Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet
Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term
Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Information:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Assessed</td>
<td>BA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>HISTORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>LIBERAL ARTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>ANDY KIRK</td>
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<td>CIAN T. MCMAHON</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>14 DECEMBER 2018</td>
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Contact Person for This Report

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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
WHAT ARE THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES?

By the time our students complete the program they will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a broad knowledge of the development of world history from antiquity to the present.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of two of the four geographical areas including United States, Latin America, Europe and Asia.
3. Demonstrate an awareness of the changing nature of historical interpretation and the ability to make independent judgments about conflicting historical interpretations.
4. Demonstrate training in the collection, analysis and evaluation of historical information.
5. Demonstrate training in critical thinking and the ability to construct a cogent argument on the basis of historical information.
6. Demonstrate training in clarity of expression orally and in writing.

WHICH LEARNING OUTCOMES WERE ASSESSED?

The goal of assessment is to evaluate student learning with the intention to improve it.

For this report, SLOs 4 and 5 was assessed in HIST 451 (Fall 2018). This overlaps with UULO #2 (Inquiry and Critical Thinking).

HIST 451 is our Capstone Experience course. It is designed to help history majors develop their skills of original research and analysis by writing a 25-30 page research paper based on primary sources.

HOW WERE THE LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSED?

This SLO was assessed using three instruments:

A) Up-to-date statistics on withdrawal rates;
B) A focus group discussion with a sample of students
C) Direct assessment of a sample of HIST 451 students’ final essays using a grading rubric
A) Up-To-Date Statistics on Withdrawal Rates
Statistics on withdrawal rates over the past several years (for all offered sections of HIST 451 each semester) were collected and collated. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
<th>Withdrawals</th>
<th>Withdrawal Rate</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>(Spring)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>(Fall)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2018 Totals</td>
<td>252 enrolled 4 withdrawals</td>
<td>(Withdrawal Rate: 2%)</td>
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B) Student Focus Group
In an effort to understand what elements of HIST 451 students struggle with (while simultaneously figuring out what measures the instructors and students themselves could take to help the students complete it effectively), a focus group discussion period was administered by the department's Undergraduate Coordinator (Assessment Officer) in one section (12 students: 8 seniors and 4 juniors) of HIST 451 in November 2018. The questions addressed during the focus group are listed in Appendix#1 below.

C) Sample Essays
A sample of the HIST 451 students’ final essays was also directly assessed using a standardized rubric (see Appendix #2 attached). This is a simplified version of the rubric suggested by the American Historical Association. For the purposes of assessing this year’s SLO, the “Evidence” and “Analysis” categories of the rubric were focused on.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

A) Up-To-Date Statistics on Withdrawal Rates
These statistics suggest that even if students find HIST 451 daunting, they generally have the resources required to finish the course. This may be because they are mostly seniors who are close to graduation and need HIST 451 to graduate as History majors.

B) Student Focus Group
This survey of 12 students suggests that we might be able to improve our students’ skills of inquiry and critical thinking by creating a clearer curricular pathway for them throughout their undergraduate experience as History majors.

Most students agreed that the History department has the resources they need to succeed in HIST 451. Many found the Lied Library’s databases, inter-library loan system, and personnel to be effective. Others felt that their professor helped them understand what was expected of them in the course.
At the same time, while some students made intellectual connections between our milestone experience (HIST 251) and the capstone project (HIST 451), others found that the two were too distant to work effectively together. It was not always clear how the skills learned in one transferred over to the other (especially for transfer students who took HIST 251 at the College of Southern Nevada). Some students felt that the department's 400-level courses helped much more than HIST 251.

Students and instructors alike seem to agree that, in its current format, HIST 451 involves too much work for a one-semester, three-credit course. To identify a topic, design a research project, and execute that project in fifteen weeks is difficult.

Relatedly, as in last year's Assessment Report, the students' responses also suggest that the problems facing our HIST 451 students involve what are sometimes referred to as strategies of “college success” (skills and work habits employed by high-achieving students). Several students admitted to having struggled with “time management,” for example, which left them less time to polish their writing. There is no doubt that our students' ability to inquire and think critically would be aided by our helping them develop these strategies (as is done in the College of Liberal Arts' First-Year Seminar, COLA100 and, to a degree, in HIST 251).

C) Grading Rubric

The direct assessment of 12 HIST 45 final papers demonstrates a great disparity of skills amongst the students who completed the course.

The average score under the “Evidence” category was 2.9 out of 4, which suggests that the average student's information derived from sufficient sources but was (in the words of the rubric (see Appendix #2 below) “either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgment of biases.” Only 4 students (33% of the sample) scored a 4/4 in “Evidence.” Another 3 students (25%) scored 3/4 while the remaining 5 (42%) scored 2/4.

The students scored even lower in the “Analysis” category. The average score was only 2.7 out of 4. This suggests that the average student struggled to reveal many “interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection” in the material they analyzed. Only 2 students (17%) scored a 4/4 in “Analysis.” Another 4 students (33%) scored 3/4 while the remaining 6 (50%) scored 2/4.

