



Sam Houston
State University

2014-2015

**College of
Humanities
and
Social Sciences**

Department of Communication Studies














Online Assessment Tracking Database









Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Communication Studies MA

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Goal	Research Literacy  To understand, assess, and report the results of communication research
Objective (L)	Research Literacy  Graduate students will be able to understand, assess, and report the findings of communication research.
Indicator	Research Literacy  We will measure this goal with an annual evaluation of a sample of student research literature reviews assigned in appropriate graduate courses. The first component of this rubric is Evidence of Understanding of the Applicable Theory or Theories including the Effective Connection of Theory or Theories to Communication Behavior (see Supporting Document for Goal 1 Indicator 1).
Criterion	Research Literacy  An average grade of 4 is the criterion for satisfying the target outcome. This average will be taken over all literature reviews and all reviewers.
Finding	Research Literacy DRAFT   The mean score for research literacy was 3.4 (see Supporting Document attached). This result is below the criterion set for the department on research literacy. Steps will need to be developed to raise students' ability to understand, evaluate, and report research.
Indicator	Mastery Of Written Composition  We will measure this goal with an annual evaluation of a sample of student research literature reviews assigned in graduate course. The second component of this rubric is Control of the Mechanics of Written Composition (see Supporting Document for Goal 1 Indicator 2).
Criterion	Mastery Of Written Composition  An average grade of 4 is the criterion for satisfying the target outcome. This average will be taken over all literature reviews and all reviewers.
Finding	Student Mastery Of Written Composition DRAFT  Using the data in the Research Literacy section above, the mean score was 3.5 for mastery of written composition. This is below the designated criterion for mastery and will to be addressed in proposed actions.
Action	Improve Student Writing Competence DRAFT   Since student writing fell below the level set for mastery, faculty felt that improvement was called for. A faculty committee constructed a document entitled "Communication Studies Writing Guidelines" that establishes writing expectations across the department. (See attachment) The

document was initially disseminated to selected classes in fall 2014 with full dissemination across Coms classes containing writing assignments in fall 2015.

Goal	Understanding And Written Communication Of Theory  Advanced students in Communication Studies must learn and be able to elucidate the theoretical concepts essential for mastery of the field.
Objective (L)	Understanding Of Theory  Graduate students will be able to understand the applicable theories of communication and related fields. Examples of these theories include, but are not limited to, expectancy violations theory, social penetration theory, relational dialectics theory, social judgment theory, cognitive dissonance theory, standpoint theory, and face-negotiation theory.
Indicator	Understanding Of Theory  We will measure this goal with an annual evaluation of a sample of student papers assigned in graduate courses. The first component of this rubric is Evidence of Understanding of the Applicable Theory or Theories (see Supporting Document attached). The scale for measuring this degree objective will be the same throughout the department's set of objectives for MA students.
Criterion	Understanding Of Theory  An average score of 4 out of a possible 5 is the criterion for satisfying the target outcome. This average will be taken over all student papers and all reviewers.
Finding	Understanding Of Theory DRAFT  The mean student score for understanding of theory was 3.1 (See Supporting Document attached for Grad Theory)
Indicator	Mastery Of Written Communication  The second component of this rubric is Control of the Mechanics of Written Composition (see Supporting Document attached). The 5-point scale for measuring this degree objective will be the same throughout the department's set of objectives for MA students.
Criterion	Mastery Of Written Communication  An average grade of 4 out of a possible 5 is the criterion for satisfying the target outcome. This average will be taken over all student papers and all reviewers.
Finding	Master Of Written Communication DRAFT  The mean student score for Writing Skill was 3.9 (see Supporting Document attached for Understanding of Theory). This is just below the criterion set for mastery for the department and needs to be addressed by remedial measures.

Action**Improve Student Writing Competence DRAFT**  

Since student writing fell below the level set for mastery, faculty felt that improvement was called for. A faculty committee constructed a document entitled "Communication Studies Writing Guidelines" that establishes writing expectations across the department. (See attachment) The document was initially disseminated to selected classes in fall 2014 with full dissemination across Coms classes containing writing assignments in fall 2015.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

The department intends to supplement the Office of Graduate Studies' recruiting efforts by those of its own, but the main effort in the coming year is the development of writing guidelines for graduate students. Writing scores, not considered in previous years, are much lower than is desirable. The graduate faculty will: 1) discuss the components of good technical writing, 2) develop guidelines for good technical writing, and 3) distribute the guidelines to all graduate students.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

1. The faculty developed and adopted a departmental Writing Guidelines handout (see attachment) that was distributed to all graduate students.
2. The faculty developed, adopted, and distributed a Graduate Handbook that contained detailed guidelines for graduate students to follow.

Attachments

1. [Communication Studies Writing Guidelines](#)

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

1. Graduate Faculty will implement all aspects of the SHSU "Online Rubric for Distance Education Courses" into the development and implementation of graduate courses.
2. As part of an overall program assessment, the Graduate Faculty will hold bi-monthly meetings to discuss information from IDEA assessments and how that information can improve pedagogy across the program.
3. From those discussions, Graduate Faculty will develop more detailed rubric to pinpoint pedagogical issues that need attention.

Department of English




Online Assessment Tracking Database


Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Creative Writing, Publishing, And Editing MFA


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Goal **Develop Skills And Knowledge Base In Creative Writing** **DRAFT** 


MFA graduates should develop a background in the area of creative writing to embrace writing, teaching, and publishing.

Objective (L) **To Offer Challenging Workshops Consistently And Frequently** **DRAFT** 


In accordance with the Association of Writers & Writing Programs' "Hallmarks of a Successful MFA Program in Creative Writing," we will offer "challenging workshops" each semester in fiction writing. These writing-intensive courses will offer students multiple opportunities for submission and revision of their work. In keeping with the fundamental nature of workshop, the students will provide and receive critical feedback not only from the professor but from fellow students. The range of commentary from close and attentive readers will provide the authors with essential feedback, both objective and subjective, for the revision and completion of their stories.

Indicator **Nature Of Writing Workshop Experiences** **DRAFT** 


We have offered the graduate fiction workshop each semester since the program's inception in the fall of 2012. These writing-intensive courses will offer students multiple opportunities for submission and revision of their work. The range of commentary from close and attentive readers will provide the authors with essential feedback, both objective and subjective, for the revision and completion of their writing.

Criterion **Submission Of Writing To The Workshops** **DRAFT** 

Each year, students in enrolled in the graduate writing workshops will submit a sufficient amount of writing to the workshop, as reported on the GSAR. "Sufficient" is defined in prose workshops as 4 stories or novel excerpts (2 per workshop), and sufficient in poetry workshops as 12 poems or pages (6 per workshop).

Finding **Writing In The Workshop** **DRAFT** 









The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment.

Criterion **Reading And Critiquing Unpublished Manuscripts** **DRAFT** 

Each year, 100% of students enrolled in the creative writing workshops will read and critique a sufficient number of unpublished manuscripts, as reported on the GSAR. "Sufficient" for the prose workshops is defined as 36 manuscripts (18 per workshop). "Sufficient" for the poetry workshops is defined as 60 poems/pages (30 per workshop).

Finding **Reading And Critiquing In The Workshop** **DRAFT** 

The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment.

Action	<p>Acquire Worthwhile Data DRAFT </p> <p>The Graduate Student Annual Report (GSAR) will be a new assessment tool that we will implement for the first time beginning in 2015-16. It will provide us with the data we need to make this assessment.</p>
Objective (L)	<p>To Engage In Extensive Literary Study DRAFT </p> <p>In accordance with the Association of Writers & Writing Programs' Hallmarks of a Successful MFA Program in Creative Writing, our program will require "extensive literary study," as writers must become "expert and wide-ranging reader(s)" in order to become successful writers. Our curriculum will "balance the practice of the art of writing with the study of literature."</p>
Indicator	<p>Equivalent Coursework And Successful Completion Of Written Comprehensive Exams DRAFT </p> <p>Students in our MFA Program in Creative Writing, Editing, and Publishing will fulfill the same requirements for the study of literature as the MA students in literature in the Department of English. This includes equivalent coursework (twelve hours of literature classes plus critical theory and narrative and/or poetic theory), as well as the successful completion of the same written comprehensive exams required of the MA students.</p>
Criterion	<p>Successful Completion Of Comprehensive Exams DRAFT </p> <p>100% of MFA students will pass all three areas of the comprehensive exams given by the Department of English.</p>
Finding	<p>Comprehensive Exam Results DRAFT </p> <p>We do not yet have a large enough sample to draw any particular conclusions. To date, two MFA students have successfully completed all three areas of the comprehensive exam, and one MFA student has successfully completed two areas and will re-take the third.</p>
Action	<p>Acquire More Data DRAFT </p> <p>We will continue to collect data on the MFA students' performances on the comprehensive exams.</p>
Objective (L)	<p>To Write Literary Short Fiction In A Realist Narrative Mode DRAFT </p> <p>Students in the MFA program in creative writing, editing, and publishing will be able to produce quality literary works of short fiction in a realist narrative mode.</p>
Indicator	<p>Writing Assessment DRAFT </p> <p>In the graduate fiction workshop, ENG 5331, students will submit, workshop, and revise three complete short stories.</p>

Near the end of the semester, the professor will ask each student to submit one of his or her pieces, written in a realist narrative mode, to be included in the assessment. In the realist mode, writers should be able to create fully imagined and compelling three-dimensional characters; artfully rendered settings, whether of this world or another; surprising and convincing plots and structures; original and texturally rich language, including metaphors and other kinds of figurative language; and, ultimately, stories that either say something new or that find a new way to say something we thought we already knew about the complex human experience.

Criterion**Internal Writing Assessment Tool DRAFT** 

85% of the students will score at least an overall average of 3 (on a 5-point scale).

Finding**Assessment Results DRAFT** 

In our initial trial run with this assessment tool, one story from each of the six MFA students enrolled in the spring workshop was evaluated by two members of the Department of English faculty (five faculty members participated in the process). Four of the six stories scored above a 3.0 with a high of 4.0, while the remaining two stories averaged 2.92 and 2.83. As a group, the average score was 3.30.

Action**Acquire More Data DRAFT** 

It is a limited data set. We also intend to revise the tool based on our first attempt with it with clearer guidelines for the scoring system.

Objective (L)**To Prepare Students For Careers In Editing And Publishing DRAFT** 

Students in the MFA program in creative writing, editing, and publishing will be able to seek careers not only as writers but as editors, book designers, and publishers.

Indicator**Opportunities For Experience With Literary And Academic Journals And Presses DRAFT** 

MFA students will gain hands-on experience with literary and academic journals and presses.

Criterion**Sufficient Opportunities With A Range Of Journals And Presses DRAFT** 

We will provide opportunities to acquire skills in editing, design, administration, marketing, and other facets of the publishing industry through Texas Review Press and Texas Review, the Sam Houston State Review, the Hawthorne Review, and the Journal of Finnish Studies.

Finding**Experiences With Publishing 2015 DRAFT** 

Our MFA students, via both the Practicum in Publishing courses (required of all MFA students) and graduate assistantships, assisted in the production of twenty-four books by Texas Review Press, two issues of Texas Review, two issues of

the Hawthorne Review, two issues of the Journal of Finnish Studies, and the annual online issue of the Sam Houston State Review. Students in the practicum in publishing course logged at least 10 hours per week at Texas Review Press while graduate assistants (depending upon their assignments) logged 10 to 20 hours per week at TRP. Other students assisted Dr. Julie Hall with the Hawthorne Review, Dr. Helena Halmari with the Journal of Finnish Studies, and Prof. Nick Lantz with the Sam Houston State Review.

Action**Future Opportunities DRAFT** 

We will continue to seek additional opportunities for our students, in particular with journals and presses unaffiliated with our own university.

Goal**Student Recruitment DRAFT** 

We are a very new program and have only a handful of students enrolled. Our goal is to recruit qualified students to enroll in the MFA program

Objective (P)**To Recruit Qualified And Exceptional Students DRAFT** 

We will recruit and accept into the program only those students, ideally between five and ten a year, who can reasonably be expected to complete it.

**KPI
Performance
Indicator****Incoming Graduate Student GPA DRAFT** 

The program will use incoming GPA scores as one indicator of likely student success. We will aim to maintain a minimum 3.00 standard for applications, with an expectation of not more than 15% allowable exemptions.

Result**GPA Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT** 

We admitted five students in the calendar year 2015. Their undergraduate GPAs ranged from 3.76 to 3.07 with an average of 3.53.

**KPI
Performance
Indicator****Incoming Graduate Student GRE DRAFT** 

In its early development, the program will use GRE scores (with emphasis on the Verbal section) as an indicator of likely student success. We will aim to maintain a minimum score of 500 on the verbal portion of the exam and a total score of 1000, with an expectation of not more than 15% allowable exemptions.

Result**GRE Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT** 

We admitted five students in the calendar year 2015. Their GRE verbal scores ranged from 450 to 575 with an average of 535. Their GRE overall scores ranged from 860 to 1175 with an average of 1085. Only one student scored under 500 for verbal and under 1000

for overall. This was a student from our own undergraduate program with whom we are quite familiar, and whose overall body of work gained our confidence.

**KPI
Performance
Indicator**

Student Recruiting DRAFT 🔑

Through visits and advertising campaigns to English majors and minors, to undergraduate creative writing classes, in venues such as *Poets & Writers* and *The Writer's Chronicle*, and via tables at the annual *Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference and Bookfair*, we hope to recruit between five and ten students to begin the MFA at SHSU. Additionally, we expect our annual visiting writers series to contribute to our recruitment efforts.

Result

Results For Admission Year 2015 DRAFT 🔑

We admitted five students.

Action

Future Recruitment DRAFT 🔑

We will continue to monitor our students' performances both as incoming and outgoing students, and to adjust our required scores for GPA and GRE accordingly.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

As we enter our third year as a program, our primary objective remains to recruit students into the program and to recruit the best students possible. We received more completed applications (seven) for the fall this year than in the previous cycle. However, the number of new students actually enrolled this fall (three) will be slightly less than the previous two years, in part because two students we accepted chose to enroll at other institutions, and in part because two other applicants (both from our own undergraduate program) did not meet our minimum standards for the GRE. We continue to encounter the tension between the need to grow the program in terms of numbers and the desire to maintain the minimum standards we expect of any of our graduate students. As one of our goals has been to reach out beyond the traditional recruitment footprint of SHSU, we are pleased to note, as an example, that we've enrolled one student from Wyoming this year, and that we had accepted (though she declined) a student from Central Arkansas.

