

Annual/Biennial Program Assessment Report

Academic Year Assessed: 2022-2023

College: Letters and Sciences

Department: Sociology

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Undergraduate Assessment reports are to be submitted annually. The report deadline is October 15th.

Graduate Assessment reports are to be submitted biennially. The report deadline is October 15th.

Program(s) Assessed

List all majors (including each option), minors, and certificates that are included in this assessment:

Major in Sociology, Major in Sociology with Criminology Option, and Minor in Sociology

Have you reviewed the most recent Annual Program Assessment Report submitted and Assessment and Outcomes Committee feedback? (please contact Assistant Provost Deborah Blanchard if you need a copy of either one). Yes

The Assessment Report should contain the following elements, which are outlined in this template and includes additional instructions and information.

1. Past Assessment Summary.
2. Action Research Question.
3. Assessment Plan, Schedule, and Data Source(s).
4. What Was Done.
5. What Was Learned.
6. How We Responded.
7. Closing the Loop.

Sample reports and guidance can be found at:

https://www.montana.edu/provost/assessment/program_assessment.html



1. Past Assessment Summary.

Findings from the 2021-2022 assessment report were positive, overall. Ratings for the program report elements were largely “Outstanding” or “Excellent.” Exceptions were (a) “How We Responded – Sharing Results with Faculty” (which received both “Excellent” and “Inadequate” ratings and (b) “Closing the Loop” (which received both “Excellent” and “Needs Development” ratings). Recommendations included (c) defining the “sociological imagination” and (d) using both formative and summative assessments of students’ coursework as data sources. Over the past year, we have attended to this specific feedback (a-d). For instance, we have now revised PLO#2, which is rooted in the sociological imagination, to include a basic definition of that central concept. In addition, in response to feedback on “How We Responded”, we discussed assessment at multiple faculty meetings and made the decision to deviate from our prior assessment plan to do a more thorough assessment of a single PLO. In doing so, we used both formative and summative methods, and attempted to track progression in student mastery of the PLO across our curriculum. Specifically, we collected data from 100-level, 300-level, and 400-level courses to help us better determine whether our students were improving on PLO#2 (sociological application) over time as they advanced in their academic careers.

2. Action Research Question. What question are you seeking to answer in this cycle’s assessment?

Can students demonstrate the ability to apply the “sociological imagination” to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes? On average, does this ability increase as our students move from lower-division to upper-division courses?

3. Assessment Plan, Schedule, and Data Source(s).

- a) Please provide a multi-year assessment schedule that will show when all program learning outcomes will be assessed, and by what criteria (data).

ASSESSMENT PLANNING SCHEDULE CHART					
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	COURSES MAPPED TO PLOs	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
PLO#1 – Sociological Principles (defined below)	SOCI 455	X	-	X	-
PLO#2 – Sociological Application	SOCI 499/other	-	X	-	X
PLO#3 – Sociological Communication	SOCI 318R	X	-	X	-
PLO#4 – Sociological Evaluation	SOCI 311	-	X	-	X

- b) What are the threshold values for which your program demonstrates student achievement?

Threshold Values		
PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME	Threshold Value	Data Source(s)*
PLO#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.	Responses to multiple-choice or short-answer exam questions, essays, and/or individual research projects.
PLO#2 – Sociological Application: Our students will demonstrate the ability to apply the “sociological imagination” to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes. The sociological imagination is the awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	See above.
PLO#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.	See above. Also, oral presentations.
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.	The threshold value for this outcome is for 70% of assessed students to score at or above 3 on a 1-4 scoring rubric.	See above. Also, oral presentations.

4. What Was Done.

a) Was the completed assessment consistent with the program’s assessment plan? If not, please explain the adjustments that were made.

Yes

No

No. The original assessment plan was to collect and analyze final papers from SOCI 455 (Classical Sociological Theory) and SOCI 318R (Research Methods). Instead, as noted above, we decided as a faculty to deviate from this plan to do a more thorough evaluation of a single PLO. We thought that we might get more valuable information by exploring if students show progress towards an advanced understanding of our PLOs as students move

through the curriculum. As such, we collected and analyzed student artifacts from three separate courses and assessed those artifacts using PLO#2 (sociological recognition). These changes allowed us to respond to the “Inadequate” and “Needs Development” ratings, as well as other recommendations we received in our Evaluation of Assessment Report (i.e., a-b listed above).

b) How were data collected and analyzed and by whom? Please include method of collection and sample size.

