed to students in HS courses. The faculty resolved to stress to students the importance of following this form of citation. In addressing the concern about theses, the department resolved to make some changes to HS 300 and HS 490 to help students ground their research in the existing historical literature, engage more deeply with theory, meet with faculty with an expertise in their research topic, and engage more deliberately in class-based peer review.

Tracking these two concerns specifically, the department found general but modest improvement over the past year. Average scores for effective theses improved modestly in HS 490 and significantly in HS 300. Likewise, scores for documentation were much improved in HS 300, but actually decreased slightly in HS 490 from 2016 to 2017.

In general, the history faculty remains dissatisfied with students' demonstrated ability to fashion, articulate, and defend a compelling thesis. Students ought to be able to document sources properly. But since documentation is mainly a mechanical exercise and thesis development is a higher-order skill, thesis development should be a priority.

Name(s) of file(s) containing data charts: HS Assessment Results Spring 2016; HS Assessment Results Spring 2017.

Part 4. Planned Changes to the Assessment System

4A. Changes to the Assessment System

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your assessment system? (Questions to consider include: 1) Do your measures and processes provide useful data with a reasonable amount of effort? and 2) Are your measures reliable, valid, and sufficient?) On which student learning goals do you plan to focus your attention during the next assessment cycle? Do you need to implement additional formative assessment tools to better understand some of your findings? If so, describe those here.

The department found it burdensome, and unnecessary, to assess essays from such a wide variety of courses, particularly HS 201/02 and HS 211/12. We have resolved to assess materials from only two, rather than four, of these courses every year, and that the courses will vary from year to year – HS 201/02 in 2018, and HS 211/12 in 2019, and so on. We also established a uniform number of papers (5) to assess in each class, with the exception of HS 300 and HS 490, from which all essays will be assessed.

The HS faculty also decided it would be convenient for the department administrative assistant to organize and manage the department's annual assessment google driver folders.

4B. Changes to the Program in Response to Data

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your program in response to what you now know about student learning? (Possibilities include changes to learning goals, pedagogy, assignments in particular classes, activities, and curricular requirements and/or structure.) What is your anticipated timeline for both implementation and assessment of the planned changes?

The HS faculty concluded that the language in the "thesis" category of the department's writing rubric lacked specificity and ought to be tightened. The language in "exceeds expectation" has been changed from "Student articulates a unique, clear, and persuasive/logical thesis" to "Student articulates a clear and persuasive thesis that is situated in the appropriate historical literature." The language in "meets expectations" has been changed from "Student articulates an identifiable and persuasive/logical thesis" to "student articulates an identifiable and logical thesis." And

the language in "fails to meet expectations" has been changed from "Student fails to present a clear thesis or to persuade in the delivery of thesis" to "student fails to articulate an identifiable and logical thesis."

The department also resolved to emphasize writing as a process more deliberately in courses in which writing is an important element (ECG classes, for example). Instructors should devote more time to explaining the prompt and detailing expectations. If necessary, time should be shifted from content to treating writing as a process. Instructors must also implement process-oriented strategies such as in-class peer reviews and one-on-one meetings to examine drafts. The departmental writing rubric must be distributed, explained, and employed at all states of the process of writing assessment. The departmental style sheet should be likewise distributed and employed. These documents must be made easily accessible on the department's web page. To assist with writing and research pedagogy, instructors will submit anonymous student essays that stand in as positive and negative examples of the categories of the department's writing rubric (thesis, style, etc.) to be used in class. The department's administrative assistant will create and manage a shared google drive folder containing these essays.

The department will continue to focus on thesis development and documentation as it has since 2016. Tracking qualitative changes is a long-term process, so it makes no sense to focus on other learning goals (like oral presentation skills, for example). Nevertheless, the changes detailed in the two paragraphs immediately above will be implemented immediately (fall 2017).

Part 5. Institutional Assessment Committee Interactions
5A. Feedback from IAC
Prompt: Briefly summarize the feedback you received from the Institutional Assessment Committee about your last report.

The committee concluded that "the department's assessment plan is effective and productive for gathering useful data on student experiences." However, the committee was concerned that the department's method – all of the faculty scoring up to 15 essays – was unduly burdensome. The committee recommended that the department devise a method to relieve this workload burden.

5B. Response to Feedback
Prompt: Briefly describe how your program has made use of the feedback.

As discussed under 4A, the department has elected to reduce the number of courses for which we will assess student writing.

5C. Request for Feedback
Prompt: Do you have questions or concerns you would like the IAC or the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to address?

Nope.

Part 6. Evidence
6A. Of Changes
Prompt: Look at previous Annual Assessment Reports to see what changes that the program planned to make at that time. If the changes have been made, please submit evidence of the change (department meeting minutes, syllabi or Bulletin pages from before and after the change). If you have decided to not make change, please provide your rationale.

Part 3, above, observes that in its 2016 assessment report the history department planned to increase attention to students' thesis development and to encourage proper citation technique. Evidence of programmatic changes is readily discoverable in the syllabi to HS 300 and HS 490 from 2016 through 2017. The 2016 iterations of HS 300 and HS 490 paid close attention to thesis development. HS 490 had students hand in a draft thesis statement early in the semester (Sept. 23), and in HS 300 students analyzed a number of articles published in professional journals with an eye to identifying its thesis and tracing the development of that thesis throughout the essay. The 2017 iterations of these courses intensify the emphasis on thesis development and, per this report, writing as a process. HS 300 engages students in a wide variety of readings on theory, introduces students to historiography in several assignments, and features two drafts of their final essay, both of which are peer reviewed. HS 490 features a theme – History, State, and

Society – that invites close attention to the vagaries of historical interpretation and engagement with historiography. Students must develop a thesis statement at an early stage of their research, and the final paper includes a first draft and a peer review. Thus, changes planned in the department's 2016 report have already begun to be implemented.