These data suggest that while students manage to complete the course (see Withdrawal Rates above), there is much room for improvement in how well they perform in the course. Based on the Focus Group administered in November 2018 (see above), it would appear that the proposed 1-credit courses, which the Department of History is in the process of instituting (see below) will go some way towards helping our students do better in HIST 451. Only time (and future Assessment Reports) will tell whether or not this turns out to be true.

HOW ARE WE RESPONDING TO WHAT WE LEARNED?

This data suggests that the problems facing our seniors are rooted in their experiences throughout their undergraduate experience. Skills such as time management are critical to the process of inquiry and critical thinking and yet few instructors consider it prudent to spend class time working on it with their students.

The Department of History needs to do a better job of helping its students develop the sorts of “college success” skills throughout their years at UNLV. At the same time, of course, the
department also needs to make sure that its students work on skills and competencies such as inquiry and critical thinking at every stage of the undergraduate experience.

The key to achieving these goals lies in the creation of a more coherent curricular pathway from freshman to sophomore to junior to senior. Currently, the department only demands that its students take two “skills-based” courses: HIST251 and HIST451.

To address this issue, the department is currently in the process developing two new, one-credit, experimental courses: a “freshman workshop” (tentatively entitled HIST151A) and a “junior workshop” (tentatively entitled HIST351A). Syllabi have been drafted and submitted to Curriculog for approval by the College of Liberal Arts and Faculty Senate.

**HIST151A** is designed to introduce History majors (and potential recruits) to the discipline of history and to our department in particular. Over the course of five weeks, a range of faculty members from UNLV’s History Department will help the students pursue the course objectives.

Building on the milestone course (HIST251), **HIST351A** will enable History majors to design a research project, which they will subsequently execute in the senior capstone course (HIST451). Over the course of five weeks, each student will define a research topic and identify primary and secondary sources related to it. The final assignments are an annotated bibliography, brief research prospectus, and oral presentation.

Moreover, as part of our broader commitment to understanding our undergraduates’ needs, the Department of History will continue to collaborate with Dr. Mary-Ann Winkelmes, Director of Instructional Development and Research in the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs (and a member of our department). Together, we will work on implementing the Transparency in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Project (TILT).

In December 2017, we systematically administered a TILT survey across our 100-level courses to learn more about the kinds of problems our freshmen students are already encountering and what measures our instructors could take to help them. In December 2018, we re-administered a version of this online survey, which provided us with more information with which we can hopefully make better decisions regarding our curriculum next year.

This TILT survey will also inform our efforts to support Retention, Progression, and Completion rates amongst History majors. It focuses especially on students’ responses to questions about “predictors” of students’ persistence (i.e. awareness of skill development, sense of belonging, sense of confidence).

Thank you,

CTM
APPENDIX #1 (STUDENT FOCUS GROUP)

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
History Department
HIST 451 Assessment Report FOCUS GROUP

Course #: ________ Semester: ________

Number of History majors in section? _____ History minors? ______

Current standings: Freshmen ___ Sophomores ___ Juniors ___ Seniors ___

These questions are designed to find out what YOU THINK about the following questions:

What is the BIGGEST OBSTACLE/DIFFICULTY you have faced in this course?

What BENEFIT/RESOURCE have you found most useful?

What COULD THE PROFESSOR HAVE DONE to help you either overcome your obstacles or exploit your resources?

What COULD YOU HAVE DONE to either overcome your obstacles or exploit your resources?

What PREVIOUS UNLV HISTORY COURSE best prepared you for HIST451. How so?
APPENDIX #2 (GRADING RUBRIC)

HIST 451 Student Performance Rubric

Criteria: From 4 (best) to 0 (worst)

Question
4: Question is clearly stated, feasible, and reflects understanding of issue at hand.
3: Question is stated but either infeasible or lacking broader understanding of issue at hand.
2: Question is stated but some terms remain undefined and ambiguities are unexplored.
1: Question is stated without clarification or description.
0: Question is either not stated or unintelligible.

Evidence
4: Information derives from sufficient sources, is well-organized, and properly cited. Biases are acknowledged.
3: Information derives from sufficient sources but is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
2: Information derives from barely adequate sources and is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
1: Information derives from inadequate sources and is either poorly organized, improperly cited, or lacking acknowledgement of biases.
0: Information is inadequate in several ways.

Analysis
4: Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal several interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
3: Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal some interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
2: Organizes evidence but reveals few if any interesting points of contrast, comparison, or connection.
1: Lists evidence but offers little analysis.
0: Offers no analysis.

Argument
4: Argument is clearly stated and carefully organized into thesis and sub-arguments. Other points of view acknowledged.
3: Argument is clearly stated but organization of thesis and sub-arguments is lacking in one or two important ways.
2: Argument is adequately stated but organization of thesis and sub-arguments is lacking in three or more important ways.
1: Argument is poorly stated and inadequately organized.
0: There is no definable argument.

Conclusion
4: Conclusion is imaginatively stated and based on careful evaluation of evidence and different perspectives.
3: Conclusion is adequately stated but loosely connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
2: Conclusion is adequately stated but either introduces new information or poorly connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
1: Conclusion is inadequately stated and poorly connected to preceding analysis of evidence.
0: There is no clear conclusion.