The most significant development for the program this past year was the beginning of our partnership with the National Book Foundation and its National Book Awards at Sam Houston program (just the second such program in the nation). The program has already brought increased attention to the MFA program, both regionally and nationally. We expect the collaboration to continue to reap benefits for the MFA program, the Department of English, the university, and the community.

Last year we launched a new website, and it has served as a useful tool not only for our currently enrolled students but for prospective students. It is regularly updated and provides ease of access to information and forms for students and prospective students. We continue to maintain an active Facebook presence and have even ventured into Twitter, though the latter doesn't generate much activity for us.

To build a career as a writer requires more than "simply" the ability to write compelling stories or to create powerful poetry. It requires an understanding of the profession and its mechanisms, and the ability to navigate those waters, whether as a teacher of creative writing, a member of an arts council, an applicant for a fellowship, a judge of a creative writing contest, an organizer of a reading series, or a publicist for a small publishing house.

In order to assist the professionalization of our graduate students, we will diligently seek to incorporate our students into the para-professional aspects of our own MFA program. For example, in the first year of the National Book Awards at Sam Houston event, held in March of 2013, we made extensive use of the members of Sigma Tau Delta, the Department of English honorary, as volunteers to prepare for events, serve as hosts at receptions, and to assist with the logistics of the visiting writers and their schedules. Though some MFA students were involved through that channel and others, we'd like more MFA students to be involved in the process from beginning to end. We'd also like to involve more graduate students in the production of our annual reading series, including administration, publicity, and hosting. We'd also like to make a stronger effort to encourage our students to submit their work for publication in literary journals and for presentation at creative writing conferences. To assist us in these efforts, we plan to hold professionalization workshops, which will include attention to the elements necessary for either job applications or the submission of creative works to presses, journals, and conferences. In the day-to-day grind of academic life (classes, research, writing, exams), these facets of the professional life of the writer are often overlooked.

As with any graduate program, we need to continue to seek to improve the funding available to support our students, both in terms of the number of students funded and the amount of funding available to each student. We currently share graduate assistantships with the MA program in the Department of English, which at this time provides us with funding for seven MFA students.

We will be seeking additional funding as well for the annual reading series so that we might continue to bring to campus both emerging and established writers. We believe that this is an integral aspect of our students' education, exposing them to a wider range of writers and instruction than just our core faculty. Currently, the reading series depends upon \$3,000 from the Friends of English fund within the Department of English. We would like to pursue at least \$5,000 more annually from another source. This funding is separate from the monies dedicated to the National Book Awards at Sam Houston program.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

A continued early goal of the program has been growth coupled with the maintenance of standards for admission. In the fall of 2014, thirteen students were enrolled in the MFA program; in the spring of 2015, fourteen students were enrolled. For the fall of 2015, we anticipate an enrollment of nineteen students. Between applications for admission to begin in the spring of 2015 and in the fall of 2015, we received ten completed applications. We have accepted six and rejected four, and five of the six accepted have joined our program. The five admitted students had an average GPA of 3.53, and average GRE scores of 535 (verbal) and 1085 (overall). This is above our preferred minimum standards of 3.0 for GPA and 500 (verbal) and 1000 (overall) for the GRE.

It's worth noting that we've been short-handed this past year as a creative writing faculty, in part because of the mid-year departure of a tenured member. Currently, we have just three tenured or tenure-track members. This fall, we've added a visiting assistant professor in creative writing (a two-year position), and we have been approved to advertise for two tenure-track positions, one in prose and one in poetry. These hires, once in place, should enable us to offer a broader spectrum of approaches to creative writing, and should assist us in matters ranging from course offerings to recruitment to administration.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

As we enter our fourth year as a program, we celebrate the graduation of our first student, the first person to hold an MFA in creative writing, editing, and publishing from Sam Houston State University. We anticipate the graduation of a handful of students (likely six) in the forthcoming year. To truly assess the quality of our program, it will be necessary to track the careers of

these graduates as writers and teachers and active participants in the literary community.

To this end, we have sought to identify and develop assessment tools appropriate to our program. As a relatively new program and as the only fine arts program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Sam Houston State, we've reached out to both peer and aspirational institutions with established MFA programs in creative writing, and as we move forward, we will be in dialogue with them about the best assessment practices for our discipline. We will also be in conversation with our fine arts peers in SHSU's College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication.

During this cycle, we've developed drafts of the following: a Graduate Student Activity Report (GSAR), an Exit Survey, and an Alumni Survey. The GSAR will be conducted annually with the current graduate students; the Exit Survey will be distributed shortly after each student completes the degree; and the Alumni Survey will be conducted every 3 to 5 years. In each case, we will seek to assess our students' and graduates' successful engagement in the literary, academic, and professional arenas. It is our expectation that these materials will give us a clear picture not only of what we hope our program provides for our students but of what it actually does provide.

We have also begun to develop tools both for internal assessments of our students' creative writing and external assessments. We conducted a trial run of a tool for internal assessment and will make adjustments to that tool for the next cycle. As the number of completed MFA theses grows, we will also seek to develop an assessment tool for outsider reviewers to use.

In addition to our core faculty, we continue to bring visiting writers to campus. Our current MFA students benefit from the presence of these nationally recognized writers and the diversity of work and perspectives that they add to the MFA experience. For potential students, the presence of a strong visiting writers series functions as a powerful recruitment tool. During the 2014-15 academic year, we brought to campus seven visiting writers and one nationally prominent editor. Most notable among our visiting writers events is our continued association with the National Book Foundation and the National Book Awards at Sam Houston. For a second consecutive year, we welcomed National Book Award finalists to campus and the community for a series of events. Our partnership has been strengthened by the hiring in the Department of English of a clinical assistant professor whose responsibilities include this partnership and this event. Additionally, this past year, for the first time, an MFA student was assigned as a research assistant (10 hours per week) to assist the event's coordinator. The program itself will continue to benefit regionally and nationally from the exposure our partnership brings. University funding for the National Book Awards event rose from \$25,000 to \$30,000 from 2014 to 2015; our departmental budget for the other visiting writer events will double from \$3,000 in 2014-15 to \$6,000 in 2015-16.

As our first cohort of MFA students moves toward completion of the degree, we've been encouraging them to become active in submitting to publications and presenting at conferences. In the past academic year, our students published two short stories and presented at four academic conferences. Six students participated in public readings of their creative work.

The Texas Review Press continues to provide extensive hands-on experience in publishing for our students. The press published twenty-four titles in 2014 and will publish another twenty-four titles in 2015. These include novels, short-story collections, and novellas; full-length poetry books and chapbooks; essays and memoirs; a departmental history and even a cookbook (with recipes from poets). The MFA students, through both the practicum in publishing class and research assistantships, partake in every aspect of the publishing process.







Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

English MA

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Goal	<p>Critical Writing, Researching, And Thinking Skills </p> <p>To produce graduates who have acquired measurable skills in critical thinking, researching, and writing about English literature, language, and writing disciplines and have acquired demonstrable breadth of knowledge in the field. While the number of graduates who have entered PhD programs or taken teaching positions at two- and four-year colleges is an objective measure of our success in accomplishing this goal, not all of our students pursue further graduate degrees or post-secondary teaching. That in mind, the department has determined three measurable learning objectives that apply uniformly to all students taking a graduate degree in English from Sam Houston State University: (1) the demonstration of critical thinking, researching, and writing skills, as measured by their class writing; (2) the demonstration of critical thinking and writing skills and breadth of knowledge, as measured by their performance on the written comprehensive examination; and (3) the demonstration of critical thinking skills and breadth of knowledge, as measured by their performance in oral examinations.</p>
Objective (L)	<p>Demonstrating Critical Thinking, Researching, And Writing Skills: Class Writing </p> <p>English graduate students will demonstrate their abilities as independent critical thinkers, researchers, and writers capable of employing sophisticated skills in written analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of knowledge and of using a professional idiom in making written arguments. The program's success in achieving this objective will be measured by a holistic assessment of graduate class writing.</p>
Indicator	<p>Holistic Assessment Of Graduate Writing </p> <p>The ability of students to write according to accepted professional standards is a direct indicator of the English MA and MFA programs' success in producing graduates who have acquired appropriate critical thinking, researching, and writing skills and are prepared for future professional endeavors. To that end, a significant amount of student writing is required in English graduate coursework.</p> <p>To assess the effectiveness of class writing assignments in developing students' ability to make sophisticated arguments about literature, language, and writing disciplines in a critical idiom appropriate to professional standards, the faculty will undertake an annual holistic review of representative graduate student writing produced during the reporting period.</p>
Criterion	<p>Standards For English Graduate Student Writing </p> <p>At least 92% of representative graduate essays evaluated during the holistic assessment will be scored as acceptable or excellent (a combined score of 5 or higher on the scale described below).</p> <p>A rubric for evaluating graduate student writing is attached.</p> <p>Assessment Process:</p>

1. To assure that the assessment reviews a representative sampling of writing, graduate professors in both long terms are asked to submit term papers or other significant writing from every third student listed on their class rosters.

2. Two primary readers from among the graduate English faculty independently read and score each essay under review; in the case of an unreliable result, the essay is referred to a secondary reader, who reads the essay independently, without any knowledge of the previous results (see number 5, below)

3. Each primary reader scores each essay on a 4-point scale, with a score of 4 the highest possible. The two primary scores are added to yield a total, with the final scores ranging from 8 (highest possible) to 2 (lowest possible). A combined score of 5 or higher is passing. A score of 7 or 8 indicates an excellent essay; a score of 5 or 6 indicates an acceptable essay; a score of 4 or less indicates an unacceptable essay.

4. Reliability of the two scores is assumed when both scores from the primary readers are congruent, that is, when they are within 1 point of each other. For example, a score of 6 that would be seen as reliable would mean that both readers marked the essay as a 3. A reliable score of 5 would mean that one reader assessed the essay as a 3 while the other reader assessed it as a 2.

5. Should the primary scores for an essay not be reliable—for example, a 4 and a 1, a 3 and a 1, a 4 and a 2—the essay is referred to a secondary reader. If that reader agrees with the higher score, the essay is certified as acceptable or excellent; if the secondary reader agrees with the lower score, the essay is certified as unacceptable.

Finding

Results Of Holistic Assessment Of English Graduate Student Writing

On July 8, 2015, a committee of seven English graduate faculty from across a wide range of areas--literature, professional writing, and creative writing--undertook the holistic review of graduate student writing for the 2014-2015 academic year. The committee reviewed fourteen essays chosen without prejudice from six graduate courses in literature, language, and writing disciplines. Two committee members read each essay and rated it on the scale of 1-4 described above; the combined scores are as follow:

Score of 8 (excellent): 2 essays
 Score of 7 (excellent): 4 essays
 Score of 6 (acceptable): 3 essays
 Score of 5 (acceptable): 4 essays
 Score of 4 (unacceptable): 1 essay

A single essay was ranked as unacceptable (4). All others were ranked as passing (5 or above),

with seven essays scored as acceptable (5 or 6) and six essays scored as excellent (7 or 8). The 93 percent rate of acceptable papers exceeds the target of 92 percent.

Action

Developing Students' Writing Abilities







Outlining a course of action for improving student writing remains difficult: While graduate professors and administrators uniformly agree that critical writing and expository writing are among the most important professional skills that our students must develop, we also concede that there are different ways to develop these skills. As evidence is the variety of writing that the holistic reading committee reviewed: annotated bibliographies, descriptive and critical book reviews, papers applying specific critical theories to works of literature, close readings of texts, linguistic analyses, research papers on pedagogical methods, and technical/professional reports. These represent not only writing about different subjects but also writing in different academic modes.

Notwithstanding this variety in both writing topics and writing modes, the graduate faculty still agree on certain standards for excellence, as measured within their respective contexts. We are satisfied that the holistic reading rubric is adaptable to the various types of writing.

As noted in the action section for the 2013-2014 reporting cycle, one obvious class in which to impress upon all of our degree candidates the standards of excellence for graduate-level/professional writing is ENGL 5330, the research and methods course required of all incoming students. The problem, however, is that even here instructors take different approaches to researching and writing: Some treat the class as a scientific approach to gathering information and editing manuscripts; others treat it as an introductory course in graduate writing and critical approaches. The department decided several years ago that it could not mandate that the professor for this class specifically teach writing, as long as she or he fulfills the contractual obligations for the class, as stated in the graduate catalogue.

Because we cannot presume that professors in this single required course are teaching writing in the same modes and by the same methods and are introducing students to the same standards of writing excellence, the responsibility for developing students' writing is then in the hands of their other graduate classroom instructors. The results of the last several holistic reading sessions suggest that these professors are doing their jobs satisfactorily, even well. Nevertheless, deciding upon uniform methods for teaching writing at the graduate/professional level remains problematic.

Because the results of the last several reporting cycles show that we are producing competent writers in our graduate courses, the best actions at this time seem, as before, to ask that the faculty continue to keep in mind the objective standards outlined in the reading rubric and to continue to encourage them to provide useful models from both professional and peer writing.

Goal	Demonstration Of Breadth Of Knowledge  English students will demonstrate that they have a graduate-level breadth of knowledge in literature, language, and writing disciplines and that they can express that knowledge in writing.
Objective (L)	Demonstrating Critical Thinking And Writing Skills And Breadth Of Knowledge: The Written Comprehensive Examination  English students will demonstrate that they have a graduate-level breadth of knowledge in literature, language, and writing disciplines and that they can express that knowledge in writing. The program's success in achieving this objective can be measured by the pass rate for the written comprehensive examination required of all students who take a graduate English degree at Sam Houston State University.
Indicator	The Written Comprehensive Examination  A passing score on the written comprehensive examination is a direct indicator that a student in English has acquired a breadth of knowledge in the subject, has developed critical reading and writing skills appropriate to a graduate-level education in English, and is well-prepared for future professional endeavors. For the examination, students choose three comprehensive areas from among thirteen broad topics in literature, language, and writing disciplines. To demonstrate their mastery of a broad range of materials, they are required to choose at least one British literature area and one American literature area and at least one early (pre-1800) British or American literary area and one later (post-1800) British or American literary area. For each area, students are given a reading list of works selected by faculty area experts. During the exam itself, the student chooses one of three questions for each area and has two hours to respond to that question. A double-blind grading system is used to evaluate the candidates' proficiency. Three graduate faculty members read and evaluate each essay.
Criterion	Written Comprehensive Examination Pass Rate   At least 90% of examination essays will pass (with a grade of pass or high pass). An examination grading rubric and sample pass, fail, and high pass essays are attached.
Finding	Results Of Written Comprehensive Examinations  During the reporting year 2014-2015 (including Summer 2015), MA candidates in English wrote thirty-seven comprehensive examination essays; this number includes retakes of essays that had previously failed. The results follow:

Total number of passing essays: 24 (65%)

Total number of failing essays: 11 (30%)

Total number of high passes: 2 (5%)

Seventy percent of the total essays passed (with a grade of pass or high pass).

Conclusions about finding: While the pass rate had risen steadily from 69% for 2011-12 to 89% for 2013-14, this year's results show a sharp decline. It is difficult to account for this result, since students had the same resources for preparing as those before them had, and there were no noticeable differences in such things as the areas that candidates chose or the circumstances under which they took the exam.

One possible variable is that students from the new MFA in Creative Writing Program sat for the exam for the first time. However, differences in the pass-fail-high pass rates for English MA and MFA students were negligible.

If we cannot attribute the decline in the pass rate to the type of student who sat for the exam (MA or MFA), there are other possible variables: One is that, despite express warnings, the students sometimes "gamble" by not reading all of the required works on the prescribed reading lists; when they come in to the exam room, they find that they are required to use in their responses certain works or certain kinds of works that they have not read. Another possibility is that they rely too heavily on classes in the specified areas to prepare them for the exams; while certainly classwork should provide foundations for the exam areas, the guidelines expressly caution that part of the preparation process--and part of what the exam sets out to measure--are the students' independent reading skills and their ability to synthesize materials, outside of courses.

Action

Preparing Students For The Written Comprehensive Examination

1. The first necessary action is to discuss in a departmental meeting the importance of students' developing independent critical skills. While classroom instructors should never be "teaching the exam," a few brief comments in a class about the distinction between coursework and exam work would be appropriate.
2. With the same qualification that graduate faculty should not be teaching students the exam in their courses, some faculty may continue to use typical exam questions for midterm and final tests, as a way of accustoming their students to the expectations and circumstances of the comprehensive examination.
3. The Graduate Director will continue to publish an exam

preparation booklet and to conduct biannual prep sessions. In these sessions, students are taken through the exam process, given strategies for preparing and sitting for the exam, and shown exemplary responses to typical questions.

4. We will continue to encourage individual faculty to meet with students preparing for the exam, to suggest strategies for preparing and sitting for the comps.

Objective (L)

Demonstrating Critical Thinking Skills And Breadth Of Knowledge: Oral Argumentation 🔑

English graduate students will demonstrate their knowledge and critical thinking skills through oral arguments. We believe that the ability to make such arguments is necessary for future professional pursuits like teaching and further graduate education. The program's success in achieving this objective can be measured by the pass rate for the oral defense required of all thesis students and the oral comprehensive examination required of all non-thesis students.

Indicator

The Oral Examination 🔑

A passing grade on the oral examination required of all students who take the English MA or MFA degree at Sam Houston State University is a direct indicator that graduates are able to demonstrate their critical thinking skills and breadth of knowledge in the field. Thesis students sit for a one-hour oral defense of the thesis; having passed the written comprehensive examination, non-thesis students sit for a one-hour oral comprehensive examination covering the same three areas as those on the written exam. A committee of three graduate faculty members examines each student, awarding the candidate a pass, high pass, or fail, according to her or his ability to respond to specific questions. The committee for the oral defense of thesis comprises the members of the student's reading committee; the oral comprehensive examination committee comprises area experts appointed by the Graduate Director.

Criterion

Oral Examination Pass Rate 🔑

At least 92% of degree candidates will pass the oral defense of thesis or oral comprehensive exam at the first sitting or upon retaking it.

Thesis defense and oral comprehensive exam grading rubrics are attached.

Finding

Results Of Oral Examinations 🔑

During the reporting year (Fall 2014-Spring 2015), two students sat for oral comprehensive examinations; two students sat for oral defenses of their theses. Three of the four students earned passes, and one student earned a high pass (for a thesis defense).

One hundred percent of the students passed the oral examination during the reporting period. This number exceeds the ninety-two percent target.

Conclusions about findings: In last year's assessment of the oral examination, we suggested that the oral defense of thesis and the

oral comprehensive examination are unequal measures of our candidates' abilities to demonstrate critical thinking skills and to make oral arguments: Thesis students know the subjects of their projects as well as, sometimes even better than, the examining faculty and have a much narrower range of material; the thesis defense sometimes becomes an exercise in congratulations upon a job well-completed. (One other important factor is that supervising faculty do not allow a thesis defense until the candidate is ready to defend her or his project; while the non-thesis student is required to take the oral comprehensive exam immediately after passing the written exam, then, the thesis student has greater scheduling flexibility.) Non-thesis students, who sit for the oral comprehensive exam, must show mastery of a much wider range of topics in literature, linguistics, and writing disciplines; have less control over the questions asked and the direction of the discussion; and are sometimes examined by faculty experts whom they have not met before the examination.

While faculty have often expressed disappointment with the performances of students in the oral comprehensive examination, the examiners during this reporting cycle were generally well-pleased with the candidates' ability to make oral arguments and with their demonstration of comprehensive knowledge in the field. Because only two students sat for oral comps, however, the results may not be statistically significant.

Action

Preparing Students To Make Oral Arguments 🔑

One hundred percent of students who have sat for the oral defense of thesis or oral comprehensive exam in the last six reporting cycles have passed.

In our statement of action for the last reporting cycle, we stressed that the oral examination should not be the only measure of a student's ability to express critical thinking skills and breadth of knowledge orally. It is, however, one of the few uniform measures, since not all graduate classes require oral presentations.

In a 2014 department meeting devoted specifically to graduate program matters, the issue of the oral exam was raised briefly, without much further discussion or consensus, since most attention was focused on the written examination (also one of the few uniform measures of our students' critical thinking abilities and breadth of knowledge).

Beginning in August 2014, during the written comprehensive examination prep sessions, the Graduate Director incorporated suggestions for preparing for the oral examination as well. It is difficult to tell whether these remarks had any effect upon the students' performance: As before, one hundred percent of students passed the oral

exam. And, as before, students who sat for the exams were not required to attend the exam prep sessions, so there is no way to measure the effectiveness of this preparation for the oral exam.

We do suggest as one action, however, that graduate faculty continue to encourage students to participate in academic conferences, at which they must not only present their arguments about literature and language orally but also respond to questions and challenges from the professional audience.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

In responding specifically to the findings for the three objectives above, we propose the following plan for continuous improvement in the 2014-2015 assessment period:

1. A committee of five graduate faculty members appointed during Spring 2014 will meet to discuss the written and oral comprehensive examinations, considering specifically how effective they are in measuring the students' critical thinking and writing skills and their breadth of knowledge.
2. The graduate faculty will undertake a thorough review of comprehensive examination questions. This task was postponed from the previous plan for improvement because it depended, in part, on the review of reading lists, which was finally completed in late spring. One persistent concern among graduate faculty is that some students are skirting the requirement that they read all works on an area list and are still managing to pass the exam because too-general questions allow too much flexibility in the responses. In order to assure greater rigor, graduate faculty have suggested more specificity in the questions. The plan for improvement will address this concern.
3. While faculty generally agree upon expectations for the quality of graduate student writing, it is difficult to reach a consensus about specific, measurable standards, in part because of the variety in the kinds of writing expected in various classes: critical term papers, linguistic analyses, papers about pedagogical methods and practices, annotated bibliographies, and expository papers. As one step toward reaching a consensus, the Graduate Director will distribute the recently revised rubric for the holistic assessment of writing to both faculty and students.
4. The graduate faculty will resume the discussion of appointing faculty members as mentors to students. While the Graduate Director will continue the general advisement of students, the faculty mentors would be available to their advisees to discuss class researching and writing assignments and to help them prepare for written and oral examinations.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

1. Despite continued discussion in departmental meetings of both the expectations and format of the written comprehensive examination, the committee of graduate faculty appointed to review the exam did not meet formally: First, a key member of the committee was awarded a year-long researching/writing grant and asked that we postpone the deliberations as long as possible because, as a junior faculty member, he has much invested in future graduate program plans. Second, there has been some discussion of how the new MFA program will affect general program matters such as the written comprehensive exam; it seemed advisable to put off any changes in the exam until such general matters are settled.
2. While the graduate faculty did not undertake the comprehensive review of comprehensive exam questions (see item #1), the Graduate Director did solicit new exam questions from a

number of faculty, to broaden the question banks, especially in a couple of areas (early American literature and 20th-/21st-century British literature) in which there were too-few questions.

3. The Graduate Director did distribute the holistic reading rubric to graduate faculty and encouraged that they make students aware of the standards for writing excellence outlined in that document.

4. Despite some informal discussion about appointing graduate faculty as mentors to students, no further action was taken with this proposal. The Graduate Director remains the primary advisor to all graduate English students.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

1. Because the written and oral examinations are such important measurements of our program's success in producing students with graduate-level/professional critical reading and writing skills and breadth of knowledge, a review of the expectations and format of the exams is crucial to our continuous improvement. The previously appointed committee of five graduate faculty members will meet this coming academic year to consider how effectively the written and oral exams serve to measure our success in accomplishing the program goals.

2. Having discussed the expectations and format of the written and oral examinations, the review committee will make a formal report to the graduate faculty. If it finds the need for any changes to exam formats, it will make formal proposals to that effect.

3. The department will continue its general discussion of the expectations for graduate-level/professional writing. To this end, the Graduate Director will distribute once again the rubric of standards for writing excellence and invite response from the collective graduate faculty.

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Department of Foreign Languages



Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Spanish BA

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Goal	<p>Language Proficiency DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>The BA in Spanish at SHSU targets two student populations: 1) those seeking teacher certification (TC) for teaching Spanish at the secondary level in the Texas public school system and 2) those wishing to complete the BA without teacher certification (WTC). The language proficiency requirements are essentially the same for both the TC and WTC groups; however, TC students must complete additional requirements in the Faculty of Education and also pass a state certification exam.</p> <p>The goal of the department of foreign language is to graduate TC and WTC students with a high level of oral and written proficiency in Spanish.</p>
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Objective (L)	<p>Oral Proficiency DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>Before graduating, all students (TC and WTC) will demonstrate an advanced level of oral proficiency in the target language system.</p>
Indicator	<p>Performance On American Council Of Teachers Of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>Prior to graduation, all students will take the computerized version of the OPI, administered by the SHSU Testing Center.</p>
Criterion	<p>OPI - Student Performance DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>All students taking the OPI will obtain a minimum score of "advanced-low" on the proficiency rubric. Students will also be required to take an advisory OPI prior to enrolling in advanced Spanish courses in order to pinpoint areas of oral proficiency that can be improved through advanced-level course work.</p>
Finding	<p>OPI Results DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>The Department of Foreign Languages hired a full-time chair after a hiatus of one year. As a result, no data was acquired for 2014-2015. The new chair, in conjunction with the faculty, has implemented the present plan with scheduled first report of data in 2015-2016.</p>

There are no actions for this objective.

Objective (L)	<p>Written Proficiency DRAFT 🔑</p> <p>Before graduating, all students (TC and WTC) will demonstrate an advanced level of written proficiency (e.g. coherence, grammatical and lexical accuracy, and mechanics) in the target language system</p>
Indicator	<p>Performance On An Instrument Of Written Language Proficiency DRAFT 🔑</p>

The Department of Foreign Languages is currently reviewing options for an instrument to use in pursuit of this objective.

Criterion

Instrument Of Written Language Proficiency- Student Performance **DRAFT**

As with the OPI applied to student oral proficiency, all students assessed for written proficiency will display the equivalent of at least "advanced-low" on the written proficiency rubric.

Finding

Written Language Proficiency Results **DRAFT**

The Department of Foreign Languages hired a full-time chair after a hiatus of one year. As a result, no data was acquired for 2014-2015. The new chair, in conjunction with the faculty, has implemented the present plan with scheduled first report of data in 2015-2016.

There are no actions for this objective.

Goal

Teacher Certification Preparation **DRAFT**

The goal of teacher certification will be to equip teachers with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to successfully teach Spanish in the secondary classroom.

Objective (L)

Language Acquisition Theories And Instructional Practices **DRAFT**

1) TC students will be able to demonstrate a good understanding of language acquisition at various developmental levels and use this knowledge to create a supportive classroom learning environment that includes target language input and opportunities for negotiation of meaning and meaningful interaction.

2) TC students will develop a variety of instructional practices that reflect language outcomes and articulated program models and address the needs of diverse language learners.

Indicator

Performance On State And Professsional Proficiency Exams With Reference To Language Acquisition Competencies **DRAFT**

Students preparing for a career teaching Spanish will be assessed by their performance on the representative state certification exam (*TEXES Languages Other than English* (LOTE)) and by performance on the ACTFL Focus Content Observer (FOC) for Spanish teachers

Criterion

Rate Of Student Performance On LOTE And ACTFL FOC With Reference To Language Acquisition Competencies **DRAFT**

Prior to graduation, all TC students will take the LOTE and will obtain a score of 80% or higher for *Domain 1: Instruction and Assessment*. TC students' actual classroom teaching will also be evaluated, and their overall teaching performance will minimally

demonstrate ACTFL's "world readiness standard for language learning", as referenced by the FOC rubric.

Finding

LOTE/ACTFL FOC Results: Language Acquisition Competencies **DRAFT** 🔑

The Department of Foreign Languages hired a full-time chair after a hiatus of one year. As a result, no data was acquired for 2014-2015. The new chair, in conjunction with the faculty, has implemented the present plan with scheduled first report of data in 2015-2016.

There are no actions for this objective.

Objective (L)

Integration Of Standards Into Curriculum And Instruction **DRAFT** 🔑

- 1) TC students will demonstrate an understanding of the goal areas and standards of the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* and their state standards, and integrate these frameworks into curricular planning.
- 2) TC students will integrate the Standards for Foreign Language Learning and their state standards into language instruction.
- 3) TC students will use standards and curricular goals to evaluate, select, design, and adapt instructional resources.

Indicator

Performance On State And Professional Proficiency Exams With Reference To Curriculum Competencies **DRAFT** 🔑

Students preparing for a career teaching Spanish will be assessed by their performance on the representative state certification exam (*TEXES Languages Other than English* (LOTE)) and by performance on the ACTFL Focus Content Observer (FOC) for Spanish teachers.

