

2011-12 Program Assessment Update

Department & Program: Humanities

submitted by: Grant Smith

Assessment table showing one SLO for Humanities program

For narrative, please see attachment that follows.

Student Learning Outcome

“Students will distinguish basic forms and strategies of philosophy, literature, and at least one of the arts and of the social sciences.”

Strategy or method of measurement

Pretest (a final used in 2009) compared to exit test (the final used in 2011).

Observations gathered from data

Student gains ranged from 486% to 2,467%

Actions recommended based on observations

There are weekly variations, and so it is recommended that the instructor constantly compare weekly quizzes to similar quizzes in other course offerings within the program.

Plan and timetable for taking action

Plan: To develop pre-tests for core courses in spring 2012

Overall evaluation of progress on objective

Implement during 2012-2013 AY

This SLO is still central to program mission.

Program Assessment – attachment
Humanities 2011-12

As an assessment of the Humanities program, the 2011 summer offering of HUMN 290, “Arts & Ideas,” is used here as a measure of the program. This course has a curriculum that integrates all the major areas of the humanities, i.e., art, music, literature, and philosophy (as well as history), and therefore reflects the program as a whole.

This assessment will address the first student learning objective listed for the program – i.e., “Students will distinguish basic forms and strategies of philosophy, literature, and at least one of the arts and of the social sciences.”

Several assessment tools are used routinely in HUMN 290—i.e., quizzes, one in-class paper, discussion reports, and two or more out-of-class papers for each student. This assessment report focuses on the quizzes and specifically on the summary quiz, which selects material from all quizzes and is administered as the course final. While discussion/writing topics focus on critical thinking, quizzes focus on a range of major concepts and modes of expression found in the art, literature, and philosophy of Renaissance, with special attention to influences from other cultures.

For all quizzes except the summary quiz, students are allowed to use notes but not texts. The scoring of quizzes (short answer) is simply the number of errors (usually 25 possible). The worst quiz, except for the summary quiz, is thrown out to allow for personal exigencies. At the end of the quarter, quiz scores, including the summary quiz, are simply added up, and a curve is calculated relative to other sections of this class previously taught.

As the course progresses, students are expected to gain in their knowledge of the intellectual, cultural, and historical backgrounds (comprehension and retention of readings/lectures), as well as in their analytical skills. The summary quiz has the same format as weekly quizzes but covers all readings/lectures, not just of one week. To measure the gain in their knowledge of reading and lecture material in the summer of 2011, students were given, as a diagnostic, the summary quiz (final) that had been given in the summer of 2009 (same texts) on the first day of the quarter. These scores are then compared to scores achieved on the same summary quiz given as the course final in 2011.

The PRETEST was the final used in 2009. Two students were absent on the first day of class. Thus 28 of 30 students took both the PRETEST and the similar FINAL. Total points possible on the PRETEST was 84. On the FINAL it was 92. A brief summary follows, but an EXCEL spreadsheet is attached that shows percentages.

FINAL	PRETEST
72	6
76	7
76	9
85	7
33	4
88	15
81	10
87	8
74	3
68	11
89	9
87	6

42	13
57	6
66	13
77	6
76	12
83	8
58	8
90	10
79	6
89	12
83	8
84	5
29	2
72	9
34	7
87	14
92	84

In administering the diagnostic, students were asked to do their best as a part of general program assessment, but no reward was offered. They all appeared to make a serious effort. 25 minutes were set aside, and all students finished without urging or being stopped.

It needs to be emphasized that all the students in this class were enrolled to fulfill a GECR and that at least a few sought to minimize their effort on the final to assure a grade of 2.0. Nonetheless, as can be seen from a casual view of the raw scores, all students gained in terms of the course goals and objectives to a statistically significant degree – even the four students who scored less than 50% on the final. Thus, the consistency of these scores illustrates the reliability of the quizzes in measuring possible student achievement in the course objectives.

Furthermore, the learning gains reflected here and in the attached spreadsheet suggest that the quizzes are a reasonably effective means of assessing student comprehension and retention and are useful guides for judging the effectiveness of the integrative curriculum. They show that the learning efficiency was good overall, that all students gained significantly in their knowledge, and that the primary need is to inspire motivation.

Recommendations for addressing identified needs:

Clearly, motivation is the most important factor in academic success in any course or program. For this and other reasons, it is impossible to maximize the learning efficiency of all students in any particular course. However, the quizzes are a useful tool in calibrating how much “knowledge of key ideas” the most motivated students can absorb effectively without sacrificing significant gains by the few students who are less well motivated. All students gained significantly in this particular class but might not in others. There may also be weekly variation, and so it is recommended that the instructor constantly compare weekly quizzes to similar quizzes in other course offerings within the program.

Respectfully submitted by
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