

Program of History Assessment Plan

Department of Social Sciences
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Park University

Introduction

The assessment plan for the undergraduate program of history is based on the University and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences mission and vision statements, as well as the Program of History mission and goals, which in turn are linked to standards defined by the American Historical Association (AHA), Organization of American Historians (OAH), Phi Alpha Theta (PAT), National Council for History Education (NCHE), and the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS). The program is designed to measure student competence in defined areas of concentration as well as provide an assessment of overall program effectiveness.

History is one of the social sciences. The values and skills that the discipline offers make it an integral part of a complete liberal arts education for better citizenship in our complex, culturally diverse, and increasingly global society. A major in History prepares students to mature into contemplative and competent citizens of a continually interconnected world. The History major is a program of learning, not merely a compilation of courses that lack connectivity. The program is recognized as incrementally developed upon courses which contribute students as global citizens that are competently knowledgeable and sustain, as lifelong learners, an essential appreciation of the perspicacity and proficiency of the historical profession.

The American Historical Association espoused in “Liberal Learning and the History Major” (*Perspectives*, 1990) that:

“Studying history as a discipline requires one to engage one’s mind with the facts, ideas, and interpretations conveyed or suggested by historical evidence, to give contexts to discrete pieces of evidence, and to devise plausible explanations and judgments based on the evidence. Such engagement compels one to sift, sort, and arrange what one sees in ways that help one make sense of it. The discipline of history equips one to extend facts, ideas, and interpretations into new realms. One must weigh the validity of arguments, assess the soundness of historical judgments, and otherwise practice the art of critical thinking characteristic of discerning minds.”

The program confirms the AHA statement by a tri-tiered plan. First, each course is assessed using measures designed to determine the mastery of course content. Second, students are required to successfully complete an advanced research project and an internship at a historical institution in the Kansas City area or second advanced research project. Third, education majors must successfully pass the PRAXIS II Subject Assessment test.

This plan was approved by the University Assessment Committee, the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Dean of College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Description of the Plan

The purpose of the undergraduate program of history is to be focused on “best practices” of the literature, standards, and competencies developed and promulgated by professional and discipline identifiable organizations. The standards and competencies, recognized upon the literature, correspond to the curricular model of Park University undergraduate programs as related to discipline specific courses, General Education and Liberal Learning’s. Applicable standards are promoted in course syllabi and curriculum for individual courses.

The comprehensive purpose of the undergraduate history program is to accompany the student through a course of study, which is interconnected to the standards and competencies, while augmenting and refining skills based upon the

interconnected components of historical thinking: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making. The focus of the program of history is continuously on the student and his/her individual and professional advancement.

The undergraduate major in history is expected to pursue a meticulous course of study, demonstrate superior academic work and author a highly developed research project worthy of a forward-thinking student of history. The Program of History is attentive to educating students who possess high-level academic preparation, who will proceed in graduate work, who upholds the utmost professional ethics of the historical profession or education, and who espouse the attributes of life-long learning and life preparation.

History majors are required to author one highly developed research project worthy of a forward-thinking student of history in their senior year. The research project evaluation is based on the connectivity of program courses and measures of assessment, cumulating in the research project.

The Program of History is evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively. Each student, major and non-major, has the occasion to evaluate each course each semester/term. The results are returned to the instructor and are accessible to the program coordinator, department chair, and Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, to become part of the formative information for course review and revision. Teaching is *the* prominent priority in Park University's Program of History. Full-time and adjunct faculty members are obliged to model best practices. In addition, alumni are surveyed every five years following graduation and graduating seniors are expected to complete an "Exit Survey for Majors" during their last semester. Both surveys are performed to ascertain if the program met his/her expectations and employment needs.

