

Sociology Certificate

Sociological Competency

Goal Description:

The Graduate Certificate in Sociology is designed for post-baccalaureate students interested in attaining the necessary expertise to teach sociology at the high school and community college levels. Graduate students who complete the Sociology Certificate Program will have expertise in core expertise in core sociological theories, concepts, and methods and expertise in key topical areas of sociological inquiry. The program will provide current teachers with the skills and knowledge to teach courses in the area of sociology.

Providing Department: Sociology Certificate

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Sociological Expertise

Learning Objective Description:

On completing the Sociology Certificate Program students must demonstrate expertise in core sociological theories, concepts, methods, and one topical area.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Certificate Indicator, Criterion, and Findings

Indicator Description:

The Sociology Department will assess its effectiveness in meeting the two primary learning outcomes associated with its Graduate Certificate in Sociology through an exit interview process. The exit interview will comprise a 30-minute zoom interview with the Director of Graduate Studies, or any member of the Graduate Committee, during the last semester of a student's enrollment in Sociology coursework.

The interview will, first, assess mastery of foundational sociological theories, concepts, methodologies. Second, it will examine the ability of the student to apply a sociological framework to a contemporary social issue. Third, the level of preparation to teach introductory sociology at the high school or community college level will be evaluated.

To assess the department's effectiveness, the interview will be scored using the attached rubric,. In addition, the scored rubric will be shared with the student to provide ungraded, constructive feedback on foundational sociological knowledge, readiness to teach introductory sociology, and level of professionalism.

Criterion Description:

Exit Level Script

1. Choose a micro and macro sociological theory. For each, provide a summary of the key tenets and describe a key concept associated with the theory.
2. Provide an example of a research topic in which quantitative research would be appropriate.
3. Provide an example of a research topic in which qualitative research would be appropriate.
4. Choose a contemporary social issue, and analyze it using a sociological lens.
5. Describe your approach to the classroom. What factors characterize your teaching persona, teaching interests, and the sorts of learning goals you would have for your students?
6. What are some examples of specific learning outcomes that would you emphasize in your own Introduction to Sociology course?
 1. How would you develop assignments to assess student mastery of these outcomes?

The expectation is that students will score sufficient or higher in each area. See attached the scoring rubric.

Attached Files

 [Certificate Scoring Rubric.docx](#)

Findings Description:

All three students who completed the Graduate Certificate during the 2021-22 academic year were invited to participate in a 30-minute exit-interview. However, none of these students elected to do so. One of the three students did elect to apply to the MA program in sociology on completing her graduate certificate.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Certificate Indicator, Criterion, and Findings

Action Description:

The nonresponse among our certificate students completing their 18-credit hours could be affected in part a small sample (i.e., 3). However, it does raise significant concerns about our first attempt to develop key performance indicators for the graduate certificate in sociology. Most of our certificate students are current teachers, and asking them to complete an optional, 30-minute exit interview during the end of a semester could well impose too heavy a burden. While performance in coursework cannot serve as a KPI, in lieu of having viable assessment data for this first year, we are encouraged that the performance (and retention) of our certificate students remains strong and promising. In addition, core curriculum requirements for the Graduate Certificate in sociology did require students to develop and implement active learning exercises to instruct others in research methods. The plan for continuous improvement will prioritize developing a more effective, manageable means to evaluate KPIs for the graduate certificate in sociology.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Sociological Teaching

Learning Objective Description:

On completing the Sociology Certificate Program, students will be able to design a sociological course for high school or community college students.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Certificate Indicator, Criterion, and Findings

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Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

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

Closing Summary

Significantly revise strategy for exit assessment. Rather, then a mandatory exit interview, faculty will implement mandatory (but ungraded) quizzes for all certificate students in the three core curriculum requirements (i.e., theory, methods, and inequality) as well as pedagogical competency in each area. During Fall 2021, the Graduate director will partner with the theory, methods, and inequality instructor to develop these quizzes, which will be used to evaluate student mastery on their successful completion of the quiz.

Formalize our data benchmarks for admission, enrollment, retention, and completion data. In the 2021-22 Academic Year, the department will record and report data on the following pieces of information:

- # of students completing an application
- # of students accepted for admission (excluding those accepted to the MA as well)

- # of students enrolled
- # of students completing certificate
- # of semesters to completion of certificate

Update our department's webpage concerning the graduate program. These changes are designed to (1) simplify content, (2) provide information in a more engaging manner (including infographics and professionally recorded videos), (3) more effectively convey pertinent information to (a) prospective students, (b) current students, and (c) former students.

Increase synchronous, virtual interactions (1) among current students, (2) between department-level administrators and graduate students, (3) between faculty and graduate students, and (4) between alumni and current graduate students.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

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- Unfortunately, this goal was not met (as indicated in the data collection portion above). Quizzes for each of the required classes have been developed and included in the transition memo for the incoming graduate director to ensure this oversight is not repeated.

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- # of students enrolled
- # of students completing certificate
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- This information has been formalized and is reported in the current assessment plan.

Update our department's webpage concerning the graduate program. These changes are designed to (1) simplify content, (2) provide information in a more engaging manner (including infographics and professionally recorded videos), (3) more effectively convey pertinent information to (a) prospective students, (b) current students, and (c) former students.

- We have addressed each of these factors. Our new graduate program website is much improved and far more user-friendly. We plan to continue to capitalize on this momentum to feature testimonials from former and current students to bolster recruitment efforts, to be elaborated on in the plan for continuous improvement.

Increase synchronous, virtual interactions (1) among current students, (2) between department-level administrators and graduate students, (3) between faculty and graduate students, and (4) between alumni and current graduate students.

- Steady progress was made in synchronous, virtual interactions for all groups with the exception of alumni and current students. Most of our offerings now have some sort of optional zoom component, which has steadily coincided with higher levels of engagement and performance of our students.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

Develop surveys for graduate certificate students in theory, research methods, social inequality, and pedagogy during Summer 2022. A 10-item survey will be included in the transition memo for the new graduate director as well as instructions for how to create and implement the survey in Qualtrics for all certificate students during their final semester.

Develop a recruitment plan to increase recruitment into our Sociology Graduate certificate.