Criterion

Rate Of Student Performance On LOTE And ACTFL FOC--Curriculum Competencies **DRAFT** 🔑





Prior to graduation, all TC students will take the LOTE and will obtain a score of 80% or higher for *Domain 1: Instruction and Assessment*. TC students' actual classroom teaching will also be evaluated, and their overall teaching performance will minimally demonstrate ACTFL's "world readiness standard for language learning", as referenced by the FOC rubric.

Finding

LOTE/ACTFL FOC Results: Curriculum Competencies **DRAFT** 🔑

The Department of Foreign Languages hired a full-time chair after a hiatus of one year. As a result, no data was acquired for 2014-2015. The new chair, in conjunction with the faculty, has implemented the present plan with scheduled first report of data in 2015-2016.

There are no actions for this objective.

Objective (L)	Teacher Candidate Professionalism DRAFT  1) TC students will engage in professional development opportunities that strengthen their own linguistic and cultural competence and promote reflection on practice. 2) TC students will know the value of foreign language learning to the overall success of all students and understand that they will need to become advocates with students, colleagues, and members of the community to promote the field.
Indicator	Teacher Candidate Oral Presentation (CAPSTONE) Rubric DRAFT  Prior to graduation, all TC students will perform an oral presentation before a panel of SPAN faculty.
Criterion	Rate Of Teacher Candidate Performance On CAPSTONE DRAFT  All TC students will demonstrate the standard of "acceptable" for professional growth/development on the CAPSTONE rubric.
Finding	CAPSTONE Results DRAFT  The Department of Foreign Languages hired a full-time chair after a hiatus of one year. As a result, no data was acquired for 2014-2015. The new chair, in conjunction with the faculty, has implemented the present plan with scheduled first report of data in 2015-2016.

There are no actions for this objective.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

The student learning experience will be most impacted by 1. establishing an Undergraduate Teaching Faculty committee of at least three Spanish faculty members in applied linguistics with professional preparation and scholarly interests in teaching, 2. who will set at least two by-semester meetings at the beginning and end of the semester to address problems with graduating majors' required tasks, how to conduct them, use them for best results, etc. The charge to the committee is to make specific content recommendations about training sessions for faculty to evaluate ALL graduating majors' tasks by applying rubrics more evenly across the board; 2. actually evaluate the past semester's graduating seniors' portfolios in order to make recommendations about curricular reform; 3. consult with the College of Education and make recommendations about how to more effectively prepare/remediate especially those teaching candidates whose preparation is weak in order that they perform more adequately on the state exams in fewer attempts. A large component of this initiative will address how to handle the practice exam for the state exams, including review efforts and grading practices (a rubric and application of same).

Anticipated results of these actions include more consistent evaluations for oral proficiency on the capstones and of identifying curricular change needed for writing proficiency for all majors. Better preparation methods for teaching candidates for the state exam for teaching and higher pass rate in fewer attempts are goals.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

No update has been added to this level.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

June 2015 brought the Department of Foreign Languages, home to the SPAN BA program, a permanent full-time chair for the first time in roughly a year. Accordingly, the new chair in consultation with the faculty has devised an overall strategy for program performance assessment.

Three-Year Assessment Project for Oral Language Proficiency

It is anticipated that all BA students will ultimately achieve an advanced-low level of language proficiency in Spanish (as indexed by ACTFL standards) by the end of their senior year. However, this expectation is based on anecdotal departmental evidence (e.g., formative class reports and professor perceptions), which makes it difficult to know to what extent students' are reaching the advanced-low level, particularly with respect to oral proficiency, a key component of language development that is of central focus in the department. Moreover, within the department, it is also unclear to what extent the current language curriculum (both lower and upper division courses) contributes to the improvement of students' oral skills. The present assessment project therefore proposes to systematically evaluate the development of students' oral proficiency as they progress throughout their BA program in order to identify how the learning context (on-line, face-to-face, study abroad courses) and diverse course content (e.g., linguistics, literature, culture) impact the development of students' oral skills over time. The findings from this project will be used to inform the department's curriculum development and pedagogical practices and, ultimately, improve the oral proficiency outcomes of Spanish majors at SHSU.

The project consists of two overlapping assessment phases; data collection for Phase I will take place during the fall 2015 semester; data collection for Phase II is longitudinal, beginning in Fall 2015 and ending approximately 3.5 years later in Spring 2018. In addition, during Phase II, the project will independently target the department's summer study abroad programs in Costa Rica and Spain, and will collect pre- and post-program data in June 2016 and 2017.

Phase I: Cross-sectional analysis of 1000 level and 2000 level Spanish courses

The majority of Spanish majors in the department begin their language study by taking lower level courses (1411, 1412, 2311, and 2312); however, there is currently no placement exam or any other type of independent language assessment for new majors. Such a situation requires most students to self-place in lower level courses with different delivery methods (e.g., face-to-face versus online delivery), which not only creates heterogeneous language groups but, more importantly, makes it virtually impossible to assess students' level of pre- program proficiency and any subsequent improvement in the lower division courses.

Objective: To determine the degree to which oral proficiency improves in the lower level courses.

For this objective, a sample of students, including majors, from all four levels of Spanish (equal numbers from online and face-to-face courses) will be assessed during the first week of class on oral proficiency using an in-house diagnostic test designed to evaluate learners' accuracy and fluency in spoken discourse. Performance on this test will be compared across 1000 and 2000 levels and will therefore provide a snapshot of the level of oral proficiency development that is generally achieved after completing Spanish 2312.

Expected Outcomes

- Empirical data about the growth of oral proficiency after 180 hours of formal language instruction
- Detailed account of how different delivery methods impact oral proficiency outcomes
- Data that can be used to create a department-wide placement test designed specifically to place students in groups based on the language reality/performance of SHSU students
- Data that can be used to create more homogenous 1000 and 2000 level groups
- Data that can inform curriculum content and pedagogical techniques for language teaching

Phase II: Longitudinal Analysis of Spanish Majors

Phase II is an extension to Phase I and follows those majors previously assessed in Phase I throughout their entire BA program and will thus provide a longitudinal perspective of their oral proficiency development at the time of graduation. Phase II will also permit assessment of the impact of study abroad programs on oral proficiency, as a majority of the majors will have participated in study abroad, either in Costa Rica, Mexico or Spain, for a minimum of one month prior to graduating.

Objective: To determine the extent of Spanish majors' oral proficiency development over the course of their BA

For this objective, majors identified during Phase 1 will again be assessed on oral proficiency skill at two different points in time: after completing 12 credits of the major and then again at the end of their major (i.e., once all 22 credits in the major have been completed). At both points, students will take similar versions of the diagnostic test administered during Phase I and will also take the ACTFL OPI.

Expected Outcomes

- Empirical data about how oral proficiency in Spanish develops over a 4-year period at SHSU
- Data that demonstrate how instruction and learning contexts interact with improvement in oral proficiency over a 4-year period.
- Data that reflect the overall outcome of oral proficiency development in the major. These data will then be used to determine whether ACTFL standards, particularly the notion of "advanced-low", are being met and whether the department's expectations for learning outcomes are realistic for its Spanish majors.

Phase II: Assessment of Study Abroad (SA) Programs

The Department of Foreign Languages currently houses two SA programs in Spanish (one in Costa Rica and one in Spain) that are offered on a yearly basis each June for a four-week period. Both student and professor accounts of these programs strongly suggest that SA not only greatly benefits participants' awareness and understanding of the target language culture, but that it also increases their willingness to use the target language in authentic verbal exchanges. This, in turn, appears to positively impact the development of oral proficiency. Given the apparent benefits associated with a SA experience, Spanish majors are therefore encouraged to participate in SA as a means of increasing their language proficiency, particularly their oral production skills. However, since the creation of SA programs in the department, there has been no systematic pre- and post- program assessment in order to determine the actual impact of these programs on students' oral proficiency. As a result, during Phase II, each summer beginning June 2016, SA students' oral skills will be assessed before and after their SA experience using the same fluency and accuracy measure previously outlined above.

The objectives of the SA assessment will be to:

- 1) Determine the qualitative and quantitative impact of a short-term (4-week) study abroad program on students' oral proficiency development.
- 2) Determine the potential advantage of SA on overall oral proficiency outcomes by

comparing SA students with non-SA students who are matched on number of major hours completed.

3) Based on 1 and 2 above, determine whether SA should become an integral part of the curriculum for the BA in Spanish and how the current on-campus curriculum might further enhance learning outcomes during the SA experience.

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Department of History
















Online Assessment Tracking Database



Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

History BA/BS

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Goal	BA Graduate Preparation DRAFT  History BA graduates often seek to teach. In addition, all History BA graduates should possess certain analytical skills best evinced by the historical research process. As appropriate, the department will monitor student preparation for teaching certification and, in general, student mastery of history-thinking skills.
Objective (L)	History Teacher Certification Preparation DRAFT  To equip would-be public school history teachers with the skills to pass the Texas state examination for certification.
Indicator	TEXES Examination DRAFT  Teacher education students who major or minor in History will pass the TExES examination. Students who major in History and minor in secondary education must pass a state examination in History (or Social Studies) to be certified to teach in Texas. The School of Education informs each of these students of their obligation to take the "TExES" test. Generally a third of all History majors have this minor. Passage of the TExES by a score of 80% qualifies the graduate to teach in Texas schools. To qualify to take the TExES test, a student must score 80% on an official practice test. This test is furnished to the department by the Texas Education Agency. As of February 2015, both the History and Social Studies tests are new. The department administers the practice tests and furnishes scores to the School of Education, which in turn informs the students if they are qualified to take the final test.
Criterion	TExES Examination DRAFT  70% of all teacher education students who major or minor in History will pass the TEXES history examination with at least a score of 80%.
Finding	TExES Outcomes DRAFT  This academic year, 19 History students took the History 8-12, History 7-12, or the Social Studies test. 16 passed and 3 failed, for a pass rate of 84% (see attached).
Action	Teacher Test Preparation DRAFT  The Texas teacher entrance tests have undergone significant revision in the past several years. Our students have been surprised by their degree of difficulty and specificity. Last year, we altered our degree plan so as to prepare our students better for the greater emphasis on such things as world history. In spring 2016, the department plans to offer, for the first time in five years, HIST 3390. This course, "Conceptualizing History Education," is a primer on the test and teaching History in Texas. Priority in the fall will be on finding staff for this course.

Objective (L)	History Research And Thinking Skills DRAFT  History students will demonstrate specific history thinking and research skills through the writing of finished history research projects.
Indicator	Senior Level Student Learning Outcome Assessments DRAFT   During the course of the semester, students enrolled in 4000-level (senior level) courses will demonstrate mastery of historical scholarship and writing skills, as determined by a panel of history faculty. A panel of two faculty members will select at random a sample of at least one-quarter of the total of 4000-level final research papers and scrutinize them according to an assessment instrument. This is the instrument perfected in previous years by panels of 4000-level evaluators and can be modified every year by that year's panel.
Criterion	Research Paper Outcomes DRAFT  The rubric specifies four areas: Thesis; Evidence; Documentation; and Organization. The benchmark of success is an average score of 3.5/5 on each and a score of 14 overall.
Finding	4000-level Papers DRAFT   The two-professor panel examined 12 of 48 4000-level papers from the year 2014-15. The average score in each field was 3.8 and overall 15.2. The variation on the overall score ranged from 12 to 19. An example of a paper scored 17 is attached.
There are no actions for this objective.	
<hr/> Goal Skills In And Knowledge Of History DRAFT  B.A. History graduates will be prepared for successful careers and productive citizenship by gaining ample knowledge and skills in departmental courses.	

Objective (L)	Learning Outcomes DRAFT  To expose students, especially during their lower level classes, to various methods of teaching and intellectual stimuli all promoting key historical thinking skills. Students will have multiple pedagogical experiences designed to ascertain which forms produce best results.
Indicator	Self- And Instructor Evaluations In History Core Curriculum DRAFT  Students will have multiple pedagogical experiences designed to ascertain which forms produce best results. We will sample a group of students representing 5% of our total 1300-level students in a study. The faculty selected for this

exercise are those teaching multiple sections of 1301/2 of similar size.

In the Fall of 2014, two sections of HIST 1301 were employed in an experiment. Using one section as a control, a comparison was made to an identically populated related section. (This was repeated in Spring 2015 using HIST 1302.) The following methods were used in the test section:

1. Reduction of lecture in favor of interactive student research activity.
2. Frequent promotion of small-group and team co-operative learning.
3. Use of Jeopardy-style gaming to promote information rehearsal.

Changes in assessments were:

1. Shift from memorization performance to researched essay responses.
2. Increased emphasis in grading expectations on appropriate use of critical thinking and analysis skills in addition to content recitation.
3. Provision of a consistent critical thinking and writing analysis rubric in preparation for all exams.

The traditionally taught course consisted of lecture and power point delivery assessed through short-answer and multiple-choice testing as is commonly practiced in freshman sections.

Success would be indicated by enhanced assessment performance from students in experimental sections.

Criterion

Modulation In Instruction Comparison DRAFT 🔑

Testing outcomes will be compared. Success would be indicated by enhanced assessment performance from students in experimental sections. Because this is a new program objective, the specific amount of desired demonstrable performance is difficult to estimate.

Finding

Modulation In Instruction DRAFT 🔑

Several History sections were included in an experiment in instructional modulation. However, the instructions we gave to the instructor failed to specify that grades cannot be used for assessment purposes. The year's data is inoperative.

Action

Instruction Modulation DRAFT 🔑

We shall develop, early in the AY, assessment-appropriate evaluation instruments for the modulation-in-instruction sections and their comparisons, and apply this instruments in the spring and if possible the fall.

Objective (L)

Learning Outcomes: Tests DRAFT 🔑

Students will acquire relevant historical knowledge and the ability to put it to use.

Indicator

Pre-Post Testing In History Core Curriculum DRAFT 🔑

Students enrolled in lower-level US history courses, by far the largest enrollments in the department's curriculum, will demonstrate an enhancement in historical knowledge over the course of the term. The department, consulting Texas norms, has devised pre-and post-tests based for this purpose.

Criterion

Pre-Post Tests **DRAFT**

The department devised a new instrument (attached) of 25 questions, based on the norms the state of Texas has expressed for the introductory history courses mandated for every public university student. The department expects measurable improvement in the post-test results versus the pre-test, of at least 10%.

Finding

Pre/post Test Results **DRAFT**

A sample of 711 (12%) of about 5,800 HIST 1301/1302 students took the new test. The average pre score was 53.4%, the average post score 58.1, for a difference of 4.7 percentage points.

