

*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*

B.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 the characteristics and dynamics of the social world, and how sociologists attempt to understand it.
- B. To understand the classical sociological theories of Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber.
- C. To understand major themes and issues in selected examples of contemporary sociological theory.
- D. To understand the nature of sociological research methods, and major examples of scientific research within sociology.
- E. To understand the nature and role of statistical analysis in sociological research.

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

A General and Overview SLOs

- A.1. Students will be able to define social structure (aka social organization) and explain some important elements of social structure, including status, role, class, power, ethnicity, race, gender, and social stratification.
- A.2. Students will be able to define culture and explain some important elements of culture, including beliefs, values, norms, and language.
- A.3. Students will be able to explain the socialization process and how it operates through at least three major agents of socialization (for example, the family, education, peer groups, and the media).

B. Classical Theory SLOs

- B.1. Students will be able to explain the major themes of Marxian, Durkheimian, and Weberian perspectives on the social world.
- B.2. Students will be able to compare and contrast these perspectives.

C. Contemporary Theory SLOs

- C.1. Students will be able to explain the major concepts and assumptions of at least two of the following perspectives in contemporary sociological theory: symbolic interactionist theory; rational choice, utilitarian, and/or exchange theory; phenomenology; the perspective of Parsons, Bourdieu, Giddens, Habermas, or Foucault; feminist theory; socio-biology.
- C.2. Students will be able to discuss the merits and limitations of each of the two chosen theoretical perspectives.

D. Research Technique SLOs

- D.1. Students will be able to explain the major characteristics of the scientific method.
- D.2. Students will be able to explain the major characteristics of surveys, field research/ethnography, and experiments.
- D.3. Students will be able to discuss the main ethical concerns sociologists face in conducting research and how sociologists attempt to address those ethical concerns.

E. Statistics in Research SLOs

- E.1. Students will be able to describe the difference between descriptive and inferential statistics.
- E.2. Students will be able to describe and give examples of what is meant by measures of central tendency and measures of variation.
- E.3. Students will be able to explain what is meant by correlation, how knowledge of the correlation between two or more variables helps clarify understanding of the social world, and why correlation does not necessarily imply causation.
- E.4. Students will be able to explain the logic of multivariate analysis, including the concept of controlling for variables

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 BA in sociology includes all three UNM student learning goals. This is to a large degree 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 deepening their knowledge of the character and dynamics of human culture (SLO A2 below), students learn skills helpful in interacting with other people, and in facilitating effective organizational and societal dynamics. Such knowledge and skills provide the basis for assessing and setting in motion personal and social dynamics associated with higher levels of social responsibility.

University of New Mexico Student Learning Goals				
Program SLOs	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility	Program SLO is conceptually different from university goals.
A.1. Students will be able to define social structure (aka social organization) and explain some important elements of social structure, including status, role, class, power, ethnicity, race, gender, and social stratification	X	X	X	
A.2. Students will be able to define culture and explain some important elements of culture, including beliefs, values, norms, and language.	X	X	X	
B.1. Students will be able to explain the major themes of Marxian, Durkheimian, and Weberian perspectives on the social world.	X	X	X	
C.1. Students will be able to explain the major concepts and assumptions of at least two of the following perspectives in contemporary sociological theory: symbolic interactionist theory; rational choice, utilitarian, and/or exchange theory; phenomenology; the perspective of Parsons, Bourdieu, Giddens, Habermas, or Foucault; feminist theory; socio-biology.	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 in-class exam questions that are required and part of the class. 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 assess the SLOs being assessed. The exams will be graded by the instructor in the course and by a representative of the Department's sub-disciplinary task force most associated with the material examined in the exam. For example, exam questions associated with research methods will be graded by the instructor of the course and by a representative of the Research Methods Task Force.

The Department realizes that the focus of the assessment process concerns the program and not individual students, thus making a blind evaluation of individual responses most appropriate. The sub-disciplinary representative that grades all exams will be grading them without attention to the identity of individual students. However, instructors of individual sections of a course will know individual students, and exam results will have some impact on their course grade. While a completely blind evaluation would be best for program assessment the Department feels that by making the exam a formal part of the course we insure participation and decrease the likelihood that some students would respond to the question in a manner that does not accurately represent what they know. A pilot project that used an exam that was not a formal part of the course led to less than full participation of students and generated some responses that evaluators felt indicated students were not taking the exercise seriously.

