# Sociology BA/BS

## 1. Achieve Sociological Competency: Entry Level

**Goal Description:**

Students who take introductory sociology classes will gain basic knowledge of social life, social change, and the causes and consequences of human behavior.

**Providing Department:** Sociology BA/BS

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Entry Level**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students who take introductory sociology classes that are included in the SHSU Core Curriculum will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the basic core concepts of the discipline and the sociological perspective.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Comprehension Of Basic Core Concepts: Entry Level**

**Indicator Description:**

A sample of students enrolled in the two introduction-level sociology courses in the SHSU Core Curriculum (SOCI 2319 in Component Area IV: Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts and SOC: I1301 in Component Area V: Social and Behavioral Sciences) is chosen in the Spring semester for evaluation. Employing an extra credit opportunity format, students responded to a ten-question evaluation instrument for the Component Area V courses (see Attachment #1) and five question evaluation for the Component Area IV course (see Attachment #2) to measure their understanding of basic core concepts in Sociology. The selection of these indicators conforms to disciplinary standards for sociological research.

In this cycle, we included item-by-item analyses to assess students' understanding of the sub-concepts of basic core concepts of the discipline indicated by the SHSU Core Curriculum.

1. Two sub-concept areas corresponding to Component Area IV: Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts: (a) Concept 1- To understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within a historical and social context (questions 1, 2, and 4); and (b) Concept 2 - to demonstrate knowledge of the influence of literature, philosophy, and/or the arts on intercultural experiences (questions 3 and 5).
2. Five sub-concept areas corresponding to the Component Area V: Social and Behavioral Sciences: (a) Concept 1- to employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition. (Q2, Q7); (b) Concept 2 - to examine social institutions and processes across various historical periods, social structures, and cultures. (Q4, Q9); (c) Concept 3 - to use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories. (Q1, Q6); (d) Concept 4 - to develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues. (Q3, Q8); and (e) Concept 5 - to identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures. (Q5, Q10).

Attached Files

📄 Attach1.BA.BSEntryLevelCompAreaV.Questions.19.20.docx
📄 Attach2.BABSEntryLevelCompAreaIVQuestions19.20.docx

**Criterion Description:**

At least 85% of participating students should have 3 correct answers out of 5 questions for Component Area IV and  85% oat least 6 correct answers out of the 10 questions for Component Area V. For Component Area IV: At least 85% of participating students should have at least 2 correct answers out of the 3 questions for Concept 1, and at least 1 correct answer out of the 2 questions for Concept 2. For Component Area V: Social and Behavioral Sciences, at least 85% of participating students should have at least 1 correct answer out of the 2 questions for each of the five concepts.

**Findings Description:**

For Component Area IV (SOCI 2319), 159 students participated in the assessment. Overall, 94% of students had at least three out of five correct answers. For concept 1, 96% of students had at least two out of three correct answers. For concept 2, 91% of the students had at least one out of two answers.

For Component Area V (SOCI 1301), 120 students participated in the assessment. Overall, 84% of the students had at least six out of ten correct answers. For the five concepts, the percent of participating students who got 1 out of 2 correct answers are as follows:

- Concept 1:  97%
- Concept 2:  80%
- Concept 3:  83%
- Concept 4:  95%
- Concept 5:  86%

**Comprehension Of Basic Core Concepts: Entry Level**
**Action Description:**

For Component Area IV, the department exceeded its goal.

For Component Area V, student performance improved slightly over the previous year. The department just missed its goal of 85% of students answering six or more of the assessment questions correctly. While student performance improved in concepts 2 and 3 from the previous year, the department is still below its benchmark. The department will continue to work with SOCI 1301 instructors to strengthen these dimensions of the curriculum.

In Spring 2025, SOCI 1301 instructors will be given access to interactive learning exercises targeting the application of theoretical perspectives, and encouraged to use them, for each topical, substantive textbook chapter (i.e., all content after Ch. 5).

# 2. Sociological Competency: Mid-level

**Goal Description:**

Students who complete the mid-level assessment course, SOCI2399: Writing in Sociology, will gain knowledge and skills in thinking and writing sociologically.

**Providing Department:** Sociology BA/BS

**Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Mid-level**
**Learning Objective Description:**

Sociology majors will be able to demonstrate the ability to think and write sociologically.

**Sociological Mid-level Papers**
**Indicator Description:**

The SOCI 2399: Writing in Sociology is required as a mid-level course to achieve a BA/BS in Sociology. A sociological essay is a requirement of the class. A random sample of approximately one-fifth of student essays was selected from the SOCI2399: Writing in Sociology class in the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters for assessment of their ability to think and write sociologically.

