Assurance of Student Learning Report 2020-2021	
Potter College	History Department
MA History 078	
Alexander Olson	

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 complete four essays and an oral examination)**		
Instrument 2	**Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)**		
Instrument 3	**n/a**		
Based on your results, check 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 complete four essays and an oral examination)**		
Instrument 2	**Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)**		
Instrument 3	**n/a**		
Based on your results, check 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 complete four essays and an oral examination)**		
Instrument 2	**Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)**		
Instrument 3	**n/a**		
Based on your results, check 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.)			
See next page.			

Although this assessment for AY 2020-21 shows modest improvement over the AY 2019-20 cycle, these results must be taken with a grain of salt due to the small number of students (3) who graduated this year. As a result, this assessment is based on only five total artifacts (3 comprehensive exams and 2 theses). The dearth of graduates can be attributed to the spike in students who graduated in AY 2019-20 (15), which was more than double the previous year (7). Overall enrollment remained steady due to a large incoming class in Fall 2020.

Using a scale of 0-3, the average rating for the three comprehensive exams across all objectives was 2.41 (an improvement on last year's 2.12 average). The average rating for the two thesis artifacts across all objectives was 2.50 (a decline from last year's 2.70 average). All three students (100%) achieved at least a low pass in all three outcomes.

Despite the small sample size, the 2020-21 data set affirms some of our current assumptions about the academic challenges facing the program. The assessment revealed divergent levels of proficiency among the three learning outcomes, with proficiency in Outcome 1 (average of 2.60 across all artifacts) and Outcome 3 (average of 2.47 across all artifacts) much higher than Outcome 2 (average of 2.27 across all artifacts). This pattern mirrored the AY 2018-19 and AY 2019-20 assessments, suggesting that the program must improve our teaching of sources and methods. Although it was not measured by this assessment, another top priority is to improve the program's diversity and inclusion.

To gain better visibility into Outcome 2, the graduate faculty voted in August 2020 to modify the comprehensive exam to include a fourth essay that requires students to interpret and analyze primary sources. The comprehensive exams in this year's assessment were the first to include this additional essay. It is notable, therefore, that scores for Outcome 2 remained lower than Outcome 1 and Outcome 3.

The following steps were taken in AY 2020-21 to improve student success in our program:

- A new core course, HIST 536: Sources and Methods, has passed the curriculum process and will be offered in Fall 2021. This will be the first graduate course in our program directly focused on Outcome 2. This course is a companion to HIST 535: Historiography, which is the only course formally required of all graduate students in History.
- Three new courses—HIST 542: Readings in African History, HIST 616: Seminar in Middle Eastern History, and HIST 617: Seminar in Latin American History—were passed through the curriculum process. Previously, all graduate historiographical courses outside the fields of US and European history had to be offered as HIST 615: Seminar in Non-Western History, which could only be repeated twice.

The following are the key steps that the graduate faculty are taking in AY 2021-22 to improve student success in our program:

- Approve and publish the History M.A. program's graduate student handbook, which has been revised over the past year and will be shared with the graduate faculty during the departmental retreat in August 2021.
- Review how the program is (or is not) serving the needs of online-only students, who now comprise 87% of students in the program.
- Submit a comprehensive program revision to reflect the consensus of the graduate faculty about program requirements, now that CPE has lifted a regulation that had prevented formal curricular changes for the past several years.

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 as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.			
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.			
Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **100% (Pass)**	
Methods	**Direct**: o The artifacts were the four comprehensive exams (*N* = 3) 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 this year. o 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.			
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.			
Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **100% (Pass)**	
Methods	**Direct:** o The artifact is the MA thesis (*N* = 2) 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 graduate student failed their thesis this year. o The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.			
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.			☒ **Met**	☐ **Not Met**

Actions

Outcome 1 measures student mastery of historical content, as opposed to methods (Outcome 2) and historiography (Outcome 3). Like last year, thesis scores for Outcome 1 (2.67 average) were higher than comprehensive exam scores for Outcome 1 (2.56 average), likely because the thesis requires that students engage with a topic in much more depth than is possible through ordinary coursework. Moreover, the reduction in the total number of graduate history courses offered each semester means that 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, when graduate courses were more plentiful.

