Assurance of Student Learning 2019-2020	
Potter College	History Department
MA History **078**	

Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.			
Student Learning Outcome 1: Graduates will showcase broad knowledge of historical events/periods and their significance.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must pass three exams)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	n/a		
Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.		**Met**	Not Met
Student Learning Outcome 2: Graduates will effectively and accurately interpret primary sources and historical data.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must pass three exams)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	n/a		
Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.		**Met**	Not Met
Student Learning Outcome 3: Graduates will identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians within defined historiographical fields.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must pass three exams)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	n/a		
Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.		**Met**	Not Met

Program Summary (Briefly summarize the action and follow up items from your detailed responses on subsequent pages.)

This assessment for the AY 2019-20 cycle reviewed a significantly larger data set, with 22 artifacts (15 exams and 7 theses), more than double the 9 artifacts (7 exams and 2 theses) that we reviewed last year. The results on this year's assessment show notable improvement over what was observed in the 2018-19 program assessment. Using a scale of 0-3, the average rating for all comprehensive exams across all objectives was 2.12 (an improvement on last year's 1.92 average). The average rating for all theses across all objectives was 2.70 (an improvement on last year's 2.50 average). In addition to this overall improvement, 100% of students achieved at least a low pass in all three outcomes.

At the same time, the 2019-20 data set provides greater visibility into some of the ongoing challenges in the program, which we are working to address. The assessment revealed divergent levels of proficiency among the three learning outcomes, with proficiency in Outcome 1 (average of 2.62 across all artifacts) and Outcome 3 (average of 2.48 across all artifacts) much higher than Outcome 2 (average of 2.12 across all artifacts). This pattern mirrored last year's assessment and held true even for the thesis instrument, which places great emphasis on sources and methods.

The accuracy of this assessment is potentially limited by the structure of the comprehensive examination. We currently have no concrete measure of student success on the oral component of the comprehensive exam, with anecdotal evidence varying widely. In addition, our course offerings are not particularly well aligned with our student learning outcomes, with a great deal of emphasis on Outcome 1 and 3 at the expense of Outcome 2. The graduate faculty share the conviction that the averages for each of the learning outcomes should be higher and that low passes should be more of a rarity among the program graduates as we would like our graduates to meet the highest of professional and academic standards.

The following are the key steps that the graduate faculty are taking to improve student success in our program:

- Examine learning outcomes for all courses, making sure that the course learning outcomes align with those of the program. Where necessary and appropriate, adjust course-specific learning outcomes to dovetail with program learning outcomes.
- Consider modifications to the comprehensive examinations to better reflect the current state of the profession and to provide documentation of the oral component. The current written component is a 6-hour, closed-note examination in which students write three essays. The format makes precise quotation from literature or primary sources impossible, limiting our ability to analyze student success in Outcome 2 and 3.
- Introduce a new course, History 536: Sources and Methods, that will be the first graduate course in our program directly focused on Outcome 2. This course will serve as a companion to History 535: Historiography, which provides a foundation for Outcome 3.
- Revise the History M.A. program's graduate student handbook.

Student Learning Outcome 1			
Student Learning Outcome	**Graduates will showcase broad knowledge of historical events/periods and their significance.**		
Measurement Instrument 1	**Direct**: The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry. Students must take comprehensive exams in their major field (geographic and/or temporal). One minor field must be distinct in space or time from the major field and is usually thematic in nature. These exams are proctored written examination, taken over 6 hours. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the three comprehensive exams.		
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass, i.e. passing each of the three comprehensive exams in the first go-around. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass). While all our students met the lower threshold, only 73% of students earned an average that would place them in the Pass to High Pass territory.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	100% (Low Pass) 85-90% (Pass)	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	100% (Low Pass) 73% (Pass)
Methods	**Direct**: ○ The artifacts were the three comprehensive exams ($N = 15$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The papers were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read thrice by three different reviewers. ○ The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their exams last year. ○ The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 2	**Direct:** ○ The M.A. Thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research methods. ○ It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. ○ The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication. ○ In the AY 2019-20 cycle, a new option was added for the M.A. Thesis in which students can write a publication-caliber article that can be submitted to a peer-reviewed academic journal.		
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass) for this LO. All students successfully met both measures, with 6 out of 7 receiving a score of 3.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	100%	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	100%
Methods	**Direct:** ○ The artifact is the MA thesis ($N = 7$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The theses were split among three full-time faculty so that each thesis was read thrice by three different reviewers. ○ The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their thesis last year. ○ The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		

Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)

Thesis scores were consistently higher than those seen in comprehensive exams. This is possibly a product of the nature of the assessment instrument, since a thesis is written over the course of many months while the comprehensive exams are written in a hyper-compressed time frame of six hours. The difference also might be attributable to greater mentoring or heightened motivation on the part of thesis students, but notably, all thesis students are also required to complete exams. Thesis students consistently scored higher on the thesis than the exam. Therefore, it is likely that more attention preparation for comprehensive exams will improve the average scores for this learning outcome. It is also possible that the structure of the comprehensive exam is failing to accurately reflect student learning.

Because of a reduction in the number of courses offered each semester, it is not feasible for students to take more than one or two courses in a specific historical subfield. In practice, students select three of their classes, invite the instructors of those classes to serve on their committee, and use the reading list from those classes as the basis for their exams. This practice has gradually diverged from the last edition of the History M.A. program's student handbook.

The department thus proposes to do the following:
- Examine learning outcomes for all courses, making sure that the course learning outcomes align with those of the program. Where necessary and appropriate, adjust course-specific learning outcomes to dovetail with program learning outcomes.
- Ensure that students receive mentoring and practice for their comprehensive exams throughout their studies as part of their regular coursework so that they are more prepared for the actual exams.
- Consider restructuring the comprehensive examinations to better reflect prevailing disciplinary norms and to provide greater visibility into student learning.
- Produce a revised edition of the History M.A. program's student handbook.

Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)

As stated in the previous assessment, a meaningful follow-up will be possible in the AY 2021-22 cycle, once the department's graduate faculty have had the opportunity to review the program's learning outcomes, evaluate the current rubric, and evaluate the alignment between course-specific learning outcomes and the program's learning outcomes.

The student handbook, including expectations for the comprehensive examinations, will be revised and presented to the graduate faculty for approval by the end of AY 2020-21.

Student Learning Outcome 2	
Student Learning Outcome	**Graduates will effectively and accurately interpret primary sources and historical data.**
Measurement Instrument 1	**Direct**: The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry. Students must take comprehensive exams in their major field (geographic and/or temporal). One minor field must be distinct in space or time from the major field and is usually thematic in nature. These exams are proctored written examination, taken over 6 hours. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the three comprehensive exams.
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass, i.e. passing each of the three comprehensive exams in the first go-around. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass). While all our students met the lower threshold, only 53% of students earned an average that would place them in the Pass to High Pass territory.

Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **53% (Pass)**

Methods	**Direct**: ○ The artifacts were the three comprehensive exams ($N = 15$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The papers were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read thrice by three different reviewers. ○ The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their exams last year. ○ The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.
Measurement Instrument 2	**Direct:** ○ The M.A. Thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research methods. ○ It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. ○ The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication. ○ In the AY 2019-20 cycle, a new option was added for the M.A. Thesis in which students can write a publication-caliber article that can be submitted to a peer-reviewed academic journal.
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass) for this LO. All students successfully met the first measure, and 6 out of 7 received an average of at least 2.

Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Average score of pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **86% (Pass)**

Methods	**Direct:** ○ The artifact is the MA thesis ($N = 7$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The theses were split among three full-time faculty so that each thesis was read thrice by three different reviewers. ○ The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their thesis last year. ○ The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.

Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.	**Met**	**Not Met**

Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)

The scores for Outcome 2 were significantly lower than Outcomes 1 and 3. This pattern held true even for students who chose to write a thesis, even though the thesis demands the utilization and interpretation of original sources. The program's course offerings focus almost exclusively on historical content (Outcome 1) and historiography (Outcome 3), with no dedicated course offerings providing training in the use of primary sources at the graduate level. Because of this misalignment between the course offerings and the learning outcomes, it is understandable that scores in Outcome 2 would be significantly lower.

The department thus proposes to do the following:
- Examine learning outcomes for all courses, making sure that the course learning outcomes align with those of the program. Where necessary and appropriate, adjust course-specific learning outcomes to dovetail with program learning outcomes.
- Introduce a new course, History 536: Sources and Methods, that will be the first graduate course in our program directly focused on Outcome 2. This course will serve as a companion to History 535: Historiography, which provides a foundation for Outcome 3.

Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)

As stated in the previous assessment, a meaningful follow-up will be possible in the AY 2021-22 cycle, once the department's graduate faculty have had the opportunity to review the program's learning outcomes, evaluate the current rubric, and evaluate the alignment between course-specific learning outcomes and the program's learning outcomes.

A new course proposal for History 536 has already been approved by the graduate faculty. If approved through the curriculum process, it will be offered in Fall 2021.

Student Learning Outcome 3	
Student Learning Outcome	**Graduates will identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians within defined historiographical fields.**
Measurement Instrument 1	**Direct**: The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry. Students must take comprehensive exams in their major field (geographic and/or temporal). One minor field must be distinct in space or time from the major field and is usually thematic in nature. These exams are proctored written examination, taken over 6 hours. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the three comprehensive exams.
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass, i.e. passing each of the three comprehensive exams in the first go-around. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass). While all our students met the lower threshold, only 73% of students earned an average that would place them in the Pass to High Pass territory.

Program Success Target for this Measurement	100% (Low Pass) 85-90% (Average score of pass)	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	100% (Low Pass) 73% (Pass)

Methods	**Direct**: o The artifacts were the three comprehensive exams ($N = 15$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The papers were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read thrice by three different reviewers. o The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their exams last year. o The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.
Measurement Instrument 2	**Direct:** o The M.A. Thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research methods. o It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. o The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication. o In the AY 2019-20 cycle, a new option was added for the M.A. Thesis in which students can write a publication-caliber article that can be submitted to a peer-reviewed academic journal.
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass. The second was to achieve no less than an average of 2 (i.e. Pass) for this LO. All students successfully met the first measure, and 6 out of 7 received an average of at least 2.

Program Success Target for this Measurement	100% (Low Pass) 85-90% (Average score of pass)	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	100% (Low Pass) 86% (Pass)

Methods	**Direct:** o The artifact is the MA thesis ($N = 7$) and all identifiers removed (student name, course numbers, faculty name). The theses were split among three full-time faculty so that each thesis was read thrice by three different reviewers. o The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass, pass, and high pass. One (1) point was earned for a low pass, two (2) points for a pass, and three points for a high pass. No fractions were permitted in the assignment of points. No students received a failing score of 0, which is understandable since no graduate student failed their thesis last year. o The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.

Based on your results, circle or highlight whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.	**Met**	Not Met

Actions (Describe the decision-making process and actions planned for program improvement. The actions should include a timeline.)

The scores for Outcome 3 (historiography) fell below the scores for Outcome 1 (historical content) and above the scores for Outcome 2 (methods). This pattern held true for both assessment instruments. The hyper-compressed nature of the comprehensive examinations—a six-hour proctored written exam that is closed-note—do not allow for quotation from literature or primary sources, which may be limiting the accuracy of the exams as an assessment instrument. The oral component, meanwhile, allows for a more conversational approach that allows faculty to ask follow-up questions about historiography, but currently there is no written record of the oral exam, so it is not included in this assessment.

The department thus proposes to do the following:
- Examine learning outcomes for all courses, making sure that the course learning outcomes align with those of the program. Where necessary and appropriate, adjust course-specific learning outcomes to dovetail with program learning outcomes.
- Revise the procedures for the comprehensive examination to include a written record of the oral component.
- Ensure that students receive mentoring and practice for their comprehensive exams throughout their studies as part of their regular coursework so that they are more prepared for the actual exams. Ensure that mentoring for comprehensive exams includes discussion of historiography rather than focusing too narrowly on historical content.

Follow-Up (Provide your timeline for follow-up. If follow-up has occurred, describe how the actions above have resulted in program improvement.)

As stated in the previous assessment, a meaningful follow-up will be possible in the AY 2021-22 cycle, once the department's graduate faculty have had the opportunity to review the program's learning outcomes, evaluate the current rubric, and evaluate the alignment between course-specific learning outcomes and the program's learning outcomes.

The student handbook, including expectations for the comprehensive examinations, will be revised and presented to the graduate faculty for approval by the end of AY 2020-21.