

Department of History
Illinois State University

M.A. and M.S. Objectives
Undergraduate Assessment Plan
Assessment Report - Spring 2003
Assessment Report - 2003 - 04

M.A. and M.S. Objectives

The main object of these programs is to advance students' knowledge and understanding of the essentials of historical study beyond what they achieved at the undergraduate level. These programs include three core elements – the development of students' general methodological and philosophical knowledge; their instruction in the skills necessary for historical research, composition, and presentation; and, the study of specific periods and places.

The specific objectives of these programs are to assist students to:

1. Develop understanding of the philosophy of historical study.
2. Develop knowledge of historiography, including major themes and narratives in history.
3. Develop multidisciplinary knowledge of research methods in history and the social sciences.
4. Develop knowledge at an advanced level of diverse periods, peoples, and societies.
5. Demonstrate the ability to apply their knowledge in examinations, research papers and presentations and, as appropriate to the program option, in thesis form.

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Undergraduate Assessment Plan

The History assessment consists of two parts:

- a. An electronic portfolio based around research papers from our introductory methods seminar, HIS 200, and from our senior "capstone" seminar, HIS 300. The intent is to use an extensive paper from early in the program and one from the end of the program to examine whether students really are picking up the research and analytical that the major is supposed to teach. The following description, which we voted last fall to include in all HIS 300 syllabi, describes the content and intent:

Portfolios: All History BA & BS students must, as part of their degrees, create an electronic writing portfolio consisting of research papers for HIS 200, 300 and other optional papers demonstrating proficiency in critical historical and thinking skills and methods. The completed portfolio must also include a self-evaluation explaining the student's intellectual development as a History major at Illinois State University.

While enrolled in HIS 300, students must complete their portfolios using software and instructions that the department provided during HIS 200. History Education majors should not do a second portfolio but should include the materials described above in their History Education portfolios. The required self-evaluation should be between 400 and 1,000 words and should consider the following: what you hoped to achieve by majoring in history at ISU; what you accomplished or fail to accomplish and why; which activities and experiences, both positive and negative, contributed most to your history education; and in general how you developed intellectually while majoring in history at ISU.

- b. An alumni survey, which we will send out via the Institutional Research Office Alumni surveys. A miscommunication (probably caused by a turnover in department chairs) prevented our devising the survey for distribution in 2001-02, but we will make sure to arrange this during the current summer.

Because the portfolio requirement went into effect as of the 99-00 catalog, we do not yet have an adequate number of completed portfolios to evaluate progress from the beginning of the major to the end. Our first big batch will come during next year. We spent much of this year working out mechanics of implementing the portfolios. After a number of false starts and software problems, we have found that the most practical way to ensure full compliance from students may not be to have them place portfolios on-line (as originally envisioned), but to have them turn in their portfolios on a 3½" disk when they turn in their seminar papers. Thus the department needs to talk again in the fall about whether it does indeed want to press ahead with making portfolios on-line or simply collect them through the seminars.

With the advice of Professors McBride and Drake, who are published authorities in portfolio assessment, we have developed the [attached rubric](#) to allow evaluation of seminar papers according to departmental goals. Right now, we are recording and making a backup disk of the first big batch of HIS 200 papers to come in under the portfolio requirement. Once that is done, we will begin evaluating them using the [rubric](#). The department just hired a new colleague who successfully implemented an evaluation

system at one of the California State system universities using a simpler rubric than the attached, so we may revise our rubric once this new colleague starts in the fall.

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