

Annual Program Assessment Report

Academic Year Assessed: 2021-2022

College: Letters and Sciences

Department: Sociology and Anthropology

Submitted by: Suzy McElrath

Assessment reports are to be submitted annually by program/s. The report deadline is October 15th.

Program(s) Assessed:

Indicate all majors, minors, certificates and/or options that are included in this assessment:

Majors/Minors/Certificate	Options
Sociology Major/Sociology Minor	Sociology and Criminology Options

Annual Assessment Process (CHECK OFF LIST)

1. Data are collected as defined by Assessment Plan
 YES NO
2. Population or unbiased samples of collected assignments are scored by at least two faculty members using scoring rubrics to ensure inter-rater reliability.
 YES NO
3. Areas where the acceptable performance threshold has not been met are highlighted.
 YES NO NA
4. Assessment scores were presented at a program/unit faculty meeting.
 YES NO (planned)
5. The faculty reviewed the assessment results, and responded accordingly (Check all appropriate lines)
 - Gather additional data to verify or refute the result.
 - Identify potential curriculum changes to try to address the problem
 - Change the acceptable performance threshold, reassess
 - Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome
 - Faculty may reconsider thresholds
 - Evaluate the rubric to assure outcomes meet student skill level
 - Use Bloom's Taxonomy to consider stronger learning outcomes
 - Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome

OTHER:

6. Does your report demonstrate changes made because of previous assessment results (closing the loop)? YES NO

1. Assessment Plan, Schedule and Data Source.

a. Multi-year assessment schedule showing PLO, course, data source (assignment), and year to be assessed

PLO#	Course	Assignment	Year to be Assessed				
			2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
1	SOCI 455	Final Paper	X	-	X	-	X
2	SOCI 499/Other	Final Paper	-	X	-	X	-
3	SOCI 318 R	Research Project	X	-	X	-	X
4	SOCI 311	Final Paper	-	X	-	X	-

***Data sources can be items such as randomly selected student essays or projects, specifically designed exam questions, student presentations or performances, or a final paper. Do not use course evaluations or surveys as primary sources for data collection.**

b. What are your threshold values for which you demonstrate student achievement?

PLO#	PLO Description	Threshold Value	Data Source
1	Sociological Principles: Our students will demonstrate an understanding of sociology's core conceptual, theoretical, and empirical principles.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	Final paper or individual research project
2	Sociological Application: Our students will demonstrate the ability to apply the "sociological imagination" to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	Final paper or individual research project
3	Sociological Communication: Our students will demonstrate the ability to communicate sociological knowledge effectively	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	Final paper or individual research project
4	Sociological Evaluation: Students will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the evidence, conclusions, and underlying assumptions of academic and non-academic sources of knowledge.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	Final paper or individual research project

2. What Was Done

a) Was the completed assessment consistent with the plan provided? YES NO

Assessment committee members for this academic year were Suzy McElrath (Chair) and Kelly Knight. This committee met during September of 2022 to begin the process of assessing the performance of students in two classes (SOC 311 and SOC 499). These are two required courses in the sociology curriculum: SOC 311 is the required theoretical course for students pursuing the Criminology option and SOC 499 is required of all student majors.

In line with the Year 0 assessment report, the committee addressed “Sociological Evaluation” (PLO #4) for SOC 311 and “Sociological Application” (PLO #2) for SOC 499. McElrath and Knight independently assessed artifacts from each class using the PLO rubrics developed in the Year 0 assessment report. Once completed, the committee met to share their scores and discuss any significant discrepancies.

Following the changes made by last year’s committee (see closing the loop), we revised the threshold value to 70%, such that the assessment for 2021-2022 is based on whether 70% of students meet or exceed level 3 (acceptable) on a scale of 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (advanced). The committee will share the findings with the sociology faculty at an upcoming meeting (Fall 2022), and discuss proposed modifications to the curriculum and assessment process.

If no, please explain why the plan was altered. n/a

b) Please provide a rubric that demonstrates how your data was evaluated.

Rubric from the Year 0 assessment report used for SOC 499, PLO #2: Sociological Application:

PLO#2: Sociological Application: Our students will demonstrate the ability to apply the “sociological imagination” to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes.				
Indicators	<i>Unacceptable (1)</i>	<i>Marginal (2)</i>	<i>Acceptable (3)</i>	<i>Advanced (4)</i>
Application of Sociological Imagination	Student does not demonstrate a “sociological imagination” and may not understand how social and historical forces shape contemporary social structures.	Student demonstrates an understanding of the way social and historical forces shape contemporary social structures but is unable to clearly apply this perspective to an analysis of social institutions, groups, or processes.	Student demonstrates understanding of how social and historical forces shape contemporary social structures and is able to apply this perspective to an analysis of social institutions, groups, or processes.	Student demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how social and historical forces shape contemporary social structures, is able to apply this perspective to an analysis of social institutions, groups, or processes, and may connect social patterns across societal contexts.

* Threshold values: 70% of students will meet or exceed level 3 competency.

