

*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. Criminology

C. Contact Person(s) for the Assessment Plan

Robert Fiala, Associate Professor, Sociology. rfiala@unm.edu
Beverly Burris, Professor and Chair, Sociology. bburris18@comcast.net
Richard Coughlin, Professor, Sociology. coughlin48@aol.com

D. Broad Program Goals & Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

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

- A. To become familiar with major sources of crime data.
- B. To become familiar with the key correlates of crime and delinquency.
- C. To become familiar with mainstream criminological theories.
- D. To become familiar with the primary formal social control institutions.

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

- A. Crime Data
 - A.1. Students will be able to identify three major sources of crime data: official data (UCR/NIBRS), victimization data (NCVS), and self report data (e.g., NYS, MTF)
 - A.2. Students will be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of each source.
 - A.3. Students will be able to identify the kinds of research questions each source of data can address and the types of questions each is unable to adequately address.

- B. Correlates of Crime and Delinquency
 - B.1. Students will be able to identify some of the key correlates of crime (e.g., age, gender, race, SES)
 - B.2. Students will be able to articulate some of the explanations/mechanisms that help explain these correlations.
 - B.3. Students will be able to distinguish between micro- and macro-level correlates of crime and related explanations.

- C. Criminological Theories
 - C.1. Students will be able to articulate the key assumptions, central arguments, and core hypotheses of mainstream criminological theories (e.g., social control, strain, labeling, social disorganization).
 - C.2. Students will be able to distinguish between micro- and macro-level theories.
 - C.3. Students will be able to apply these theories to empirical data at both the micro and macro levels (e.g., peers and criminal behavior (micro) or poverty rates and crime rates (macro)).

- D. Social Control Institutions
 - D.1. Students will be able to identify the key functions and goals of criminal justice institutions.
 - D.2. Students will be able to explain the nature and form of inequality in the criminal justice system (especially race, class and gender) and be able to articulate the central (and often competing) explanations for these inequalities.
 - D.3. Students will be able to identify and discuss some of the factors and/or conditions that make formal social controls more or less effective.

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 criminology 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 crime and delinquency 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 correlates of crime (SLO B1 below), students learn skills helpful in assessing and developing social and organizational policy that may be directed to the common good within organizations, society, and the international community.

University of New Mexico Student Learning Goals				
Program SLOs	Knowledge	Skills	Responsibility	Program SLO is conceptually different from university goals.
B.1. Students will be able to identify some of the key correlates of crime (e.g., age, gender, race, SES)	X	X	X	
C.1. Students will be able to articulate the key assumptions, central arguments, and core hypotheses of mainstream criminological theories (e.g., social control, strain, labeling, social disorganization)	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 required courses 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 assess the SLOs. The exams will be graded by the instructor in the course and by one or more representatives of the Criminology Task Force within the Sociology Department.

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 representative from the Criminology Task Force that grades all exams will be doing so 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 greater 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 criminology course or courses most closely associated the SLO(s) under examination. For example, when examining an SLO closely associated with the causes of crime, all students in the Program’s required course on the causes of crime in a specified semester will be examined. Since the population of all students in a course during a single semester is but a sample of all 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 criminology 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 correlates of crime (SLO B1) will be done in Fall 2009, while exams for criminological theory will occur in Spring 2011. These dates may change because of scheduling problems, yet such change is not likely.

As noted above the exams will be graded by the instructor in the course and by one or more persons from the Criminology Task Force. The person or persons from the Task Force will review all exams in all classes. All persons evaluating the exams will use the same rubric. Evaluators will be particularly attentive to establishing agreement on what constitutes a performance that is not deemed appropriate to pass. Although instructors of individual sections of a course will use the common rubric for their contributions to the assessment project, they may use alternative techniques in establishing their grading of individual students in their courses.

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 the 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 Criminology Task Force will meet to consider the results of the assessment exam and information emerging from the discussion among direct participants in the assessment project. The Task Force will discuss possible changes in the curriculum, staffing of classes, mechanisms of assessment, and other issues germane to improving instruction and learning.
- Each year the Sociology Department has a day long retreat in which a variety of topics germane to the Department are discussed in some depth. One session of the retreat will now be dedicated to considering the results of assessment exams, and information and recommendations generated in discussions among participants in the assessment and the Criminology 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 Criminology Task Force. The continual interplay among assessment participants, the Criminology Task Force, 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. Criminology: 2008-2009

Fall, 2008

Preliminary plans for assessment of SLO B1 (Correlates of Crime)

- * Suggestions for course offering and staffing
- * Criminology Task Force discussions

Spring, 2009

Establish procedures for administering exams for SLO B1 (Correlates of Crime)

- * Selecting questions and establishing rubrics
- * Coordinating syllabi

Assessment of B.A. Criminology 2009-2010 (SLO B1, Correlates of Crime)

Fall, 2009

- * Administration of assessment exams for SLO B1 in all sections of Soc. 312 (Causes of Crime)
- * Evaluating results of exams
- * Preparing preliminary report of exam results

Spring, 2010

Discussion of results from Fall, 2009 assessment of SLO B1 (Correlates of Crime)

- * Discussion by persons involved in the process (instructors and person from Criminology Task Force)
- * Discussions and recommendations from the Department's Criminology Task Force
- * Discussions and recommendations from the full faculty
- * Implementing recommendations for reaching goals regarding the correlates of crime and delinquency

Assessment of B.A. Criminology: 2010-2011 (SLO C1, Criminological Theory)

Fall, 2010

Plans for assessment of SLO C1 (criminological theory)

* Selecting questions and establishing rubrics

* Coordinating syllabi

Spring, 2011

* Administration of assessment exams in all sections of Social Control (Soc. 313)

* Evaluating results of exams

* Preparing draft 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 of the Sociology Department as well as instructors of courses linked to the areas targeted for assessment participate in the other 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 one or more representatives of the Criminology Task Force establish testing mechanisms, perform appropriate testing and produce a report. This is followed by discussions and recommendations in meetings of persons doing the assessment, the Criminology Task Force, and the full faculty at a faculty retreat and regular faculty meetings. Implementation of possible changes then follows.

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 will be 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 follows:
(1) persons directly involved in the assessment; (2) the Criminology Task Force; and
(3) the full faculty at a faculty retreat and regular faculty meetings.

Source: Kansas State University Office of Assessment