Action

Instrument Revision **DRAFT**

The new test of 25 questions was cut down from 50 so that a great deal of class time would not be allocated to this instrument. The 25 question test is not, perhaps, long enough to represent the range and differentials of student knowledge. This year, the department shall develop and apply a 30-question instrument.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

The first challenge is to monitor the new degree plan and how it alters the culture and performance of the undergraduate major. This will be undertaken by the Undergraduate Affairs committee.

Also, we must monitor the quality of undergraduate teaching by the best instruments we can find, paying particular attention to the experience of our severela EWCAT sections this year.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

The Undergraduate Affairs committee monitored the progress of the degree plan implementation. It obsewrved that the catalog is not updated, but Degree Works is. This will be rectified in the new catalog cycle.

The EWCAT classes were evaluated by sample with an instrument that must still be further refined, as in Learning Objectives above.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

1. We want to ensure that our History Teacher Certification outcomes are successful. We plan to hire a new instructor in this area (teaching HIST 3390) who will strive for improved testing outcomes and add to the assessment instruments at our disposal.

2. We shall revamp our assesment of the entry-level core courses beyond the pre- and post-tests, which remain valuable instruments. Cohorts will be the smaller classes; the pre- and post-tests remain for the large. We hope to see marked improvement in our service-course learning outcomes.

Department of Political Science











Online Assessment Tracking Database






Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Political Science BA/BS

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Goal	Students' Skills   Upon completion of the undergraduate program students will possess skills relevant to employment fields associated with the study of political science.
Objective (L)	Develop Students' Skills  Students will be able to analyze and present empirical data, explain key concepts of research design, and write coherent reports and research papers.
Indicator	POLS 3379  POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course. Faculty members who teach the course will receive and review 5 randomly selected papers POLS 3379 courses. Faculty members will review the papers using a rubric. Papers will be scored on a scale of 1 - 5 with 5 being the highest.
Criterion	Scoring Of POLS 3379 Assignments  We expect that 75% of the written assignments selected for committee review will receive a score of three or better.
Finding	Scoring Results  80% of the papers reviewed by the committee were scored at or above 3. However, faculty reviewing assignments felt that the nature of the written assignments scored varied a great deal, thus rendering assessment across POLS 3379 sections somewhat difficult. For example, one set of assignments emphasized key concepts of research design over analysis and presentation of empirical data. Faculty teaching 3379 agreed that the the content of POLS 3379 courses needs to be more consistent across sections. For example, similiar assignments, class activities, etc. This will help improve the assessment process and allow faculty to determine what set of skills students are lacking and how best to improve students' skills.
Action	Students' Skills  Faculty teaching POLS 3379 agreed to establish more course content consistency across 3379. This will allow faculty to engage in more thorough assessment of students' skills and provide faculty the information needed to determine how best to improve students' skills.

Goal	Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics  Build students' knowledge of government and politics, citizenship skills, and civic engagement
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Objective (L)	<p>Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics </p> <p>Throughout their enrollment, students will explore the following themes in a national and international context: the structure and operation of various forms of government, political philosophies, informal and formal political organizations and actors, public policies, and political behavior</p>
Indicator	<p>Grading Rubric For Upper Division Courses  </p> <p>Each field of study will be assigned a team of 2 faculty members who have expertise in the particular field. Each semester the individual teams will receive and review 5 randomly selected papers from an upper division course in their respective fields. Faculty members from each subfield will evaluate the papers using the attached rubric. The papers will be scored on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.</p>
Criterion	<p>Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics </p> <p>We expect that at least 75% of the essays will score a 3 or above. This will represent an increase of over 5% from the previous year.</p>
Finding	<p>Evaluation Of Students' Knowledge </p> <p>Although the procedures used to assess student knowledge of government and politics produced results in the past, faculty support for the procedures has never been strong (i.e., faculty abide by the procedures but question the effectiveness of the results). This year faculty lack of support for assessment procedures resulted in explicit discussions (both in department meetings and one on one faculty member meetings with chair) about the need to change the existing assessment procedures. One area of concern for faculty, obtaining and sharing randomly selected papers from courses, proved problematic in AY 2014/2015. year. Evaluation of students' knowledge is best done using an assignment given at the end of the course. However, the current assessment procedures require sharing written papers and not all faculty relied on written papers for final assignments. Thus, assessment data for AY 2014/2015 was not obtained.</p> <p>Although faculty objected to current assessment procedures, they expressed a willingness to adopt new procedures. These new procedures will be adopted and implemented in fall 2015.</p>

There are no actions for this objective.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

Goal 1: Develop Concrete Plans for Improving Students' Knowledge and Skills: The current method is useful for evaluating students' knowledge and skills. However, the method has failed

to result in concrete actions designed to address weaknesses in students' knowledge and skills. In AY 2014 - 2015 the following actions will be taken to resolve the problem:

1. All faculty have consistently agreed that students' writing and data analysis skills need improvement. POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course that addresses writing and data analysis skills. However, students tend to take the course during their last semester in the program. The department will begin taking steps to require that all majors take POLS 3379 as one of their first upper division courses.
2. Officials from the Professional and Academic Center for Excellence (PACE) will be asked to give a presentation to faculty addressing best practices for improving students' writing skills.
3. Faculty will be encouraged to make better use of SHSU resources, such as the Writing Center.

Goal 2: Students Knowledge of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility: One goal of the department's five year strategic plan is to create a climate that encourages civic engagement. In F14 faculty teaching American Government and Texas Government courses as well as all ACE courses will be asked to develop an agreed upon definition of civic engagement, introduce learning material into their courses related to civic engagement, and develop and implement a tool for measuring students' knowledge of civic engagement.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

ASSESSING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Faculty teaching American Government and Texas Government developed pre/post tests as assessment instruments.

POLS 3379

It was not logistically possible to require students to take POLS 3379 during their second year as the department would have to offer enough 3379 sections to fit into students' different course schedules (i.e., days and hours). A review of past enrollment in 3379 suggested that additional sections would encounter low enrollment problems.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

ASSESSING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Last year the department revised its six core hours, specifically the department moved from offering American/Texas Government and Topics in Public Policy to American Government and Texas Government. Pre/post tests were designed by faculty to assess students' knowledge of course material as well as students' knowledge of civic engagement. In fall 2015 students enrolled in American Government courses will complete pre/post tests and in spring 2016 students enrolled in Texas Government courses will complete pre/post tests. The department agreed to allow the SHSU Planning and Assessment Office to score the tests as the office has hardware and software that will allow for the test data to be mined in ways helpful to the department and the assessment office.

ASSESSING POLS MAJORS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The POLS degree plan does not have a capstone course. However, POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course, its assignments require students to demonstrate the broad skills and knowledge associated with the discipline of political science, and most students take the course in their senior year. For these reasons, POLS 3379 is the best course to use for assessment purposes. POLS 3379 will become the primary vehicle for assessing POLS Majors' knowledge and skills. Faculty teaching 3379 agreed upon a set of pedagogical approaches to be used by all faculty teaching 3379 beginning fall 2015. Two faculty members teaching 3379 received SHSU assessment mini-grants that will help with the implementation of the new pedagogical approaches.









Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Political Science MA

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Goal	Written Comprehensive Exams  Students will gain knowledge and skills that are associated with advanced degrees in political science.
Objective (L)	Written Comprehensive Exams  Upon completion of the MA in Political Science program, students will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the key features of methodology. 2. Evaluate political theories and discuss the significant research in one of the program's subject areas: American government, public administration, comparative politics, or international relations.
Indicator	Successful Completion Of Written Comprehensive Exams   We utilize written comprehensive exams as a tool for measuring graduate students' knowledge and skills. Prior to graduation, students complete two written comprehensive exams in areas relevant to their coursework. Exam questions are written by faculty with expertise in the students' areas of study and the questions are based on the comprehensive exam reading lists and the content of the overview courses (see department level goal of revise written comprehensive exam process for more information on the reading lists and overview courses). Students' exams are graded by at least two faculty members (more when possible) who have expertise in the areas of study pursued by students. Exams are assigned one of the following scores: high pass, pass, and no pass. If the two faculty members issue conflicting scores (e.g., pass and no pass), a third faculty member will be asked to score the exams and issue a final ruling.
Criterion	Written Comprehensive Exams  We expect that at least 80% of our students will pass their exams on the first attempt and that 100% of the students who have to take the exam a second time will pass.
Finding	Comprehensive Exam Results  The new comprehensive exam format consist of two sections. Five students took exams in spring and summer 2015. On the first round of exams two out of five students received high passes on the first and second sections, two out of five students received passes on the first section and fails on the second section, and one student received fails on both sections. All three students who took sections of the exam a second time passed. On section one of the exam, four out of five students passed the exam with two receiving high passes. Thus, we were pleased with students performance on the first section of the exams. Three out of five students failed the second

section of the exam, but passed the second section on their second attempt. Although the three students passed on the second section on their second attempt, the rate of passes on the second section of the exam needs to improve.

Action**Written Comprehensive Exams** 🔑

The MA in Political Science will move completely online in fall 2016. The move will require faculty to re-evaluate the program curriculum and thus the content and delivery mode of the comprehensive exams. The MA director and faculty will use this coming year to make the necessary changes in the curriculum and comprehensive exams.

Goal**Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills** 🔑

Students will learn to think critically and reflectively.

Objective (L)**Changing The Written Comprehensive Exam Process** 🔑

MA faculty wish to design a comprehensive exam process that will require students to rely more on informed reflection and less on memorization when preparing for the exams. The written comprehensive exam questions will be rewritten to require students to demonstrate reflective and critical thought.

Indicator**Exam Process Revisions** 🔑

The MA director, in consultation with faculty from the discipline's subfields, will develop a database of exam questions designed to require students to demonstrate critical thought.

Criterion**Exam Process Revisions** 🔑







The new comprehensive exam questions will be developed in the fall of 2014 and implemented in the spring of 2015. We believe the new questions will decrease the amount of memorization based exam answers and increase the amount of critical thinking based exam answers.

Finding**Number Of High Passes Awarded** 🔑

We were pleased to see two students receive high passes on their first attempts on the first section of the exam.

Action**Critical Thinking Skills** 🔑

The MA in Political Science will move completely online in fall 2016. The move will require faculty to re-evaluate the program curriculum and thus the content and delivery mode of the comprehensive exams. The MA director and faculty will use this coming year to make the necessary changes in the curriculum and comprehensive exams.

Goal	Graduate Student Writing Skills  Graduate students will develop strong writing skills
Objective (L)	Improving Graduate Student Writing Skills  The writing skills of students will improve during their first year in the program.
Indicator	Identifying Students With Weak Writing Skills  At the beginning of each semester the MA director will send graduate faculty the names of all students new to the program. Faculty will alert the director to any new student whose first written assignment indicates weak writing skills. Two faculty members will assess the sample and confirm the weaknesses.
Criterion	Improved Writing Skills  We believe the writing skills of students who are referred to the Writing Center will improve. Two or more faculty who cited the weak student evaluate a second writing after the student has received training at the SHSU Writing Center. All referred students must show demonstrated improvement to the satisfaction of the assessing faculty.
Finding	Results Of Efforts To Improve Writing Skills  Overall, MA faculty noticed a difference in the quality of some students' application writing samples (all prospective students must submit a writing sample) and written work submitted in classes. Class written assignments were weaker than application writing samples. Faculty hypothesized the submitted writing samples for the application process represented highly polished texts possibly achieved with coaching. The first paper intervention process was designed to identify such instances and rapidly bring students to consistent improved writing performance. During the AY 2014/2015 one student was identified as in need of improvement. The student worked with Writing Center. Subsequently, two faculty members confirmed writing improved to the acceptable graduate performance level. The student also raised their overall GPA significantly between the alert to poor writing and the sessions with the Writing Center.
Action	Writing Skills  The MA in Political Science will move completely online in fall 2016. The pool of prospective students for the online degree include full time professionals in the fields of education, government, and non-profits. We expect that this pool of prospective students will possess strong writing skills. Thus, the need to monitor incoming students' writing may fade as new students enter the program. If this is not the case, we will design a strategy appropriate for improving the writing skills of students who are taking courses online rather than face-to-face.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

In fall of 2014 a new chair was appointed and the department adopted a five year strategic plan. As a result of these changes, the department's plan for continuous improvement has changed.

Goal 1: Expand Assessment of Student Learning and Department Performance:

(1) Develop and administer entrance and exit surveys that are designed to provide information about student learning and economic impact of the degree programs. Possible survey questions might include: How has the program contributed to your knowledge of the field? Do you believe the program improved your ability to perform your professional duties? Did the program contribute to your ability to obtain a promotion, salary increase, etc.?

Goal 2: Improve the Comprehensive Exam Process:

(1) Revise the comprehensive exam process so as to offer graduate students more preparation for the exams. The MA director, in consultation with faculty from the disciplines/subfields, will develop a database of exam questions and set an agreed upon schedule for when students begin preparing for exam and when exams are administered.

Goal 3: Improve Graduate Student Writing Skills and Implement an Early Warning System for Students Who are at Risk

(1) At the beginning of each semester the MA director will send all graduate faculty the names of students new to the program. Faculty will be asked to alert the director to any new student whose first written assignment indicates weak writing skills. Students with weak writing skills will be referred to the Writing Center.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

Changes to the written comprehensive exams were implemented and efforts to address graduate students' writing skills were made.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

This coming year the department will begin taking the steps necessary to move the MA online. The move towards an online program will likely affect the type of students we recruit (i.e., traditional students versus full time professionals), the reasons the students are pursuing the degree (e.g., wanting to use a MA as a means of getting into doctoral programs versus using a MA as a means of furthering an existing professional career), etc. The director and MA Committee will use this coming year to rethink key aspects of the program, such as: student learning objectives and program curriculum, comprehensive exam processes that are conducive to an online program, measurement tools that can be used to measure students' skill and knowledge before entering the program and upon graduating from the program, etc.

