

MA Sociology
Plan for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes
College of Arts and Sciences
The University of New Mexico

A. College, Department and Date

1. College: College of Arts and Sciences
2. Department: Sociology
3. Date: January 2017

B. Academic Program of Study

M.A. Sociology

(Note: The MA & PhD Sociology programs have effectively become one program. Their assessment plans and reports, while still separate, should be read together. The MA SLOs also apply to our PhD program, but not vice versa.)

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, critique, and be able to note research applications of insights from the classical sociological theories of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim, as well as select perspectives in contemporary sociological theory.
- B. To understand the nature of sociological research methods, and how they may be used in examining sociological issues.
- C. To understand how some contemporary statistical procedures may be used to examine research issues in contemporary sociology.

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

A.1. Students will be able to explain the major themes of a Marxian, Weberian, and Durkheimian perspective on the social world.

UNM Goals (Knowledge Skills Responsibility)

A.2. Students will be able to explain and critique at least two theoretical perspectives that are part of contemporary sociological theory.

UNM Goals (Knowledge Skills Responsibility)

A.3 Students will be able to derive a research hypothesis from a theoretical perspective that may be applicable to an area of their own interest. They will also be able to provide a brief description of a possible research project that investigates the hypothesis.

UNM Goals (Knowledge Skills Responsibility)

B.1 Students will be able to explain how a research topic important to them may be investigated using a particular research design, mode of data collection, and mode of data analysis.

UNM Goals (Knowledge Skills Responsibility)

C.1 Students will be able to write a professional, empirical research paper that uses univariate and regression-based multivariate statistical techniques to conduct an original data analysis.

UNM Goals (Knowledge Skills Responsibility)

E. Assessment of Student Learning Three-Year Plan

1. Timeline for Assessment

Year/Semester	Assessment Activities
Year 1, Fall	Direct measures for A1 Faculty discussion of B1 results, proposals for improvements
Year 1, Spring	Direct measures for A2&3 Indirect measures for A1,2&3 Implementation of changes for B1
Year 2, Fall	Faculty discussion of A1,2&3 results, proposals for improvements
Year 2, Spring	Direct measures for C1 Indirect measures for C1 Implementation of changes for A1,2&3
Year 3, Fall	Direct measures for B1 Faculty discussion of C1 results, proposals for improvements
Year 3, Spring	Indirect measures for B1 Implementation of changes for C1

2. How will learning outcomes be assessed?

A. What:

Direct Measures: All SLOs will be directly assessed through paper projects or essay assignments that are required and part of the class. The use of essays vs papers will be at the discretion of the assessment coordinator to accommodate the variance in how

instructors structure their courses. These will be graded by the instructor in the course and by either the assessment coordinator or another member of the department with a specialization in the topic.

The Department realizes that the assessment process for a program is interested in the program and not individual students, thus making a blind evaluation of individual responses most appropriate. The non-instructor-assessor will be rating the exams/papers 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 decreases 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.

Example 1: To assess SLO A1, students in Sociology 500 “Classical Social Theory” may be given short paper assignments asking them to summarize and critique the major classical theorists. The instructors will grade these and the assessor will rate the essays on the 4 point scale discussed below.

Example 2: To assess SLO C1, students in Sociology 581 “Advanced Social Statistics I” may be required to write an original empirical research paper using multivariate regression models. The instructors will grade these and the assessor will rate the essays on the 4 point scale discussed below.

Indirect Measures: All SLOs will be indirectly assessed through online surveys of the graduate students. These questions will pointedly ask the students to rate the courses’ and program’s effectiveness in helping them achieve the SLO, and ask for more detailed, open-ended feedback on how the program can improve student learning.

Criteria for Success: While the criteria for success may vary with the character of individual questions and the rubric in use, generally a rubric will be used that has three “passing” categories (excellent, good, fair), and one “failing” category (poor), and success will be represented by having 75% of the students receive a passing assessment. If instead a series of exam questions are assessed whose answers can only be correct vs incorrect, then success will be represented by having 75% of the students correctly answering 65% or more of the questions (i.e. a passing grade on those questions collectively). See example rubric for papers and essay questions in Appendix 1.

B. Who:

Students will be sampled from the courses that 1) most directly address the SLO in question, and 2) are required milestones that every student in the program must pass through. Thus every student in the program has a chance of being assessed, and the assessment happens at the time when the SLO should be achieved. The number of students in these courses is small enough that all of the Sociology MA

students taking the course in the assessment year can reasonably be included in the assessment.

3. What is the unit's process to analyze/interpret assessment data and use results to improve student learning?

At the beginning of each Fall semester, the tenure-line faculty of the department will meet to review and discuss the assessment reports for the previous year, as presented by the assessment coordinator. The faculty will decide at this meeting on improvements to the curriculum and/or assessment process based on these results and discussion. These will be recorded in the meeting minutes and the assessment reports themselves, and will be communicated to non-tenure-line faculty and staff as necessary by the department chair and/or graduate committee chair. The graduate committee will then take the lead on implementing any changes to curriculum, with a general goal of doing so in the following Spring semester, depending on the nature of the changes. The assessment coordinator will take the lead on implementing any changes to the assessment process, with a general goal of doing so immediately.

Appendix 1. Example Assessment Rubric

Paper Assessment Rubric		
Score	Assessment	Standard
4	Excellent	Student went above and beyond the requirements of the instructions in displaying mastery of the SLO, and/or demonstrated particular good insight or skill regarding the SLO.
3	Good	Student demonstrated the SLO with a good performance and fulfilled the requirements of the assignment instructions.
2	Fair	Student's demonstration of the SLO was adequate but not good, or a good but with incomplete fulfillment of the assignment instructions.
1	Poor	Student did not adequately demonstrate the SLO.