Characteristics of the Assessment Plan

The Program of History Assessment Plan at Park University is established on "best practices" as promoted by the American Historical Association, Organization of American Historians, Phi Alpha Theta, National Council for History Education, and the National Center for History in the Schools. The Plan is in accord with the literature that strengthens and applies developmental techniques, methodologies, and best practices within the historical profession. The Plan is based on the foundational literature listed below:

- "History Departments and the NCATE/NCSS Accreditation Process: Time for a Change" (*Perspectives*, 2006)
- "National History Center Launches Initiative on History Education Policy" (*Perspectives*, 2006)
- "Reading History and Remembering the Past" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "A New Era for the Discipline of History" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "Reinventing the Survey: Pedagogical Strategies for Engagement" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "Engaging Students in the Game of Research" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "Student Assessment in the History Classroom: Who's in Control?" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "Teaching the Introductory Survey: Insights from the College Board's AP®Survey" (*Perspectives*, 2005)
- "What We Should Know about Precollegiate Learning" (*Perspectives*, 2004)
- "The Development of Benchmarks for Professional Development in the Teaching of History as a Discipline" (*Perspectives*, 2004)
- "Research on Students' Historical Thinking and Learning" (*Perspectives*, 2004)
- "Teaching Students to Interpret Documents" (*Perspectives*, 2004)
- "Benchmarks for Professional Development in Teaching of History as a Discipline" (*Perspectives*, 2003)
- "Building Bridges between Historians and Educators" (*Perspectives*, 2003)
- "Looking for Learning in the History Survey" (*Perspectives*, 2002)
- "Teaching the Theory and Practice of History" (*Perspectives*, 2002)
- "Teaching 'Globalization' Against the Grain" (*Perspectives*, 2002)
- "The Historian's Craft" (*Perspectives*, 2002)
- "Method in the Madness: Teaching Historical Research to History Majors" (*Perspectives*, 2002)

- “Creating the History Curriculum for the 21st Century: Experiences and Issues” (*Perspectives*, 2000)
- “Best Practices: Encouraging Research Excellence in Postsecondary History Education” (*Perspectives*, 2000)
- “Criteria for Standards in History/Social Studies/Social Sciences” (*Perspectives*, 1998)
- “The Historian, the Internet, and the Web: Reassessment” (*Perspectives*, 1998)
- “How Will We Do History in the 21st Century?” (*Perspectives*, 1996)
- “To Feel a Part of History: Rethinking the U.S. History Survey” (*Perspectives*, 1996)
- “Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of History” (*Perspectives*, 1994)
- “Redrawing Professional Boundaries to Revitalize History Education” (*Perspectives*, 1994)
- “A Code of Ethics for Teachers of History” (*Perspectives*, 1992)
- “Introducing Undergraduates to Manuscript Research” (*Perspectives*, 1991)
- “The Undergraduate Student and Quantitative Research” (*Perspectives*, 1991)
- “Teaching Undergraduates to Think Like Historians” (*Perspectives*, 1990)
- “Liberal Learning and the History Major” (*Perspectives*, 1990)
- “The Undergraduate Major to Receive Assessment” (*Perspectives*, 1989)
- “Using Your Research in the Survey Course” (*Perspectives*, 1988)
- Dennis A. Trinkle and Scott A. Merriman, ed. *History.edu: Essays on Teaching with Technology* (Armonk, NY.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001).
- D. Anthony Cantu and Wilson J. Warren *Teaching History in the Digital Classroom* (Armonk, NY.: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).
- Thomas Bender, ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Irvine, CA.: The University of California Press, 2002).
- *Statement on Excellent Classroom Teaching of History*, American Historical Association, 1998.

Flows from the institution’s mission: Linkages among the University, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Program mission statements, conceptual framework, and Program Academic Goals are outlined.

- **University Mission Statement:** *The mission of Park University, an entrepreneurial institution of learning, is to provide access to academic excellence which will prepare learners to think critically, communicate effectively and engage in lifelong learning while serving a global community.*
- **College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Mission Statement:** *The College of Liberal Arts & Sciences of Park University will prepare graduates who are articulate, literate, reflective, lifelong learners and active global citizens.*
- **Program of History Mission Statement:** *The Program of History is dedicated to excellence in undergraduate education and preparing students for a diversity of professions within a global society. The History faculty is committed to the advancement of reading, writing, research, critical thinking, and analytical and interpretive proficiencies of its majors, as well as those enrolled in General Education and Liberal Learning Curriculum courses.*

The triad of mission statements recognizes education as the means to exist capably in a diverse, interconnectedness global world. They also indicate the obligation of an educated person to evaluate critically and proceed as a leader in the world, while pursuing to learn and enrich that world.