- 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 75% 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 course most closely associated the SLO(s) under examination. For example, when examining an SLO closely associated with general sociology, all students in Introduction to Sociology, the major general sociology course, will be examined. Since the population of all students in a course during a single semester is but a sample of students that will eventually receive a degree, we anticipate our sample of eventual graduates will underestimate the percentage of "graduates" that would receive passing scores. This anticipation is based on the assumption that students completing a degree have better knowledge of sociology than a sample of students that also includes those that do not complete the degree. The department will be doing research to better understand the relation between the percentage of all students in an appropriate course that receive a passing score and the percentage of eventual program graduates that would receive a passing score.

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 for general sociology (SLO A1, A2) was done during Spring 2008, will be done for classical theory (B1) and contemporary theory (C1) during Spring of 2010. This schedule may be changed because of scheduling problems for the appropriate classes, yet such change is not likely.

As noted above the exams will be graded by the instructor in the course and by a person from the appropriate sub-disciplinary task force in the Department. The person from the task force will examine all exams in all the classes. All persons evaluating the exams will use the same rubric. We will be particularly attentive to establishing agreement on what constitutes a performance that is not deemed appropriate to pass. Although instructors for individual sections of a course will use the common rubric for their contribution to the assessment project, they may use alternative techniques in establishing their grading for individual students in their course.

The results will be discussed in several forums. The following forums are listed beginning with those closest in time to the presentation of results.

- Instructors of sections of the course in which the assessment exam was administered will meet and discuss the results. This will help in providing information to participants in the assessment process, and provide information for subsequent forums on the results.
- The Departmental task force most closely associated with the area in which assessment took place will meet to consider the results of the assessment exam, including possible changes in the curriculum, staffing of classes, mechanisms of assessment, and other issues germane to improving instruction and learning.

- Each year the Department has a day long retreat in which a variety of topics germane to the Department are examined in some depth. One session of the retreat will be dedicated to considering the results of the assessment exam, and information and recommendations generated in discussions among participants of the assessment, and in the appropriate task force. It is likely that discussion among the full faculty at the retreat will lead to recommendations for changes in curriculum, staffing, and/or future assessment and other issues germane to improving instruction and learning.
- It is expected that the Departmental retreat will identify issues that will be referred back to the appropriate Departmental task force and perhaps other Departmental committees. The continual interplay among assessment participants, departmental task forces, departmental committees, 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 B.A. Sociology: 2008-2009
(General Sociology)

Fall, 2008

Discussion of results from Spring 2008 assessment of SLO A1 and A2
(focus on General Sociology)

- * Discussion by persons involved in the process
(instructors and assessment coordinator Robert Fiala)
- * Report prepared for full faculty
- * Discussions and recommendations at faculty retreat,
Fall, 2008
- * Implementing recommendations for reaching learning goals
regarding general sociology (goal A)

Spring, 2009

Report to full faculty regarding assessment of SLO A1 and A2

- * Discussion & recommendations at faculty retreat, Spring 2009
- * Implementation of recommendations

Assessment of B.A. Sociology: 2009-2010
(Sociological Theory)

Fall, 2009

Planning and coordination of Spring 2010 assessment of SLO B1 and SLO C1 (focus on Classical Theory and Contemporary Theory)

- * Selecting questions and establishing rubrics
- * Coordinating syllabi

Spring, 2010

- * Administration of assessment exams in all sections of Classical Theory (371) and Contemporary Theory (471)
- * Evaluating results of exams
- * Writing report of exam results

Assessment of B.A. Sociology: 2010-2011
(Sociological Theory)

Fall, 2010

Discussion of results from Spring 2009 assessment of SLO B1 and C1 (Classical and Contemporary Theory)

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

Spring, 2011

- * Discussions and recommendations at the faculty retreat of Spring, 2011
- * Implementing recommendations for reaching learning goals regarding sociological theory (B & C)

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 persons teaching courses linked to the areas 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. Then persons teaching courses targeted for assessment of specific learning objectives and the Department's outcomes 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 the full faculty at a faculty retreat and regular meetings. Implementation of possible changes is then set in motion.

2. *The process for consideration of the implications of assessment for change:*
 - a. *to assessment mechanisms themselves,*
 - b. *to curriculum design,*
 - c. *to pedagogy*
 - d. *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 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 is 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 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