

History Student's Ability to Devise a Research Project

History BA – College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Step 1: Student Learning Outcome

Students can devise a research project driven by a thesis, informed by historiographical contexts, and structured by a clearly articulated analytical framework appropriate to the field of study.

Step 2: Methods and Measures

Direct: Final papers in capstone course HIST 490T are scored using a calibrated rubric with the following characteristics, 1) Thesis, 2) Historiographical Contexts, and 3) Analytical Framework, using a 4-point scale (1= Does not meet expectations, 2=Needs improvement, 3 = Meets expectations, 4 = Exceeds expectations).

Indirect: Questions for History majors on the university exit student survey.

Step 3: Criteria for Success

Direct: 70% of samples “Meets” or “Exceeds” expectations with a score of 3 or 4.

Indirect: 70% of students “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” on questions related to the SLO.

Step 4: Results

Direct Assessment: Final papers in capstone course HIST 490T courses taught spring 2021.

Total Samples: 41 (50% of total 490T papers)

Overall, 40 (98%) papers received a “Meets” or “Exceeds” expectations, with a majority of scores in the upper range:

Exceeds Expectations = 29 (71%)

Meets Expectations = 11 (27%)

Needs Improvement = 0 (0%)

Does Not Meet Expectations = 1 (2%)

Indirect Assessment:

The university Exit Survey was distributed spring 2021, and included questions targeted to History majors.

96% of students “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with the following statement:

- *My experience as a history major has improved my ability to conceptualize problems and use research to find answers to them.*

98% of students “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” with the following statement:

- *My experience as a history major has improved my ability to formulate well-reasoned arguments and to articulate those arguments in speaking and/or written form.*

The assessment results for both measures indicate that a majority of majors “Meets” or “Exceeds” expectations for this SLO at or near graduation.

A comparison with prior assessment results reveals an increase in student performance:

- 2012 assessment: 23% scored “Meets” or “Exceeds”
- 2015 assessment: 64% scored “Meets” or “Exceeds”
- 2021 assessment: 98% scored “Meets” or “Exceeds”

Improvement actions implemented after the 2015 assessment included requiring students to complete HIST 300A and 300B before taking HIST 490T. Making these intermediate-level courses prerequisites for HIST 490T ensured that students had the preparation, practice, and experience that helped them to successfully complete the capstone research paper, with significant improvement revealed in the 2021 results. In addition, the results from the indirect assessment indicate that student perceptions of their abilities is supported by faculty evaluation of their work.

Step 5: Improvement Actions

HIST 300B guides students through the research and writing process that prepares them for the more advanced work in HIST 490T. The assessment committee plans to assess this SLO in HIST 300B to establish a baseline by which to measure the progress of students as they complete their coursework.