The department thus proposes to do the following:

- Review how the department can best serve the needs of students on the Non-Thesis Track, especially online-only students who now comprise 87% of the program—a significant increase from the last revision of the graduate curriculum.
- Discuss how and whether to ensure that students encounter historical content that enhances understanding of race, gender, and power in a global context.
- 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.
- Approve and publish a revised edition of the History M.A. program's student handbook.

Follow-Up

As stated in last year's assessment, a meaningful follow-up will not be possible until the AY 2021-22 cycle, once the department's graduate faculty have had the opportunity to review the revised student handbook in August 2021. Over the past year, we have laid the foundation for this revision by piloting an expanded comprehensive exam structure that was approved in August 2020.

Next Assessment Cycle Plan

This outcome will be assessed again in the AY 2021-22 cycle, using the same artifacts and methods.

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 as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.

Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **67% (Pass)**
Methods	**Direct**: o The artifacts were the four comprehensive exams (*N* = 3) 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 this year. o 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.		
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **50% (Pass)**
Methods	**Direct:** o The artifact is the MA thesis (*N* = 2) 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 graduate student failed their thesis this year. o The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.		☒ **Met**	☐ **Not Met**

Actions

The scores for Outcome 2 were lower than Outcomes 1 and 3. 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.

In Fall 2020, we successfully sent a New Course Proposal through the curriculum process for HIST 536: Sources and Methods, which will become the second core course in the MA History curriculum. We anticipate that this course will greatly strengthen Outcome 2. It is being offered for the first time in Fall 2021 and will continue to be offered every other Fall on a rotating schedule with HIST 535: Historiography, which provides a foundation for Outcome 3.

In Fall 2020, the graduate faculty approved a revision to the comprehensive examinations to better measure Outcome 2. Students are now required to complete a fourth essay that focuses exclusively on the handling of primary sources.

Follow-Up
As stated in last year's assessment, a meaningful follow-up will not be possible until the AY 2021-22 cycle, after the faculty has been able to observe the impact of the changes to the comprehensive examinations and the addition of a second core course, which will be offered for the first time in Fall 2021.
Next Assessment Cycle Plan
This outcome will be assessed again in the AY 2021-22 cycle, using the same artifacts and methods.

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 as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.		
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	**100% (Low Pass)** **85-90% (Pass)**	**Percent of Program Achieving Target**	**100% (Low Pass)** **100% (Pass)**
Methods	**Direct**: o The artifacts were the four comprehensive exams (N = 3) 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 this year. o 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.		
Criteria for Student Success	The program used two measures of success. The first was achieving at minimum a Low Pass for all students. The second was for at least 85% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass). All students met both targets. The statistical significance of these results is questionable due to the small number of students who graduated in AY 2020-21.		

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

Methods	**Direct:** o The artifact is the MA thesis (N = 2) 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 graduate student failed their thesis this year. o The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.

Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.	☒ **Met**	☐ **Not Met**

Actions

Like last year, the average score (2.47) for Outcome 3 (historiography) fell below the score (2.60) for Outcome 1 (historical content) and above the score (2.27) for Outcome 2 (methods). This pattern held true for both assessment instruments. In addition to the small sample size on this year's assessment, the structure of the comprehensive examination might be reducing visibility into student learning. The comprehensive examination includes two components: a written portion followed by an oral examination. The oral component 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.

In last year's assessment, one proposed action item was to "Revise the procedures for the comprehensive examination to include a written record of the oral component." This action was not completed. However, this will be a priority for all comprehensive examinations completed in AY 2021-22.

Follow-Up

As stated in last year's assessment, a meaningful follow-up will not be possible until the AY 2021-22 cycle, after the faculty has been able to review and approve a revised graduate handbook and, where appropriate and necessary, make changes to their courses to better align with the program learning outcomes.

Next Assessment Cycle Plan

This outcome will be assessed again in the AY 2021-22 cycle, using the same artifacts and methods.