Regarding concerns about documentation, in 2016 the department (led by Malia McAndrew) published a departmental style guide to assist students in mastering the appropriate documentation methods for historical writing. This guide is readily available on the department's web page, and it is used in every history class where Chicago-style formatting for citations is used.

6B. of Impact of Changes

Prompt: Consider the changes reported in Part VI of this and previous reports. What impact has the change had? When the impact of the changes has been assessed, discuss whether changes have had the intended impact and how you know. If the change is too recent or assessment is ongoing, you may wait for a future report.

As already indicated, the department was not satisfied with students' thesis development and documentation practices and resolved to make the changes outlined above. Nevertheless, we do not expect to see improvement in these matters overnight, so gauging the impact of the changes we have implemented will take some time.

6C. Academic Program Review Action Plan Update

Prompt: If your program has completed an Academic Program Review since 2011, please review your Action Plan from your most recent Academic Program Review, and add a column indicating the progress made on each item. Attach your update to this report.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Department of History

Recommendation	Action	Responsible agent	Timeline	Status	Progress as of 9/17
The Department of History should commit itself to meeting more regularly in order to engage in more open discussions about matters of strategic importance. Such meetings will help the Department to become "a reflective community of practice."	The department chair will identify a period or periods during the week when full-time faculty are free and hold those times open for department meetings.	Department	Fall 2017	In process. The new chair will implement regular meetings.	New dept. chair scheduling monthly meetings with pre-distributed agenda and documents.
The Department of History should monitor closely, based on the available data, how best to engage in the core while at the same time ensuring the integrity and viability of its major.	In the absence of university-wide processes for scheduling core courses and ensuring balance between departments, the history department will continue to meet the needs of students in the sunsetting distributive core and in the new integrative core. The faculty will strive to offer a breadth of courses across the various categories of the core. It will strive to schedule full-time faculty into courses appropriate for first-year students in the hopes they use those courses as gateways into the major or minor. The department has sought to promote the integrity of 400-level	Department	Fall 2017	Developed preliminary schedule for 400-level class offerings; adjusted bulletin requirements to encourage students to take 400-levels	The actions listed under "status" have been implemented. Also, the new dept. chair is consulting with the former chair about how to best coordinate core and major offerings to meet the needs of the department and university and to most efficiently employ the departments' full-time faculty.

	courses (typically enrolling only majors and minors) by modifying its major and minor to require those students to take at least one such course besides HS 490. The department chair will also monitor the department's offerings at the 300 and 400-levels to ensure that enrollments in these courses are not spread thinly.				
The Department of History, as part of its assessment efforts, should discuss the distinctions among the various levels of courses and establish a set of basic expectations for its 200-level, 300-level and 400-level courses.	The absence of clear distinctions between course levels is not restricted to the history department but is a problem endemic to JCU more generally (in spite of language attempting to make this distinction on p. 121 of the 2015-17 Undergraduate Bulletin). The history department has initiated a conversation about establishing minimum expectations for courses at these levels. A policy will be established during fall, 2017. Revisit assessment of HS 300 and HS 490 with an eye to skills taught	Department, Director of Assessment	Fall 2017	Conversations to begin in AY 2017-18.	The department is discussing bringing back 100-level courses specifically to help populate the new "humanities" distribution requirement in the revised integrative core.
The Department of History should work to establish local public history internships, strengthen its existing five-year masters programs, and vigorously promote the History minor, in order to enhance its presence on campus.	Expand and publicize internship opportunities for History majors	Department, Career Services	spring 2017	In the spring of 2017, the department took steps to formalize its internship processes by introducing an internship agreement signed by the student, the supervising official from the sponsoring institution, and the department chair. The form must set out measurable learning goals for the student to accomplish. All internships will conclude with a reflective essay and a formal presentation to the history department faculty. Efforts have been made to promote the history minor	The actions listed under "status" have been implemented. Additionally, beginning fall 2017 in HS 300, students complete an internship project that requires students to research internship opportunities, participate in a resume workshop, and submit a mock internship application.

				through improved signage and publicity in the Historical Inquirer, the department's semi-yearly newsletter.	
The Department of History should devote concerted attention to discussing and drafting a proposal, to be submitted to the Dean, that outlines ways to create a more vibrant community of student majors and minors.	TBA	Department	fall 2017	To be started fall 2017	Currently under discussion.
The Department of History should reduce the number of adjunct faculty and review the ways in which the adjuncts can best serve the Department's needs.	History department response: The review team slightly misunderstood the department's use of adjuncts. Although the department employs roughly twelve adjunct faculty, it does not employ them at once, or even once a year. The department uses typically three or four a semester, with only George Vourlojianis consistently teaching one course per semester. Even so, in light of budgetary pressures that place a premium on maximizing the use of full-time faculty, the department should consider carefully the use of part-time faculty and use them only when absolutely necessary. The department should, however, maintain good relations with its part-time instructors, most of whom teach at JCU not because they must (as a source of income) but because they enjoy and are good at it.	Department	Fall 2017	Under review	The new dept. chair, in consultation with the former chair, is in the process of reviewing the department's use of part-time faculty. The department is reviewing the appropriate number of courses it needs to offer every semester, and that figure will determine the department's use of part-time faculty.