Members of the Undergraduate Assessment Committee reviewed the selected papers at the end of the Spring semester based on two main areas: sociological content and sociological writing. Sociological content includes three criteria: understanding social forces, applying sociological concepts, and providing empirical evidence. Sociological writing style includes three criteria: adopting American Sociological Association format, demonstrating a formal academic writing style, and minimizing grammatical errors. The selection of these criteria conforms to disciplinary standards for sociological thinking and writing (see Attachment #1).

Each paper was evaluated by three Undergraduate Assessment Committee members using the evaluation rubric, where a score from 1 to 5 (1 is "no mastery" and 5 is "excellent mastery") is assigned in each of the six criteria in the two main areas.

**Criterion Description:**

At least 75% of papers should be rated 3 or better on average for each of the two main areas: Sociological Content and Sociological Writing Style.

Attached Files

📄 MidLevelRubric23_24.docx

**Findings Description:**

Seven of the eight (87.5%) student essays meet the minimum requirement of an overall average score of 3.0 for Sociological Content and Sociological Writing. The average combined score for the eight papers is 3.7/5.0. The results of the inter-item analysis reveal that students performed better on the Writing Area (3.8/5.0) than the Content Area (3.40/5.0). The results also indicate that, on average, papers meet or exceed the 3.0 desired minimum score for each of the six criteria.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Sociological Mid-Level Papers**

**Action Description:**

The department met and exceeded expectations. No actions are necessary.

# 3. Sociological Competency: Exit Level

**Goal Description:**

Students who complete the Sociology Program will have an advance understanding of the core concepts of the discipline and the sociological perspective.

**Providing Department:** Sociology BA/BS

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Exit Level**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Sociology majors will be able to demonstrate and apply advanced sociological knowledge and scientific skills to analyze social phenomenon through a capstone research paper.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Sociological Papers: Exit Level**

**Indicator Description:**

The SOCI 4399: Senior Seminar class is a required capstone course to achieve a BA/BS in Sociology. A sociological research paper is a requirement of the class. A random sample of twenty-five percent of student research papers was selected from the SOCI 4399: Senior Seminar classes in the Fall 2023 semester to assess students' advanced sociological knowledge and scientific skills to analyze social phenomenon.

The Undergraduate Assessment Committee reviews the selected papers at the end of the Spring semester based on three core content criteria in the discipline of Sociology: Sociological Theory, Sociological Methods, and Sociological Perspective; and four core writing criteria: Writing Quality: Academic Writing, Writing Quality, Citations, and Documentation of Sources. The selection of these criteria conforms to disciplinary standards for sociological research (see Attachment #1).

Each paper is evaluated by three Undergraduate Assessment Committee members using the evaluation rubric, where a score from 1 to 5 (1 is "no mastery" and 5 is "excellent mastery") is assigned in each of the seven core areas.

To continue to identify specific strengths and weaknesses in meeting the core learning objectives in the undergraduate BA and BS programs, for the 2022-2023 cycle we conducted item-by-item analysis in the three core content areas and four core writing areas.

Attached Files
📄 Attach1.ExitLevelRubric21.22.docx

**Criterion Description:**

Overall, at least 80% of papers should be rated 3 or better on average for the three core content areas and the four core writing areas.

For item-by-item analysis, at least 80% of papers should be rated 3 or better on average for each of the seven core areas.

**Findings Description:**

Fall 2023 was the last time that SOCI 4399 was offered as the department is transitioning the BA and BS programs to a revised curriculum. Hence, there were only a small number of students who completed the senior seminar.

Overall, 3 of the 4 students' papers (75%) meet the minimum requirement on average across the seven core areas. The average combined score for the eight papers is 3.7/5.0. Regarding the item-by-item analysis of the three core Content areas: 3 out of 4 (75%) for Theory, 3 out of 4 (75%) for Methods, and 3 out of 4 (75%) for Sociological Perspective meet the minimum requirement. Regarding the item-by-item analysis for the four core Writing areas: 3 out of 4 (75%) for Academic Writing, 3 out of 4 (75%) for Spelling and Grammar, 3 out of 4 (75%) for Proper Citations, and 3 out of 4 (75%) for American Sociological Association (ASA) Format, meet the minimum requirement.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Sociological Papers: Exit Level**

**Action Description:**

The department has now transitioned its curriculum, and SOCI 4399 is no longer offered. Thus, the department will be implementing a new assessment mechanism next year.

# Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

**Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

For the BA and BS programs in the 2022-2023 academic year, the focus will be on implementing the revised curriculum. As part of the process, course rotations and schedules will need to be adjusted. The department chair and undergraduate coordinator will work on developing a new set of schedules and course rotations to fit with the new BA and BS curriculum. Additionally, the mid-level assessment mechanism will be reviewed, and a new exit level assessment mechanism will be developed.

The Sociology Department will implement a peer mentoring program. At the end of the spring semester, the program's effectiveness will be reviewed, and adjustments made for the 2023-2024 academic year if necessary.

In the spirit of public sociology, the Sociology Department will launch a research initiative to study how issues of inequities impact student success at Sam Houston State University. The aim of this initiative is: (1) to better understand disparities and the ways they affect student experiences at SHSU, (2) to facilitate the development and implementation of programs and policies to assist student success, and (3) to foster academic excellence. The department will seek to use this initiative to increase student participation in research projects.

The department will increase its efforts to recruit more majors from both the current SHSU student body and new students. This will include the use of on-campus activities (e.g., alumni career panels) and off-campus outreach and recruitment efforts.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

For the BA and BS programs in the 2022-2023 academic year, the focus will be on implementing the revised curriculum. As part of the process, course rotations and schedules will need to be adjusted. The department chair and undergraduate coordinator will work on developing a new set of schedules and course rotations to fit with the new BA and BS curriculum. Additionally, the mid-level assessment mechanism will be reviewed, and a new exit level assessment mechanism will be developed.

- The Department has implemented the revised curriculum, including establishing instructors and a rotation for the applied core. The mid-level assessment was reviewed and found to be effective. A revision of the exit-level assessment was delayed a year, as the exit-level requirements were in transition the past year. A new exit-level assessment mechanism will be developed this upcoming academic year.

The Sociology Department will implement a peer mentoring program. At the end of the spring semester, the program's effectiveness will be reviewed, and adjustments made for the 2023-2024 academic year if necessary.

- The sociology department implemented a successful peer mentoring program. The program consisted of monthly events and informal peer mentoring. Each month, the students met up and attended events or discussions that either educated them about future opportunities or encouraged them to socialize and make connections. In Spring 2024, events included a discussion of internships, student-employment opportunities within the Sociology Department, and a Faculty-Student mixer. About peer mentoring, each mentor-mentee pairing is given food vouchers and prompt cards each month. The themes of the prompt cards changed monthly, ranging from approaches to classes and lessons they learned while taking courses, to mental health and how to balance social and academic life. Over 15 students participated in the program in its first year.

In the spirit of public sociology, the Sociology Department will launch a research initiative to study how issues of inequities impact student success at Sam Houston State University. The aim of this initiative is: (1) to better understand disparities and the ways they affect student experiences at SHSU, (2) to facilitate the

development and implementation of programs and policies to assist student success, and (3) to foster academic excellence. The department will seek to use this initiative to increase student participation in research projects.

- This research initiative was successfully launched. One of the projects examined student-parents. This project has generated a report, workshops, presentations on the issue and a set of recommended actions. A second project has examined food security among SHSU students. This project has completed focus groups and a campus-wide survey and is preparing a report for the university administration.

The department will increase its efforts to recruit more majors from both the current SHSU student body and new students. This will include the use of on-campus activities (e.g., alumni career panels) and off-campus outreach and recruitment efforts.

- The department substantially increased its recruiting efforts, including participation in recruiting events, the development of new promotional materials, and a digital advertising campaign. While we do not yet have the final numbers for the fall semester, undergraduate majors are up over 15%.

## New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

**Closing Summary:**

The emphasis for the 2024-2025 academic year for the BA and BS programs will be on improving program quality and growing enrollment. The department plans to build on recent curriculum changes and recruitment efforts to further grow and strengthen its undergraduate major programs.

The department will evaluate the teaching preparations and loads of tenure-track faculty. The intent is twofold: first, to increase agility in scheduling and course offerings. This will enable the department to better meet enrollment demands and shift the curriculum to meet student demands. Second, it will allow the department to place instructors in classes where they will have the greatest impact. In other words, the department will work to match better instructor teaching strengths with teaching modality and course level.

The department will identify strategic areas of specialization for replacement line(s) and fill positions with opportunities for strategic growth in course offerings. The department has lost three tenured faculty in the past two years. This has given the department an opportunity to evaluate its course offerings and hire faculty that will contribute to the sociology program.

With curriculum changes to the BA and BS programs fully implemented, the department needs to develop and implement a new exit-level assessment for SACS assessment of the BA and BS programs.