

*Academic Program
Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
The University of New Mexico*

A. College, Department and Date

1. College: Arts and Sciences
2. Department: Sociology
3. Date: January, 2009

B. Academic Program of Study*

M.A. Sociology

C. Contact Person(s) for the Assessment Plan

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D. Broad Program Goals & Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

1. Broad Program Learning Goals for this Degree/Certificate Program

- A. To understand, critique, and be able to note research applications of insights from the classical sociological theories of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim.
- B. To explain the meaning of terms used to capture elements of sociological theory, describe at least four perspectives in contemporary theory, and note research applications of at least two of those perspectives.
- C. To understand the nature of sociological research methods and how they may be used in examining sociological issues.
- D. To understand how statistical procedures may be used to examine research issues in contemporary sociology.

2. List of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for this Degree/Certificate Program

- A. Classical Theory SLOs
 - A.1 Students will be able to explain the major themes of Marxian, Weberian, and Durkheimian perspectives on the social world.
 - A.2 Students will be able to discuss the differences, merits, limitations, overlapping characteristics, and possible ways to integrate two or more of the three classic perspectives.
 - A.3. Students will be able to derive at least two research hypotheses from two or more of the perspectives that may be applicable to an area of their own interest. They will also be able to provide a brief description of a possible research project that investigates the hypotheses.

- B. Contemporary Theory SLOs
 - B.1 Students will be able to explain how concepts, relationships, middle-range theory and general theory relate to one another in comprising what sociologists mean by theory (note: there are several alternative terms referring to middle-range and general theory that are not noted here). They will be able to note some major concepts, relationships, and perhaps middle-range theory found in a major perspective in contemporary sociological theory.
 - B.2. Students will be able to explain and critique at least two theoretical perspectives that are part of contemporary sociological theory.
 - B.3. Students will be able to explain two research hypotheses that are associated with the two perspectives described above. They will be able to provide a brief description of a possible research project that investigates the hypotheses.

- C. Research Methods SLOs
 - C.1 Students will be able to explain the major characteristics of the scientific method, and how it differs from other ways of knowing the world.
 - C.2. Students will be able to explain the major approaches to research design, data collection, and data analysis in contemporary sociological research.
 - C.3. Students will be able to explain how a research topic important to them may be investigated using a particular research design, mode of data collection, and mode of data analysis.

- D. Statistics SLOs
 - D.1 Students will be able to describe the idea of fitting a line to a scatterplot of data points and the least squares concept. They will be able to explain the “ordinary least squares” (OLS) regression assumptions and their implications, and illustrate the use of OLS regression. They will be able to interpret OLS results, including summary measures of model fit, estimated coefficients, and statistical significance of effects.
 - D.2. Students will be able to explain situations in which OLS regression can and cannot be appropriately applied, and the benefits and limitations of using OLS regression in sociological research.
 - D.3. Students will be able to describe, for at least two of the methods listed below, research problems or types of data for which the methods are useful. They will also be able to explain the methods in a non-technical way, and be able to interpret their main results. Possible methods include generalized least squares, logistic regression, Poisson and negative binomial regression, principal component and factor analysis, correspondence analysis, event history analysis, time series analysis, social network analysis, and analysis of hierarchical or clustered data.

E. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan

1. Student Learning Outcomes

[Insert at least 2-5 priority learning outcomes that will be assessed by the unit over the next three years. Each unit will select which of its learning outcomes to assess.]

Relationship to UNM Student Learning Goals (insert the program SLOs and check all that apply):

Each of the SLOs for the M.A. in sociology includes all three UNM student learning goals. This is to a large extent because of the nature of sociology and the program at UNM. In both the discipline and the program the instructional effort is directed towards acquisition of *knowledge* about the social world that can facilitate development of *skills* in social action and social organization that help not only individual and group functioning, but can also facilitate social *responsibility* in academia, social organizations, society, and the international community. For example, in developing the knowledge and skill of explaining how specific research hypotheses are associated with two theoretical perspectives (SLO B3 below), students develop capabilities to help better understand the social world and offer informed assessments of social problems, which can contribute to informed discussions and social policy.

University of New Mexico Student Learning Goals				
Program SLOs	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility	Program SLO is conceptually different from university goals.
B3. Students will be able to explain two research hypotheses that are associated with two perspectives in contemporary theory. They will be able to provide a brief description of a possible research project that investigates the hypotheses.	X	X	X	
C3. Students will be able to explain how a research topic important to them may be investigated using a particular research design, mode of data collection, and mode of data analysis.	X	X	X	

2. **How will learning outcomes be assessed?**

A. What:

- i. *For each SLO, briefly describe the means of assessment, i.e., what samples of evidence of learning will be gathered or measures used to assess students' accomplishment of the learning outcomes in the three- year plan?*

Assessment will be done through exam questions that are required and part of the class most directly associated with the SLO being examined. The exam will occur at the end of the semester, and students will be informed of the questions and the rubric for evaluating the responses at the beginning of the semester. The exam questions will directly examine the SLOs being assessed. The exams will be graded by the instructor in the course AND by a regular faculty member chosen by the Graduate Committee of the Sociology Department.

- ii. *Indicate whether each measure is **direct** or **indirect**. If you are unsure, then write "Unsure of measurement type." There is an expectation that at least **half of the assessment methods/measures will be direct** measures of student learning. [See attached examples of direct and indirect measures.]*

All questions on the exams are direct measures of specific student learning outcomes.

- iii. *Briefly describe the **criteria for success** related to each direct or indirect means of assessment. What is the program's performance target (e.g., is an "acceptable or better" performance by 60% of students on a given measure acceptable to the program faculty)? If scoring rubrics are used to define qualitative criteria and measure performance, attach them to the plan as they are available.*

While the criteria for success may vary with the character of individual questions and the rubric in use, most generally when a rubric is used that has three "passing" categories (excellent, good, fair), and one failing category (poor), then success will be represented by having 90% of the students receive a passing assessment.

- B. Who: *State explicitly whether the program's assessment will include evidence from all students in the program or a sample. Address the validity of any proposed sample of students.*

We will examine the population of all students enrolled in the required courses most closely associated the SLO(s) under examination. For example, when examining an SLO closely associated with contemporary theory, all students in the Department's required contemporary theory course will be examined.

3. *When will learning outcomes be assessed? When and in what forum will the results of the assessment be discussed?*

The examination portion of assessment will be done at the end of the semester in which the relevant course is taught.

As noted above, the exam will be graded by the instructor of the class and by a faculty member chosen by the Department's Graduate Committee.

The results will be discussed in several forums listed below. The list begins with those closest in time to the presentation of results.

- A discussion between the two persons grading the exams will first occur. The information emerging in that discussion, combined with a preliminary report that is prepared will provide the basis for a subsequent discussion in the Department's Graduate Committee.
- The persons grading the exam will meet with the Graduate Committee to present and discuss the results and report on the assessment project. The discussion will include possible changes in the curriculum, reassignment of specific persons teaching specific classes, and other issues germane to improving instruction and learning.
- Each year the Department has a day-long retreat in which a variety of topics are discussed by the Department in some depth. One session of the retreat will be dedicated to considering the results of the assessment exam, information and recommendations generated in discussions among participants of the assessment, and in the Graduate Committee. It is expected that discussion among the full faculty at the retreat will lead to recommendations for changes and improvement in student learning.
- It is expected that the Departmental retreat will identify issues that will be referred back to the Graduate Committee. The continual interplay among assessment participants, the Graduate Committee and the full faculty will keep assessment alive and dynamic.

A three-year time line for assessing the SLOs listed above will be:

[Briefly describe the timeframe over which your unit will conduct the assessment of learning outcomes selected for the three-year plan. For example, provide a layout of the semesters or years (e.g., 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011), list which outcomes will be assessed, and which semester/year the results will be discussed and used to improve student learning (e.g., discussed with program faculty, interdepartmental faculty, advisory boards, students, etc.)]

**Assessment of the M.A. Program in Sociology: 2008-2009
(Contemporary Theory)**

Fall, 2008

Planning and coordination of assessment of SLO B3

Spring, 2009

- * Administration of assessment exams to all students in 513 or 514 (Contemporary Theory I and II)
- * Evaluating results of exams
- * Writing report of exam results

**Assessment of Graduate Program in Sociology: 2009-2010
(Contemporary Theory)**

Fall, 2009

Discussion of results from Spring 2009 assessment of SLO B3
(focus on Contemporary Theory)

- * Discussion by persons involved in the assessment process (instructor and assessment coordinator)
- * Discussions and recommendations from the Department's Theory Task Force
- * Discussions and recommendations from the Department's Graduate Committee

Spring, 2010

- * Discussions and recommendations from the full faculty
- * Implementing recommendations for reaching SLOs for Contemporary Theory (B)

Assessment of Graduate Program in Sociology: 2010-2011
(Research Methods)

Fall, 2010

Planning and coordination of Spring 2011 assessment of SLO C3
(focus on Research Methods)

* Selecting questions and establishing a rubric

Spring, 2011

Administration of assessment exams in Sociology 580 (Research
Methods) assessing SLO C3

* Evaluating results of exams

* Writing report of exam results

4. *What is the unit's process to analyze/interpret assessment data and use results to improve student learning?*

Briefly describe:

1. *who will participate in the assessment process (the gathering of evidence, the analysis/interpretation, recommendations).*

Participation and involvement of individuals and groups is described above at various places, yet will be summarized here. Most generally, the full regular faculty and the instructor teaching the course most directly linked to the area targeted for assessment, participate in the assessment process. More specifically, the process initially involves the full regular faculty by establishing goals and specific learning objectives. Subsequently, the person teaching the course targeted for assessment of specific learning objectives along with the Department's assessment coordinator establish testing mechanisms, perform appropriate testing, and produce a report. This is followed by discussions and recommendations in meetings of persons doing the assessment, appropriate departmental task forces and committees, and the full faculty at a faculty retreat and regular faculty meetings. Implementation of possible changes then occurs.

2. *the process for consideration of the implications of assessment for change:*
 - a. *to assessment mechanisms themselves,*
 - b. *to curriculum design,*
 - c. *to pedagogy**...in the interest of improving student learning.*

As discussed above, individuals and committees at various points in the process are involved in considering possible changes in assessment mechanisms, curriculum design, pedagogy and staffing. The culmination of general discussion at the faculty retreat, and followed by a summation of recommendations, provides a mechanism for keeping the big picture of improving student learning front and center.

3. *How, when, and to whom will recommendations be communicated?*

As noted above, the results of the report of the assessment are discussed and recommendations considered at several levels, with these discussions and recommendations moving up to the full faculty and then into policy implementation. The levels at which the discussions and recommendations are made are as follows: (1) persons directly involved in the assessment; (2) the departmental task force and committees most directly associated with the particular SLOs under assessment; and (3) the full faculty at a faculty retreat and regular faculty meetings.

Source: Kansas State University Office of Assessment