Rubric from the Year 0 assessment report used for SOCI 311, PLO #4: Sociological Evaluation:

PLO #4: Sociological Evaluation: Students will develop critical thinking skills to evaluate the evidence, conclusions, and underlying assumptions of academic and non-academic sources of knowledge.				
Indicators	<i>Unacceptable (1)</i>	<i>Marginal (2)</i>	<i>Acceptable (3)</i>	<i>Advanced (4)</i>
Evidence	Evidence is not accurately interpreted or evaluated. The viewpoints of experts are not questioned.	Evidence is inconsistently interpreted and evaluated. The viewpoints of experts are not thoroughly questioned.	Evidence is accurately interpreted and its quality fairly evaluated. The viewpoints of experts are thoroughly questioned.	Evidence is accurately interpreted and its quality is fairly evaluated, the viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly, and the work's overall validity is assessed.
Conclusions	Conclusions are misrepresented or not analyzed for quality.	Conclusions are mostly represented accurately and analyzed logically, but mistakes remain evident.	Conclusions are accurately represented and logically analyzed based on the quality of the evidence presented.	Conclusions are accurately represented, logically analyzed based on the quality of the evidence presented, and evaluated for overall validity.
Underlying Assumptions	Does not identify or evaluate their own or others' assumptions.	Identifies but does not fully or consistently analyze their own or others' assumptions.	Identifies and analyzes their own and others' assumptions and presents a substantiated position of the appropriateness of those assumptions.	Identifies and analyzes their own and others' assumptions, presents a substantiated evaluation of the appropriateness of those assumptions, and connects these assumptions to the work's overall validity.

* Threshold values: 70% of students will meet or exceed level 3 competency.

3. How Data Were Collected

a) How were data collected? (Please include method of collection and sample size).

Working with course instructors, the committee identified a relevant data source and requested assessment artifacts. For SOCI 311, this yielded a random sample of individual papers in which students were asked to evaluate and compare two core criminological theories (n=15). While the identified artifact for this course was a Final Paper, after consultation with the instructor, the committee determined that this paper (due midway through the semester) best captured the relevant PLO. For SOCI 499, this yielded the population of executive summaries produced for group final projects (n=5). Faculty members were asked to mask student names and email the artifacts to the committee chair who shared them with the other committee member via a OneDrive folder.

b) Explain the assessment process, and who participated in the analysis of the data.

The two-person committee independently reviewed each sample, scoring entries on the 1-4 scale using the appropriate rubric presented above. The committee members compared their scores and discussed significant discrepancies.

4. What Was Learned

Based on the analysis of the data, and compared to the threshold values provided, what was learned from the assessment?

a) Areas of strength

The committee found that a majority of students (80% of SOCI 311 and 100% of SOCI 499) met or exceeded the standards of Acceptable or Advanced as described in the PLO evaluation rubrics. These scores are above our revised threshold value of 70% and meet or exceed the ambitious goal of 80% Acceptable or Advanced. For both courses, median, and modal scores fall within the Acceptable category. Overall, we found that our students performed to expectations based on our revised and original threshold values for the assessed PLOs (Sociological Evaluation and Sociological Application).

SOCI 311, PLO #4	(N=15)	SOCI 499, PLO #2	(N=5)
Unacceptable	0%	Unacceptable	0%
Marginal	20%	Marginal	0%
Acceptable	80%	Acceptable	100%
Advanced	0%	Advanced	0%
Mean	2.8	Mean	3.0

b) Areas that need improvement

While pleased with the results, the committee believes that assessment reliability could be improved in two ways: 1) revising the language of the PLOs based on Bloom's taxonomy, and 2) revising assignment prompts to more directly align with our desired PLOs.

5. How We Responded

a) Describe how "What Was Learned" was communicated to the department, or program faculty. Was there a forum for faculty to provide feedback and recommendations?

The assessment committee plans to communicate our areas of strength and suggestions for improvement to the faculty during an upcoming Fall meeting. This meeting will also serve as a forum for faculty to provide feedback and recommendations. Specific suggestions:

- 1) Revising PLO language based on Bloom's taxonomy to include action words. This suggestion applies to all PLOs – not just those assessed in the current cycle. The suggestion is based on feedback from both committee members and the 2020-2021 Evaluation of Assessment Report provided by the Office of Academic Affairs.
- 2) Revising assignment prompts to more directly align with our desired PLOs. The committee members will present this suggestion and solicit faculty feedback.

b) Based on the faculty responses, will there be any curricular or assessment changes (such as plans for measurable improvements, or realignment of learning outcomes)?

YES NO

If yes, when will these changes be implemented? Please include which outcome is targeted, and how changes will be measured for improvement. If other criteria is used to recommend program changes (such as exit surveys, or employer satisfaction surveys) please explain how the responses are driving department, or program decisions.

Subject to faculty agreement in Fall 2022, the committee anticipates revising PLOs to include action words based on Bloom's taxonomy in Spring 2023.

c) When will the changes be next assessed?

The committee anticipates revising the action words in all relevant PLOs in time for the 2022-2023 assessment cycle in the Fall of 2023.

6. Closing the Loop

a) Based on assessment from previous years, can you demonstrate program level changes that have led to outcome improvements?

Following the 2020-2021 assessment, the faculty discussed and agreed to revise the threshold value for all PLOs to 70%. This change was implemented for the 2021-2022 assessment. Additionally, the faculty started a departmental folder to share writing assignments and tips. With continued focus on developing writing skills in all of our classes, we hope to see outcome improvements for SOCI 318R and SOCI 455 in the 2022-2023 assessment cycle.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu