

**Texas A&M International University
Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (AIER)
for Academic Programs**

Program: BA in Sociology

Assessment Period Covered: March 1, 2008 to January 31, 2009

Program Coordinator (Preparer of Report) John Kilburn

List Other Program Faculty:

Cecilia Garza
Judith Warner
Marcus Ynalvez

The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review for Academic Programs is directed at Goal 1: Academics of the Texas A&M International University 2006-2010 Strategic Plan:

Develop, maintain, assess, and improve academic programs, administrative/educational support services and student services, to admit, retain, and graduate students who achieve established learning outcomes designed to prepare them for success in their chosen careers.

Institutional Mission

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

Academic Program Mission

The Bachelor of Arts in Sociology is designed to support the mission of the university by 1) increasing student's ability to communicate through the use of the written and spoken word; 2) develop their appreciation of culture and social integration and 3) develop their sense of self-realization. This program addresses the College (COAS) goal of preparing students for a variety of professions and roles by providing a broad-based liberal arts education.

Provide summary of the last cycle's use of results and changes implemented

Program faculty should evaluate the former cycle. This statement should specify if the outcomes addressed were a continuation of previous ones, new outcomes, or modified versions of previous outcomes. In addition, the statement should include a concise analysis of the assessment data collected during the previous year, a brief explanation of actions taken to address specific outcomes, an evaluation of how these actions contributed to the improvement of the program, and any recommendations formulated. Assessment data—including actual samples of student work—must be viewed and discussed by program faculty during this process.

We have a small number of majors so we are still gathering data about student writing. We were unable to run an independent class of Sociology Senior Seminar so we had to cross-list it with the Criminal Justice Senior Seminar. We are now growing our number of majors so we have much more data from other courses for majors that have not yet graduated. For example, writing outcomes in Social Inequality showed 6/16 (38%) demonstrated thoughtful analysis and critical thinking in critiques of professional research articles. Five out of sixteen (31%) demonstrated a good understanding of the research process but neglected to offer substantial levels of critical thinking in their papers and 1/16 (6%) demonstrated an adequate understanding of the professional literature. Three of the four students that failed to demonstrate quality written work failed the class and we feel that we could not adequately assess the role of teaching as related to their mastery of concepts. One student received a grade of D in the class and their paper was assessed as failing to understand the important sociological concepts in the professional literature. With regards to Research Methods, all (n=5) of the Sociology Majors in this course passed with an exemplary score. All five performed exemplary work - almost the quality expected of a first-year graduate student. The sampling designs were well-critiqued, the measurement schemes recommended fit the nature of the research problem, the critique of the overall research design exhibited mastery of concepts pertaining to ethics and scientific rigor (professional standards) expected of social science students at the University level.

Selected list of program-level intended student learning outcomes (*It is recommended that programs rotate through their entire set of outcomes over a multi-year period. Programs may focus on one or two outcomes each year, as deemed appropriate*).

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to write professional reports.
2. Students will demonstrate understanding of how professional research papers are organized and developed.
3. Students will use professional literature in their papers to focus on a research question.
4. Students will use professional citation formats.
- 5.

Section I: Planning and Implementation

Outcome(s): *Identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year.*

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the professional sociological literature.

Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (QEP). Yes

Methods of assessment to be used: *The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

Research papers in SOCI 4380 will be assessed on a rubric. This rubric score is 0 through 4. 4= The literature is current and related to the topic and builds a clear research hypothesis. 3= While most of the literature is current and related to the overall topic, there is some component of the hypotheses that is not addressed. 2= The paper uses some literature to support the hypothesis but some of the literature is outdated and/or off the topic. 1= The paper uses old literature. Most of the references are unrelated to the topic 0=No professional literature is used correctly to support hypothesis development.

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

December 2008

Criteria/Benchmark(s): *Specify, if deemed appropriate to assess outcome(s). Criteria/ benchmark(s) may be optional, especially if qualitative measures are used for data collection.*

All students will receive at least a 2 on the rubric score for understanding professional literature.

Section II: Analysis of Results

What were the results attained? *Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) of the program suggested by the results.*

While all student papers reviewed “passed” with above a 2.0 on the rubric, the average scores were Writing – 2.6, Organization & Development – 2.3, Focus and Content – 2.3, Citations – 2.7. The students are demonstrating improving writing skills but they are not yet to the point where they demonstrate use of the professional literature.

What were the conclusions reached? *Should include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information to other individuals. For example, if the discussion took place during the annual spring retreat, include a summary from those deliberations using the Meeting Minutes template found at <http://www.tamtu.edu/integrate/docs/Minutes-Template.doc>. Once completed, submit the minutes to assessment@tamtu.edu.*

Our students need more experience understanding the professional literature. We noted significant weakness in the students’ review of literature sections. Before beginning a research study, it is pro forma to conduct a literature review. The purpose is to locate and define a research question which will provide new knowledge. These students were writing from freshman-sophomore level factual research papers which, in some cases were below their capability.

Describe the action plan formulated. (The plan may be multi-year in nature.)

Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning, including a timeline for implementation.

Recommendations for the Senior Seminar

Literature Review

Introduce the purpose of the scientific method. To develop a thesis (literature review), research problem and specific hypotheses (research) on the basis of prior research, Indicate that the student needs to focus on a specific research problem and not present a factual paper based on commonly available information, particularly internet sources. The student needs to learn to judge the quality of sources.

Specify that the student needs to use the EbscoHost, Proquest and other library databases to search for papers to download onto a memory device relevant to the topic. Specify that internet sources are not to be used unless it is peer-reviewed material.

Ask the student to turn in a general research topic and have an individual discussion about how to narrow down a search. The search should be focused on the questions that contemporary researchers believe need to be asked.

The student should be made to understand that the scientific method does not exist for the purpose of verifying their personal opinion/common sense knowledge. It exists to test whether popular belief is true and to expand knowledge in under-researched subjects. Students should be required to locate 50 journal articles and narrow down the search, collecting more journal articles as they target a topic. A literature review should be based on at least 20-25 peer-reviewed sources.

Students should be made to understand the knowledge is accumulated practice. If more than one researcher finds that alcohol is linked to a certain type of behavior that can be quoted grouped in parents, which means they need to go further in using APA/ASA style.

The first part of the senior seminar should be devoted to literature review, locating the research problem through reading and taking notes on research articles and writing the literature review.

The second part of the senior seminar should be devoted to doing a qualitative or limited quantitative study related to their literature review.

The instructor should constantly remind the student of research ethics. Unfortunately, they should also be required to turn in work to the Turn-it-in Dropbox to remove plagiarism/copying as an unethical source of information/getting a grade.

Section III: Resources

Resource(s) to implement action plan: *Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.*

No new resources. We will restructure the Senior Seminar course and schedule it so that full-time faculty teach the course.

Funding

- New Resources Required
- Reallocation of current funds

Physical

- New or reallocated space

Other

- Primarily faculty/staff time
- University/rule procedure change only

Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)

N/A

Identify proposed outcomes for the next assessment cycle:

Continuation of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for continuation):

We will focus more on the use of the literature and students will not collect data. This will allow us to assess the paper as a review of literature.

New Outcome(s) – (List outcomes below):

N/A

Modification of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for modification):

The paper and the Senior Seminar class will focus more on reading, understanding and writing about the professional literature. Therefore, the measures will be the same but the rubric will be redesigned for assessment purposes.