**Department of
Psychology
and
Philosophy**



Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Philosophy BA

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Goal	Improving Critical Thinking And Analytic Reasoning 1 🔑 Students completing the critical thinking and logic courses in our curriculum will develop a broad-based skills in critical thinking and formal logic.
Objective (L)	Demonstrate Critical Thinking Skills 🔑 Critical thinking skills are an essential component of philosophical work. Students will be able to analyze arguments and draw conclusions from available information.
Indicator	Response Scores On TACTS 🔑 🔑 All students who take PHIL 2303 will be tested on their critical thinking skills. All faculty who teach PHIL 2303 will administer the Texas Assessment of Critical Thinking Skill (TACTS)s, an externally validated test of critical thinking skills, in a pre-test/post-test format. The TACTS is a broad-based assessment of critical thinking skills that goes beyond the current scope of PHIL 2303. This will allow the faculty to determine areas that may be added to our current curriculum in the future. In addition, it allows for substantial flexibility in what is taught, thereby ensuring academic freedom for instructors to design individual sections around their own expertise and interests. A copy of the current TACTS is attached. A copy of the credited responses is attached. The Philosophy Program Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that all faculty who teach PHIL 2303 effectively administer the pre- and post-tests in every section of their course. Dr. Sanford will be responsible for gathering pre- and post-test data from the faculty members who teach PHIL 2303.
Criterion	Statistically Significant Improvement From The TACTS Pre-test To The TACTS Post-test. 🔑 A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. The philosophy program expects to see a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2303) 🔑 🔑 A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 331 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached. One professor did not submit data for any sections from 2014-2015.
Criterion	Improvement In Calculating Probabilities 🔑 The data from the team that developed the TACTS show that a knowledge gap exists with respect to decision making when an outcome depends upon the conjunction of two probabilistic events. Their data show that less than 20% of those tested correctly answered the following question: "George is waiting for two of his customers, Fuzzy Logic Computers, Inc.

and Stalking Horse Designs, to pay their bills. If either of them pays before the end of the month, then George can pay his supplier. But if neither of them pays, then George will have to take out a bank loan. George estimates that the chance that Fuzzy Logic will pay in time is 70% and the chance Stalking Horse Designs will pay in time is 60%. Assuming that his estimates are correct and that the two events are independent, what is the chance that George will have to take out a bank loan? (a) 12% (b) 40% (c) 65% (d) 42% (e) 88%" 2012-2013 will be the fourth year that the Philosophy Program will expect all faculty to evaluate this type of reasoning as part of the critical thinking course. We will consider this effort successful if there is at least a 75% improvement on this type of question from the pre-test to the post-test.

Finding

Improvement In Calculating Probabilities

The sample is limited to only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test. For students whose pre-test score was reported, 59 of 331 (17.8%) correctly answered the question.

On the post-test, 158 of 331 (47.7%) correctly answered the question. This represents a 168% improvement in the percentage of students who successfully answered the probability questions from the pre-test to the post-test. This is better than the 134.8% improvement seen in 2013-2014, the 127.0% improvement seen in 2012-2013 and the 126.2% improvement seen in 2011-2012. Recent results compare favorably to the 85.6% improvement seen in 2009-2010 and 106.5% seen in 2010-2011. Yet, remains a challenge to improve even further. The sample is limited to only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test. Additionally, one professor did not submit data for any sections from 2014-2015.

Action










Probabilities Calculation, New Instrument, And Data Completeness

The Program will continue to share teaching strategies among all faculty teaching PHIL 2303 with an eye toward further improvement in student outcomes with respect to calculating probabilities.

Professors Sanford and Wright are using an assessment grant from SHSU's Office of Planning and Assessment in an effort to develop a new instrument for assessing student critical thinking skills. The research is looking at the metacognitive outcomes of critical thinking instruction. The instrument should be available for use starting Fall 2015. We expect to report the results of this work during the 2015-2016 academic year.

The professor who did not provide data for the PHIL 2303 sections from 2014-2015 is no longer employed at SHSU. In an effort to ensure data completeness for 2015-2016, the SACS Coordinator has meet with each person scheduled to teach PHIL 2303 during 2015-2016. Data completeness is scheduled to be an agenda item for each Program meeting

during Summer 2015. Additionally, the SACS coordinator will send a reminder email to all faculty prior to the start of each semester and at the end of each semester. Finally, as a means of catching issues early, the SACS Coordinator will request that all data from Fall 2015 be submitted before Spring 2016 classes start.

Goal	Understanding Of General Philosophical Concepts 1  Ensuring that students acquire a general understanding of basic philosophical concepts.
Objective (L)	Demonstrate Basic Understanding Of Core Concepts In Philosophy  As students progress through the Philosophy BA, they will acquire a basic understanding of metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory. This basic information, provided by our introductory courses serves as the foundation for student success in upper-division courses.
Indicator	Statistically Significant Improvement Of Student Scores From Pre-test To Post-test (2361/2603)   All students in PHIL 2361 and PHIL 2603 will be tested on their knowledge of basic concepts in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory using a locally standardized pre-test and post-test for each course. Following a review of best practices for the teaching of these courses, a group of Program faculty chose the questions for the assessment. The questions asked cover the range of concepts that are taught in peer departments. Instruction on these concepts promotes a basic competence in metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory. The attached documents provide the assessment instruments for PHIL 2361 and PHIL 2603 as well as the credited responses for each.
Criterion	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2361/2603)  A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2361)   A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 212 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached. One professor did not submit data for his sections of PHIL 2361.
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From The Pre-test To The Post-test (2306)   A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 455 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.

Indicator	<p>Improved Student Knowledge Of Kant 🔑</p> <p>Students will demonstrate increased understanding of Immanuel Kant's philosophy. Questions 10 and 12 on the pre-test and post-test were chosen to measure our Program faculty's ability to improve this targeted area.</p>
Criterion	<p>Improvement At Identifying Major Themes Of Kantian Philosophy 🔑</p> <p>After comparing students' pre-test and post-test performance on questions 10 and 12 of those tests, the Program will consider this effort successful if the data indicate at least a 75% improvement in student performance on each question. Anything less will be taken as an indication that the Program must improve its performance in this area. Regardless of performance, the 2012-2013 data will serve as a baseline for measuring future performance.</p>
Finding	<p>Improvement At Identifying Major Themes Of Kantian Philosophy 🔑</p> <p>24.5% of students chose the correct answer for question 10 on the pre-test. This improved to 53.5% on the post-test. This represented a 118.4% improvement, which compares favorably to the 85.3% improvement attained during 2012-2013. 28.0% of students chose the correct answer for question 12 on the pre-test. This improved to 58.4% on the post-test. This represented an 108.6% improvement, which compares favorably to the 86.7% improvement attained during 2012-2013.</p>
Indicator	<p>Improved Student Knowledge Of The Death Penalty Debate 🔑</p> <p>Students will demonstrate increased understanding of arguments related to the death penalty. Questions 19 and 20 on the pre-test and post-test were chosen to measure our Program faculty's ability to improve this targeted area.</p>
Criterion	<p>Improvement At Identifying Arguments Related To The Death Penalty 🔑</p> <p>After comparing students' pre-test and post-test performance on questions 19 and 20 of those tests, the Program will consider this effort successful if the data indicate at least a 75% improvement in student performance on each question. Anything less will be taken as an indication that the Program must improve its performance in this area. Regardless of performance, the 2012-2013 data will serve as a baseline for measuring future performance.</p>
Finding	<p>Improvement At Identifying Arguments Related To The Death Penalty 🔑</p> <p>20.7% of students chose the correct answer for question 19 on the pre-test. This improved to 42.3% on the post-test. This represented an</p>

104.3% improvement, which compares favorably to the 92% improvement achieved during 2012-2013. Likewise, 25.5% of students chose the correct answer for question 20 on the pre-test. This improved to 57.2% on the post-test. This represented an 124.3% improvement, which compares favorably to the 91.2% improvement achieved during 2012-2013.

Action**Assessment Of Students' Understanding Of General Philosophical Concepts** 🔑

The Program is undertaking a review of the instruments used to assess PHIL 2306 and PHIL 2361. These efforts will be undertaken by faculty members who teach these courses in consultation with the Program Coordinator. The processes may revise the instruments or retain them in their present form based on the faculty members' findings regarding the fit between assessment instruments, course content, and curricular goals.

Objective (L)**Demonstrate Advanced Understanding Of History Of Philosophy** 🔑

Well-educated philosophy students will demonstrate appreciation for the arguments and positions of earlier thinkers. Because so much of what is written in philosophy is a reaction to the metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions of earlier thinking, it is the core of well-rounded philosophical education.

Indicator**Pre-test Post-test Response Scores On Locally-Standardized Instruments (3364/3365)** 🔑









All students in PHL 3364 and PHL 3365 will be tested on their knowledge of general concepts in the history of philosophy. All faculty who teach these courses will administer a pre-test and post-test to all students. All Philosophy BA students are required to take PHL 364 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy) and PHL 365 (Modern Philosophy). Together, these courses provide students with upper-level instruction covering the history of metaphysics and epistemology. Following a review of best practices for the teaching of these courses, a group of Program faculty chose the questions for the assessment. The questions cover the range of concepts that are taught in peer departments. Instruction on these concepts promotes a well-rounded understanding of the history of philosophy.

Criterion**PHL 3365 Assessment** 🔑

A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.

Finding**Statistically Significant Improvement From Pre-Test To Post-Test** 🔑

A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 17 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.

Criterion	PHL 3364 Assessment  A paired two-sample t-test will be performed on the scores of all students who take the pre-test and the post-test. Students in both courses will demonstrate a statistically significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test.
Finding	Statistically Significant Improvement From Pre-Test To Post-Test (3364)   A paired two-sample t-test on our sample of 13 student scores, covering only those students who took both the pre-test and post-test, demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their scores. Data and basic analysis are attached.
Action	Ongoing Assessment Of Students' Understanding Of Advanced Philosophical Concepts  The Program will continue to gather data on student outcomes in PHIL 3364/3365 in an effort to obtain a dataset that is large enough to facilitate analyses capable of shedding light on specific trends within these courses.
Goal	Revision Of PHIL 3362 And Development Of A New Assessment Tool  In Fall 2013, PHIL 3362 will be taught by two new faculty members who have been asked to revise both the content of the course and the assessment instrument. The Program's goal is to establish a new standard for teaching PHIL 3362.
Objective (P)	Creation Of Revised On-line And In-person PHIL 3362 Courses  The Program plans to implement revised versions of PHIL 3362 in on-line and in-person formats that take advantage of the talents of our new faculty for 2013-2014.
KPI Performance Indicator	Delivery Of On-line And In-person PHIL 3362 Sections  The Program will meet this objective if it is able to offer students revised versions of PHIL 3362 in on-line and in-person formats.
Result	Successfully Offered On-line And In-person Versions Of Contemporary Logic  The course number for PHIL 3362 was changed to PHIL 2352 mid-year. The Philosophy Program successfully offered on-line and in-person sections of PHIL 2352, the new course number for Contemporary Logic that was created in order to allow students with disabilities an option to take the course as a substitution in the Core Curriculum.

**KPI
Performance
Indicator****Development Of A New Assessment Tool For PHIL
3362** 

Upon completion of their course revisions, Dr. Diaz and Dr. Brommage, who will be teaching PHIL 3362 for the foreseeable future, are tasked with development an appropriate assessment technique for PHIL 3362. We will consider these objectives successful when the assessment protocol has been finalized.

Result**Completion Of New Assessment Instrument For
Contemporary Logic**  

The course number for PHIL 3362 was changed to PHIL 2352 mid-year.

Professors Brommage and Wright created an assessment instrument for PHIL 2352. Dr. Wright was hired after Dr. Diaz announced her departure. The attached document shows sample questions related to each student learning outcome.

Action**Assessment Of Contemporary Logic Sections** 

During 2015-2016, all sections of PHIL 2352 will be assessed using the instrument created during the 2014-2015 cycle.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

The Program will gather data indicating student performance on individual questions in PHIL 3364/3365 as a means of identifying areas for improving both those courses and the student preparation provided for those courses by PHIL 2306/2361.

The Program will begin gathering data on student outcomes in PHIL 3362 as a means of continuing our efforts to assess and improve student learning related to logic and critical thinking.

The Program will begin investigating the need for establishing expected learning outcomes for PHIL 2303, 3364, and 3365 that go beyond statistically significant improvement from pre-test to post-test.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

The Program gathered data on both PHIL 3364 and PHIL 3365; however, the overall dataset remains too small to draw specific conclusions about student outcomes. The Program will continue to collect data on these courses in an effort to expand the dataset.

The Program did not gather data in PHIL 2352 (formerly PHIL 3362). This resulted because of a disruption in our faculty caused by Dr. Diaz's departure. The Program opted to delay finalizing the new assessment instrument until after we knew who would be on faculty for 2015-2016, and how this might affect the course revision that was under way. With the successfully hiring of Dr. Wright, the instrument was finalized, and it will be administered in all sections of PHIL 2352 starting Fall 2015.

The Program did not establish expected learning outcomes beyond statistically significant improvements from pre-test to post-test for PHIL 2303, 3364, and 3365. The dataset for PHIL 3364 and PHIL 3365 remains insufficient for robust analysis. The Program is in the process of

developing an assessment instrument for metacognitive improvement in PHIL 2303 as part of an assessment grant from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment. We expect to continue these efforts and produce a viable strategy for assessing efforts to improve metacognitive judgement in PHIL 2303.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

The Program will finalize an instrument for assessing metacognitive judgement in PHIL 2303.

The Program will continue gathering data on student outcomes in PHIL 3364 and 3365 in an effort to identify specific trends in those courses.

The Program will complete its review of the curricular goals and assessment instruments for PHIL 2306 and PHIL 2361.