Three faculty members volunteered to collect and submit samples of artifacts assessing PLO#2 from each of their courses. They submitted the following.

- Answers to two multiple choice and one short essay question were collected from two 100-level Introduction to Sociology courses with an approximate class size of 200 and 300 each. The sample size was approximately the entire class (n=200-300, depending on the class) for the multiple-choice questions and n=11 for the essay question.
- Responses to short answer questions were collected from a 300-level criminological theory course with an approximate class size of n=40. The sample size was n=9.
- Last, essays were collected from a 400-level capstone course with an approximate class size of n=15. The sample size was n=12.

c) Please provide a rubric that demonstrates how your data were evaluated.

PLO#2 – Sociological Application: Our students will demonstrate the ability to apply the “sociological imagination” to understand and analyze social institutions, groups, and processes. The sociological imagination is the awareness of the relationship between personal experience and the wider society.				
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				

5. What Was Learned.

- a) Based on the analysis of the data, and compared to the threshold values established, what was learned from the assessment?
- b) In the 100-level course, 95% of students met level 2 competency (range = 1 - 2 level competency) for PLO#2 using multiple choice questions and 10% of students met level 3 competency (range = 1 - 4) for PLO#2 using a short essay question.

- In the 300-level course, 0% of students met level 3 competency for PLO#2.
- In the 400-level course, 83% of students met or exceeded level 3 competency for PLO#2.

c) What areas of strength in the program were identified from this assessment process?

Students in the 400-level class clearly demonstrated the ability to apply the sociological imagination (PLO#2). Students in the Introductory course were able to identify the sociological imagination in a multiple-choice format.

d) What areas were identified that either need improvement or could be improved in a different way from this assessment process?

Students in our 100-level and 300-level classes would benefit from more instruction on PLO#2. That said, the artifacts from the 300-level course were not as directly tied to the sociological imagination as those in the Capstone course. As such, we might gain more valuable information in the future if we can identify specific artifacts tied to specific PLOs, or perhaps structure some artifacts around PLOs for the purpose of assessment.

a) **How We Responded.** Describe how “What Was Learned” was communicated to the department, or program faculty. How did faculty discussions re-imagine new ways program assessment might contribute to program growth/improvement/innovation beyond the bare minimum of achieving program learning objectives through assessment activities conducted at the course level?

Handouts of the assessment results were distributed at two faculty meetings and the faculty discussed the findings. The faculty discussions re-imagined how we could make methodological improvements to the type of data we can collect and analyze. Faculty discussed several options, including developing survey instruments specifically designed around PLOs, designing student artifacts more clearly linked to PLOs for the purpose of assessment, and continuing the practice of a “deep dive” on a particular PLO at each assessment cycle.

b) How are the results of this assessment informing changes to enhance student learning in the program?

The results of this assessment have informed the number of meetings the committee plans to hold over the next year to continue discussing the results and to develop future assessment directions. In particular, for this assessment cycle, we attempted to be more prospective and less retrospective in our approach to assessment. We made a plan in advance of what PLO we would examine and what courses we would gather artifacts from. We feel this approach can enhance student learning and mastery of PLOs because our instructors will be in the mindset that PLOs should be at the background of what our specific course learning outcomes set out to achieve.

- c) If information outside of this assessment is informing programmatic change, please describe that.

N/A

- d) What support and resources (e.g. workshops, training, etc.) might you need to make these adjustments?

The committee will now plan the assessment process earlier than has been conducted in the past.

7. Closing the Loop(s). Reflect on the program learning outcomes, how they were assessed in the previous cycle (refer to #1 of the report), and what was learned in this cycle. What action will be taken to improve student learning objectives going forward?

- a) In reviewing the last report that assessed the PLO(s) in this assessment cycle, what changes proposed were implemented and will be measured in future assessment reports?

We plan to use more consistent assessments (e.g., collecting artifacts from all in-class exams) rather than a mix (e.g., comparing artifacts from an in-class exam with artifacts from a take-home essay assignment).

- b) Have you seen a change in student learning based on other program adjustments made in the past? Please describe the adjustments made and subsequent changes in student learning.

Yes, more faculty are providing instruction relevant to PLO#2 which will increase study learning in this area.

Delete the following in the final report.

Next Steps:

- 1) Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu
- 2) Upload report to Department website. Reach out to University Information Technology for support related to CMS or website management.