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Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Psychology BS

Goal	Core Concepts In Psychology 🔑 The Bachelor of Science Program in Psychology will provided students with a broad base of essential knowledge in the various subfields of psychology.																											
Objective (L)	Students Demonstrate Broad Knowledge Base 🔑 Students who complete the Bachelor of Science Program in Psychology will demonstrate knowledge of core concepts in the various sub-disciplines of Psychology.																											
Indicator	PSY 1301 Exit Examination 🔑 Students' knowledge of the diverse areas within the field of psychology will be assessed using a common comprehensive final exam in PSY 1301 - Introduction to Psychology																											
Criterion	70% Of Students Will Pass Specific Areas Of Exit Exam 🔑 Criterion for success is to have 70% of the students respond successfully to questions in the following areas: Science of Psychology; Research Design; Physiological; Learning; Sensation/Perception; Developmental; Abnormal; Memory/Cognition; Personality; and Social Psychology. Our operational definition of "successfully" is a minimum of 70% correct on each of the subfields. A copy of the instrument is attached to this indicator.																											
Finding	Broad-based Knowledge 🔑 In the fall 2014 semester, 649 students took the common Introductory Psychology final exam. The overall percentage of correct scores was 66%. In the spring 2015 semester we had a sample of 635 students taking the common final with an overall percentage of correct scores of 65.0. Data from the Exit Exam for Introductory Psychology broken down between semesters showed that the following percentage of correct answers for specific areas in psychology. Note that the scores for fall 2013 and spring 2014 are listed in parentheses. Asterisks (*) signify positive trends in our data while negatives (-) indicate negative trends in the data. <table><tr><td></td><td>Fall 2014</td><td>Spring</td></tr><tr><td>2015</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Psychology science</td><td>67% (69)</td><td>as a</td></tr><tr><td>Research Design</td><td>68% (72)-</td><td>72%</td></tr><tr><td>Physiological Psychology</td><td>61%</td><td>(53)</td></tr><tr><td>* Learning</td><td>60% (57)*</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>* Sensation/Perception</td><td>72% (68)*</td><td>(69)</td></tr><tr><td>* Cognition/Memory</td><td>71%</td><td>(61)</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>66% (61)*</td><td>62%</td></tr></table>		Fall 2014	Spring	2015			Psychology science	67% (69)	as a	Research Design	68% (72)-	72%	Physiological Psychology	61%	(53)	* Learning	60% (57)*		* Sensation/Perception	72% (68)*	(69)	* Cognition/Memory	71%	(61)		66% (61)*	62%
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	66% (61)*	62%																										

(62)	61% (62)	
Personality		61%
(60)	62% (53)*	
Social	69%	(75)
-	67% (73)-	
Developmental		61%
(62)	62% (61)	
Abnormal		66%
(68)	65% (65)	

Action**Broad-based Knowledge** 

For the fall 2014 semester, the results were encouraging. The overall score for the Exit Exam was 1.4 points higher than the previous fall. There were some slight (1-2 point) declines in Psychology as a science, Research Design, Developmental and Abnormal, but there were large (3+) increases in Physiological Psychology, Learning, and Sensation/Perception, areas that were particularly low over the past several years.

For the spring 2015 semester, the results were similar with increases in Psychology as a Science, Physiological Psychology, Sensation/Perception and Personality. The results were below expectations, though, as we failed to reach criterion on several of the different categories. The reason expectations were high was that during the course of the semester the chair checked for progress on the different areas and found them to be quite encouraging, only to have a decreased during the exit exam. Reasons for these discrepancies may include: at the time the exit exam is taken the students are involved in comprehensive exams for several other courses; there is typically a long delay between presentation of the primary materials for the course and the exit exam; the exit exam includes materials given over a 15-week semester and the students may not have time to concentrate as well as they should on different aspects of the course.

We are better than we were a year ago but we are not near reaching our goals. One issue that did come up during the first semester was that the publishing company only provided about 60% of the books that were needed. Thus, a large portion of the classes was without books for the first 5 weeks of the semester. We then changed texts for the spring semester and the instructors had to get used to using a slightly altered format. This may have had an effect and we will see in the fall. One other issue is that the websites for the previous text required the students to pay an amount for access while the new text supplied a free web site.

Specific actions will include having all of our TAs attend the Teaching Conference in August 2015. In addition, we have continued to review individual questions in each section and, in some cases, change the wording or replace the questions to make them more understandable. This, perhaps, had a slight effect in raising performance and we will continue to do this this upcoming year to see if this strategy can have a lasting impact. Another factor is that the students seemed to do well with the sub-tests during the semester and didn't do as well during the exit exam. Therefore, one of the issues may be of retention of materials over the course of

the semester. The TAs will be instructed to review all of the areas on the exit exam during the final week of class and the students will be given a list of terms from which to re-familiarize themselves for the exit exam.

As always, the department chair will meet with the TAs and stress to them the need to present the material in ways that are germane to the students and are linked with experiences that a typical young person may have encountered, e.g., rather than using "nonsense" syllables in the mnemonic section of memory, using the learning and retention of grocery lists or names of others in the class or even materials from which to be tested.

Goal	Generate, Apply And Communicate Scientific Findings 🔑 The Bachelor of Science program in Psychology will provide students with opportunities to apply and communicate the scientific findings of their discipline.
Objective (L)	Generate, Design, Apply And Communicate Scientific Knowledge 🔑 Students who complete the Bachelor of Science Program in Psychology will be able to generate, design and apply the results of scientific investigations and communicate their implications.
Indicator	PSYC 3101 (Statistics Lab) Assignments 🔑 🔑 The ability of students to conduct and understand research as well as apply and communicate results is assessed by means of a series of faculty-developed assignments for Psychology 3101 (Statistics Lab). The instruments requires students to: 1) choose research designs, compute statistics, and interpret outcomes. (Objectives 1 and 2); and interpreting results of scientific data, making decisions using the results based upon statistical probabilities, and making recommendations for follow-up work, either in the scientific or social environment. (Objectives 3 and 4). We're basically asking what do these data mean and why are they important? Copies of the Assignments are attached.
Criterion	Objectives 1 And 2 🔑 Criterion for Objectives 1 and 2, 80% of psychology majors will receive a score that is deemed "acceptable" score (70% or higher) according to faculty-developed departmental rubric.
Finding	70% Minimum--Objectives 1 And 2 🔑 In the fall 2014 semester, 79% of the students attained the aforementioned acceptable score on Objectives 1 and 2 and 66% scored at the 80% and above level. In the spring 2015 semester, 85%attained an acceptable score on Objectives 1 and 2 while 72% scored at least an 80% on Objectives 1 and 2. Overall, for Objectives 1 and 2, 82% of the students scored at the acceptable level with 69% scoring at the 80% level.

Criterion**Objectives 3 And 4** 

For Objectives 3 and 4, 80% of psychology majors will receive a score that is at least acceptable (70% or above), according to departmental rubric.

Finding**70% Minimum--Objectives 3 And 4** 

In the fall 2014 semester, 72% of the students reached the acceptable criterion while 64% attained at least the 80% level on Objectives 3 and 4. In the spring 2015 semester, 85% of the students reached criterion and 59% reached the 80% level.

Overall, for the 2014-2015 academic year, 79% of the students performed at an acceptable level and 61% performed at an 80% or above level.

Action**Generate And Communicate Scientific Findings** 

Overall, the data look reasonably good given that we reached criterion for Objectives 1 and 2 and almost reached criterion for Objectives 3 and 4. The scores in the spring seemed to be much better than in the fall semester and that may be a function of the instructor as the fall 2014 semester was his first teaching this particular class. We shall continue to teach the information as was done in the spring 2015 semester but will also include a new Exit Exam for the Psychology 3101 lab sections. This will incorporate all of the information that was presented during the course of each semester and will add as a check for retention of materials over the course of that semester.

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Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

Broad-based knowledge:

We seem to be maintaining where we were in the previous academic year which is unsettling. The numbers for the Social Psychology section are improved from previous years as are the numbers for Research Design. The problems remain in the Physiological Psychology section and the Personality section.

For those areas not reaching criterion, the coordinator for the Introductory sections will:

1. send out very specific guidelines for what their students should take away from the course;
2. examine the performances for those areas on each pertinent exam during the course of the semester;
3. the TAs will be instructed to make the materials for these areas more germane to student interest;
4. the instructors will be encouraged to utilize more on-line materials that the students can access.

Assessments will be ongoing and will consist of comparing performance on each area exam with performance on past and current final exams.

In addition, it is the goal that the 70% criterion that is striven for on the final exam be in place for all the areas on the area exams.

This should allow us to identify problems as the semester goes along.

Generating and Communicating Scientific Knowledge: The chair will meet with the new instructor for the statistics course and lab and impress upon him the need to make the material more understandable to the students. He also will review the current types of embedded questions that are asked and attempt to update those with specific, real-life examples. Specific points will be to consistently, throughout the semester, assess how students generate and communicate scientific knowledge.

For both areas:

1. questions will be embedded in each exam, and addressed on each laboratory exercise, to assess the students' abilities to determine and explain statistical findings and effects;
2. the 80% criterion will continue to be used;
3. if criteria is not met at each level of assessment further remedial tasks will be given;
4. assignments including design selection (between vs. within, single factor vs. factorial, etc.) will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% criterion being used to determine effectiveness;
5. assignments with hands-on SPSS/Excel based calculations will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% criterion being used to determine effectiveness;
6. hypothesis formation, testing, and interpretation will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% criterion being used to determine effectiveness;
7. students will be tasked on three separate research papers to analyze mock data and report decisions in APA-style results and Discussion sections. An 80% criterion will be used to determine effectiveness of the course to instill the ability to generate and communicate scientific data.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

Broad-based knowledge:

We seem to be maintaining where we were in the previous academic year which is unsettling. The numbers for the Social Psychology section are improved from previous years as are the numbers for Research Design. The problems remain in the Physiological Psychology section and the Personality section.

For those areas not reaching criterion, the coordinator for the Introductory sections will:

1. send out very specific guidelines for what their students should take away from the course—this was done and seem to have had a positive effect on semester exams and on the comprehensive final;
2. examine the performances for those areas on each pertinent exam during the course of the semester—interestingly, the performance on unit exams was fairly good with scores in the mid 70s to the mid 80s. There is some issue as to why the students didn't perform as well on the comprehensive final exam but that could be explained because of the time lapse between when the materials were presented and the final exam or, perhaps, students did not review as well as they should have due to the weight of other exams. Regardless, the students did do better during the semester and perhaps we should consider those scores as well.;
3. the TAs will be instructed to make the materials for these areas more germane to student interest---the TAs were very open to this suggestion and it probably had an effect on their IDEA scores;
4. the instructors will be encouraged to utilize more on-line materials that the students can access.

Assessments will be ongoing and will consist of comparing performance on each area exam with performance on past and current final exams—See Number 2 above.;

In addition, it is the goal that the 70% criterion that is striven for on the final exam be in place for all the areas on the area exams. This should allow us to identify problems as the semester goes along.—This seems to have worked but needs to be viewed more consistently.

Generating and Communicating Scientific Knowledge: The chair will meet with the new instructor for the statistics course and lab and impress upon him the need to make the material more understandable to the students. He also will review the current types of embedded questions that are asked and attempt to update those with specific, real-life examples.

Specific points will be to consistently, throughout the semester, assess how students generate and communicate scientific knowledge.

For both areas:

1. questions will be embedded in each exam, and addressed on each laboratory exercise, to assess the students' abilities to determine and explain statistical findings and effects;
 2. the 80% of students successfully mastering the materials criterion will continue to be used--
- Overall, the criterion was met on one indicator and almost met on the other. What would be better, though, would be to have met criteria for both indicators for each semester and not just

over the entire year. Spring was better than the fall and this may have been due to the new instructor being more used to dealing with our students. We predict that the success for the spring 2015 semester will roll over into the fall 2015 semester.

3. if criteria is not met at each level of assessment further remedial tasks will be given--it appears that students did better as the semester progressed, indicating a positive learning curve and that earlier assignments had a positive effect on later assignments. Also, it may be presumed that later assignments reinforced the earlier assignments.

4. assignments including design selection (between vs. within, single factor vs. factorial, etc.) will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% of successful mastery of the materials criterion being used to determine effectiveness--this appears to have worked and we may raise our definition of mastery to 75% and not 70%;

5. assignments with hands-on SPSS/Excel based calculations will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% criterion being used to determine effectiveness--this also seems to have worked;

6. hypothesis formation, testing, and interpretation will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% of students mastering the material being used to determine effectiveness--the laboratory assignments required these factors and we shall continue to use them;

7. students will be tasked on three separate research papers to analyze mock data and report decisions in APA-style results and Discussion sections. An 80% criterion will be used to determine effectiveness of the course to instill the ability to generate and communicate scientific data--we used two APA-formatted papers during the course of the semester and student scored between 74% and 82% on Objectives 1 and 2 and between 69% and 80% on Objectives 3 and 4. Again, they were much better in the spring than in the fall and this may be a result of the instructor being more comfortable with our students. I think we will probably keep him.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

Broad-based knowledge:

We appear to be progressing with respect to meeting criterion for most areas and we are cautiously pleased with this. As we did last year, the coordinator for the Introductory sections will:

1. send out very specific guidelines for what their students should take away from the course for both the unit tests and for the exit exam;
2. examine the performances for all areas on each exam during the course of the semester and compare them with the performance on the exit exam;
4. the instructors will be encouraged to utilize more on-line materials that the students can access.
5. TAs will be instructed to periodically review the materials during the course of the semester, prior to the exit exam, to foster re-familiarization of the materials for the students.

In addition, it is the goal that the 70% criterion that is striven for on the final exam be in place for all the areas on the area exams. This should allow us to identify problems as the semester goes along.—This seems to have worked but needs to be viewed more consistently.

Generating and Communicating Scientific Knowledge: The chair will meet with the new instructor for the statistics course and lab and impress upon him the need to make the material more understandable to the students. He also will review the current types of embedded questions that are asked and attempt to update those with specific, real-life examples.

Specific points will be to consistently, throughout the semester, assess how students generate and communicate scientific knowledge.

For both areas:

1. questions will be embedded in each exam, and addressed on each laboratory exercise, to assess the students' abilities to determine and explain statistical findings and effects;
2. the 80% of students successfully mastering the materials criterion will continue to be used--Overall, the criterion was met on one indicator and almost met on the other. What would be better, though, would be to have met criteria for both indicators for each semester and not just over the entire year. Spring was better than the fall and this may have been due to the new

instructor being more used to dealing with our students. We predict that the success for the spring 2015 semester will roll over into the fall 2015 semester.

3. if criteria is not met at each level of assessment further remedial tasks will be given--it appears that students did better as the semester progressed, indicating a positive learning curve and that earlier assignments had a positive effect on later assignments. Also, it may be presumed that later assignments reinforced the earlier assignments.

4. assignments including design selection (between vs. within, single factor vs. factorial, etc.) will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% of successful mastery of the materials criterion being used to determine effectiveness--this appears to have worked and we may raise our definition of mastery to 75% and not 70%;

5. assignments with hands-on SPSS/Excel based calculations will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% criterion being used to determine effectiveness--this also seems to have worked;

6. hypothesis formation, testing, and interpretation will be required of the Psychology 3101 class with an 80% of students mastering the material being used to determine effectiveness--the laboratory assignments required these factors and we shall continue to use them;

7. students will be tasked on three separate research papers to analyze mock data and report decisions in APA-style results and Discussion sections. An 80% criterion will be used to determine effectiveness of the course to instill the ability to generate and communicate scientific data--we used two APA-formatted papers during the course of the semester and student scored between 74% and 82% on Objectives 1 and 2 and between 69% and 80% on Objectives 3 and 4. Again, they were much better in the spring than in the fall and this may be a result of the instructor being more comfortable with our students. I think we will probably keep him.











Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Psychology MA

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Goal	Research Competence   Students develop increased competence in research methodology and statistical analyses.
Objective (L)	Research Competency  Students demonstrate knowledge and skills related to competency in research methodology and statistical analyses.
Indicator	Research Project  Students' production of original research. This program is considered to be a research-oriented program. Therefore, all students in the program will either complete a research thesis or will have been engaged in a faculty member's program of original research along with having taken Psychology 5388, Advanced Experimental Design.
Criterion	Research Project   Students will demonstrate research competency when they either have completed a thesis or have enrolled in PSY 5388, Graduate Experimental Design. A common rubric will be used to rate the thesis; students will be required to reach a score of at least 80/100 to be considered thesis-complete. In the 5388 course, one of the requirements is to write three papers in APA format. The first two are intended to train the student in the proper format and written comments are supplied to the students to this end. The third paper is written in APA format and submitted for evaluation by the instructor and by an independent examiner using the attached rubric. The paper is scored with respect to particular sections with a minimum score of 80 being the threshold for the designation "Acceptable." A copy of the rubric for this assignment is attached.
Finding	Research Project  The entire program had a total of 8 students of which one was a first-year student. The first-year student was enrolled in Psychology 5388 and successfully passed the course. One issue is that the student did not meet the criterion on the APA-formatted papers but was able to make up for this weakness by doing well on other portions of the course.
Action	Research Project  The unsuccessful attempt to meet criterion on the APA-formatted papers is a problem and faculty currently are working with the student to increase his knowledge and appreciation of the APA style. At issue were seemingly careless errors and it has been impressed upon the student to take more time and effort in correcting those errors. This student has met with the instructor on various occasions during the academic semester and we have encouraged him to become more involved in faculty members' research programs in order to bring him up to an acceptable level of research competence.

Another issue that has again been raised is that the numbers in the MA-General program typically fluctuate from low to very low. Thus, the plan is to convert this MA-General program in to an MA program with an emphasis in Industrial/Organizational psychology and offer it at The Woodlands campus. The chair of the department currently is working on the paperwork to this end. One issue will be staffing the program but that problem will be overcome when the time arises. Until the transition occurs, though, the department is going to keep extended tracking of our MA-General graduates to assess the value of the program.

Goal
Foundation Competence 

Students develop broad-based knowledge and competence in the scientific, theoretical, and conceptual foundations of general psychology.

Objective (L)
Foundational Competency 

Students demonstrate competency in the areas of general psychology through synthesis and integration of scientific, methodological, and theoretical foundations.

Indicator
Comprehensive Exams 

Students demonstrate through a written comprehensive examination their ability to integrate the areas of general psychology.

Criterion
Pass Comprehensive Examination  

100% of students must pass comprehensive examination prior to graduation. Students are given a written exam of which they must complete 5 of 7 questions listed. Criteria for passing are: the student must provide integrative responses that reveal an understanding of the information and experiences to which they have been exposed; they must provide complete references for all works cited using proper APA style; they must demonstrate their knowledge of the science in the field and support their answers, arguments, theories, logic, etc. with scientific research studies when applicable. Each question will be scored using a rubric for each question by two faculty members who have expertise in the particular area. An example of the comprehensive examination and the question rubric is attached.

Finding
Comprehensive Examination 

During the past academic year a total of five individuals took the comprehensive examination. Four of the five successfully met criterion on their first try while the fifth failed in the fall and then passed in the spring. Thus, 100% of students taking the exam passed that portion of the program.

Action
Comprehensive Examination 

Four of the five students taking the comprehensive exam passed on the first time taking the exam and the fifth passed on the second time. In the upcoming academic year the coordinator for the program and the chair will meet with each student about to take the comprehensive exam to better assess if each student is at an acceptable level. Also, we will set up study groups prior to comprehensives so that the students can gauge where he or she is with respect to the other students.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

1. Prior to comprehensive exams, students will be given instruction on what to expect and various strategies in handling the questions. This should enable them to better focus on, and better handle, the way they approach the exam.
 2. During the course of the semester in which Psychology 5388, APA style and vigilance will be stressed on the research portion of the papers.
 3. There is a concern about the numbers of students applying and being accepted into this program; this year only one, an Hispanic male, was admitted. Dr. Crosby, when he speaks of the School Psychology program at Prairie View A&M University and Lamar University, will put in a pitch for our other MA programs as well.
- The department will be hosting graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

1. Prior to comprehensive exams, students will be given instruction on what to expect and various strategies in handling the questions. This should enable them to better focus on, and better handle, the way they approach the exam--this appears to have worked as students did well on this year's comprehensive exam. We'll continue to work with our students to ensure success.
2. During the course of the semester in which Psychology 5388, APA style and vigilance will be stressed on the research portion of the papers--well, the lone MA General student did not do all that well on the APA-formatted research paper. This appears in part to be due to laziness as the student made what we consider to be dumb little mistakes, but they were mistakes just the same. With the incoming students, the chair will meet at the beginning of the academic year and stress the need for being meticulous in their studies and especially in their use of APA style.
3. There is a concern about the numbers of students applying and being accepted into this program; this year only one, an Hispanic male, was admitted. Dr. Crosby, when he speaks of the School Psychology program at Prairie View A&M University and Lamar University, will put in a pitch for our other MA programs as well--this year, we have two and perhaps a third choosing to enroll in our MA General program. This is better but the numbers are still too low for us to be happy. We will continue to host graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program and attempt to make them more aware of our program and will mention to our MA Clinical students who may be wait-listed for that program that the General program is available. Also, the chair will sit down with the new coordinator of the MA programs and the new coordinator of the School program and discuss ideas to make our programs more attractive.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

Incoming and second-year students will meet with the chair of the department at the beginning of the academic year. At that time, the chair will attempt to impress upon them:

1. the importance of successfully preparing for the comprehensive exams;
2. the importance of mastering APA style;
3. the importance of becoming involved in research;
4. With respect to numbers, we will continue to host graduate school information programs for our undergraduate students who appear to qualify for entrance into our program and attempt to make them more aware of our program and will mention to our MA Clinical students who may be wait-listed for that program that the General program is available. Also, the chair will sit down with the new coordinator of the MA programs and the new coordinator of the School program and discuss ideas to make our programs more attractive.

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Department of Sociology












Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Sociology BA/BS

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Goal	1. Achieve Sociological Competency: Entry Level  
	<p>Students who take introductory sociology classes will gain basic knowledge of social life, social change, and the causes and consequences of human behavior as they acquire the sociological perspective.</p>
Objective (L)	1. Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Entry Level 
	<p>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.</p>
Indicator	Comprehension Of Basic Core Concepts  
	<p>A sample of students enrolled in all of the three introduction-level sociology courses in the SHSU Core Curriculum (SOC12319 in Component Area IV: Humanities and Visual and Performing Arts; and, SOC11301 and SOC11306 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 five question evaluation instrument for the Component Area V courses (see Attachment #1) and a ten 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. This assessment was developed by the Department Undergraduate Committee and approved by the entire faculty.</p>
Criterion	Desired Result: Comprehension Of Basic Core Concepts 
	<p>At least 85% of participating students should have at least 3 correct answers out of the 5 questions.</p>
Finding	Results: Comprehension Of Basic Core Concepts  
	<p>Component Area IV: Out of 847 participating students in 24 sections, 95.7% of the students performed satisfactorily (see Attachment #3). Component Area V: Out of 352 participating students in 9 sections, 93.1% of students performed satisfactorily (see Attachment #3).</p>
Action	Comprehend Basic Core Concepts 
	<p>The data indicate the desired result is exceeded regarding both component areas. The department will continue to ensure that entry level students understand the basic core concepts of sociology.</p>

Goal

2. Sociological Competency: Mid-level 

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

Objective (L)	Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Mid-level 🔑 Sociology majors will be able to demonstrate the ability to write sociologically.
Indicator	Sociological Mid-level Papers 🔑 The SOCI 2399: Writing in Sociology is required as a mid-level course to achieve the BA/BS in Sociology.
Criterion	Desired Results: Mid-Level Sociological Papers 🔑 At least 75% of papers should be rated 3 or better on average for the three core areas.
Finding	Mid-Level Paper Findings 🔑 The initial evaluation method employed a pre- and post-format for student papers. This method was found lacking in several areas and needs to be reworked to better align the pre- and post-evaluation criteria with the respective assignments.
Action	Demonstrate Sociology Writing 🔑 The Departmental Undergraduate Studies Committee and the OATDB Coordinator will meet with the instructors for the SOCI2399: Writing in Sociology class and further evaluate the criteria and protocol for this mid-level assessment at the beginning of the Fall 2015 semester. As an outcome of this meeting, a revised protocol, including assessment rubrics, will be developed and implemented during the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 classes.
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Goal	3. Sociological Competency: Exit Level 🔑 Students who complete the Sociology Program will have an advanced understanding of the core concepts of the discipline and the sociological perspective.

Objective (L)	Demonstrate Sociological Competency: Exit Level 🔑 Sociology majors will be able to demonstrate and apply advanced sociological knowledge and scientific skills to critically analyze social phenomenon through a capstone research paper.
Indicator	Sociological Papers 🔑 🔑 The SOCI4399: Senior Seminar class is a required capstone course to achieve the 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 are selected from SOCI4399: Senior Seminar class in the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters for assessment of

their advanced sociological knowledge and scientific skills to critically analyze social phenomenon.

The Undergraduate Committee reviews the selected papers at the end of the Spring semester based on three core criteria in the discipline of Sociology: sociological theory; sociological methods; and sociological perspective. The selection of these criteria conforms to disciplinary standards for sociological research. The evaluation rubric was developed by the Undergraduate Committee and approved by the entire faculty (see Attachment #1).

Each paper is evaluated by three undergraduate committee members (two faculty members and the Director) 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 three core areas. Note: The Undergraduate Committee is composed of four faculty members plus the Director of Undergraduate Studies. Each paper is evaluated two faculty members and the Director.

Criterion

Desired Result: Sociological Papers

At least 75% of papers should be rated 3 or better on average for the three core areas.

Finding

Sociological Papers

83.3% of the students' papers meet the minimum requirement. Attachment #1 includes the summary table of results. Attachment #2 includes two examples of graded rubrics. Attachment #3 includes two examples of "pass" papers. Attachment #4 includes two examples of "fail" papers.

Action

Apply Sociological Perspective, Theory, And Methods

The data indicate that the desired result is exceeded. Those students who did not perform satisfactorily did not meet the minimum evaluative criteria regarding use of the sociological perspective, demonstrate understanding of sociological theory, and apply appropriate sociological methods. The department will continue to make efforts in curricula and teaching to reduce the percentage of students who do not meet the minimum criteria.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

Regarding the entry level assessment, while in the 2014-2015 cycle we will maintain the desired criteria of the 2013-2014 cycle (minimum of 85%), the Sociology Department Undergraduate Program will put more effort on improving the learning outcomes of online students. The department has experienced a rapid increase in the number of students taking online classes. Online classes tend to exhibit more pedagogical challenges. To improve overall student learning outcomes, it is important to elevate the learning outcomes of online students. The Undergraduate Committee will develop instructional recommendations to improve students' learning outcomes by coordinating with the Department-level performance objectives regarding the undergraduate program.

Regarding the exit level assessment, the outcome of the exit-level evaluation met the desired criteria in the 2013-2014 cycle. To stabilize this successful pattern of student learning

outcomes, we will maintain the same criteria (minimum of 75%) for the 2014-2015 cycle, but continue to invest our effort on improvement of student learning outcomes. As part of this effort, the major challenges for students in the SOCI 4399 class regarding the three core areas (theory, methods, and sociological perspective) will be identified and a plan for appropriate interventions will be discussed and suggestions for improvement provided by the undergraduate committee.

As a new component of continuous improvement, the SOCI 2399: Writing in Sociology course will be included as a mid-level assessment for all sociology majors in the 2014-2015 cycle. To better prepare Sociology majors for writing in all upper-level courses, the SOCI 2399 course was added to the Sociology major core requirements in Fall 2013. To develop the proposed mid-level assessment, a pilot evaluation protocol was created, implemented, and revised during the SOCI 2399 course in Spring 2014.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, this course will be provided in the Fall and Spring semesters. The Undergraduate Committee will meet in early Fall 2014 and establish achievable criteria to measure mid-level student success toward the learning objectives. As a potential procedure, twenty-five percent of the students enrolled in each class will be randomly selected for assessment in both semesters. The Undergraduate Committee will review the papers at the end of the Spring semester based on the revised evaluation protocol.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

Regarding Goal 1 to improve the outcomes of student learning in entry-level courses, the Department hosted a workshop by our highest rated online instructor to enhance online pedagogy and student learning outcomes.

The Department added a new goal regarding mid-level assessment. A pilot assessment was carried out in the Spring semester but due to major administrative and personnel changes in the department, this goal was not realized during this evaluation period, but will be re-engaged during the 2015-2016 evaluation period to further adjust and optimize the protocol for this assessment level.

Analysis of the exit-level data revealed the deficiency in performance level was primarily in area of the theory. The instructors for this course were informed of this finding and agreed to adjust the pedagogy accordingly.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

Regarding the entry-level assessment, the Undergraduate Committee will work with SHSU Online to standardize the delivery system in each class for the assessment of the learning comprehension for basic core concepts in Sociology. This will allow the Department to identify strengths and weaknesses item by item, as well as differentiate potential differences in online and in-person delivery systems related to core concept comprehension. The Department will maintain the existing criterion (85%) for the percentage of students meeting the minimum requirement for the desired learning outcome for the 2015-2016 assessment period.

Regarding the mid-level assessment, the Undergraduate Committee and OATDB Coordinator will work with the two instructors for the SOCI2399: Writing in Sociology course to evaluate the challenges faced in 2014-2015 in developing an assessment protocol for that course. A new pilot evaluation protocol will be created and implement during the 2015-2016 assessment cycle. The Department will maintain the proposed criterion (75%) for students meeting the minimum requirement for the desired learning outcome in the 2015-2016 cycle.

Regarding the exit-level assessment, the Undergraduate Committee will work with the two professors who teach this course to adjust the evaluation rubric to allow for enhanced inter-item analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the three criteria: theory, methods, and sociological perspective. The Department will maintain the existing criterion (75%) for students meeting the minimum requirement for the desired learning outcome in the 2015-2016 cycle.