The Program of History academic goals, additionally, sustain both the University and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences mission statements. Students will be engaged in competences linked to five interconnected components of historical thinking:

- *Chronological thinking*—
 - Differentiate among past, present, and future time periods.

- Connect the chronological configuration of a historical narrative.
- Organize relationships of historical succession and duration.
- *Historical comprehension*—
 - Diagram the literal and contextual significance of a historical passage.
 - Identify the central question(s) in historical narratives.
 - Articulate historical perspectives.
- *Historical analysis and interpretation*—
 - Identify the author and source of the historical document or narrative.
 - Compare and contrast opposed sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions.
 - Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.
 - Investigate multiple perspectives.
 - Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causations.
 - Evaluate opinions of historical inevitability.
 - Assess competing historical narratives.
 - Debate interpretations of history as tentative.
 - Restate major contentions between historians.
 - Hypothesize the impacts of the past.
- *Historical research capabilities*—
 - Articulate historical questions.
 - Acquire historical data.
 - Evaluate historical data.
 - Recognize the disparities in the accessible record and compose an unassailable historical interpretation.
- *Historical issues analysis and decision-making*—
 - Recognize issues and problems in the past.
 - Assemble evidence of antecedent circumstances and contemporary factors contributing to the issues and promulgate alternative courses of action.
 - Identify relevant historical antecedents.
 - Assess alternative courses of action.
 - Evaluate the implementation of a decision.

Has a conceptual framework: The conceptual framework of the Program of History is established on the philosophy and practice of the faculty. The framework is consistent in that it acknowledges that preparing students is lifelong work. Program assessment activities replicate this philosophy at all levels.

Has faculty ownership/responsibility: The faculty, in collaboration with colleagues in the School for Social Sciences, initially advanced the assessment plan. It has evolved as experience and need have demanded.

Has institution-wide support: Program of History faculty, in consultation with the Director of Institutional Research and Assessment to ensure consistency with other university assessment programs, evaluates the plan annually. Modifications are made as necessary to make certain that the Program of History Assessment Plan has institutional support.

Uses multiple measures: Multiple sources of data, both qualitative and quantitative, are used to evaluate the program.

Provides feedback to students, faculty and the larger institution: Feed back is provided to students through returned work, capstone/internship evaluation, and end-of-course grades. End-of-course evaluations are employed to enable students the occasion to present feedback to the faculty and larger university constituents. An alumni and exit survey for graduating majors are performed to ascertain if the program meets individual professional needs.

Is cost-effective: Course embedded assessment activities and instruments are the central point of the plan. Many of the activities used for evaluation are practical applications of theory taught in the classroom.

Does not restrict or inhabit goals of access, equity, and diversity established by the institution: The goals of the Program of History affirm unmistakably the faculty's aspiration to be inclusive and available to working professionals.

Leads to improvement: The purpose of the assessment is to systematically distinguish areas of strength and areas of improvement. Assessment tools are evaluated at least annually to permit for change and improvement. Outcomes of surveys are evaluated as they become available each year.

Includes a process for evaluating the assessment program: Assessment tools are evaluated to conclude if they are providing the information required. Student and faculty feedback assists to determine the effectiveness of the Assessment Plan, as well as the overall effectiveness of the program. Modifications are made as evaluation indicates. Review of instruments is recurrent to acknowledge necessary refinement of the program.

Measures of Assessment

There are numerous measures of assessment that unify each history course to the overall program outcomes and to the University Mission and Vision Statements, Program Mission Statement, and interconnected components of historical thinking. These measures attest that the assessment of program graduates accurately exhibits their competence in the assorted standards and competencies.

Students are obliged to employ best research practices, advance and implement appropriate historiographical methodologies, effectively analyze primary and secondary sources, and to articulate a historical supposition based on their research. Students will impart their conclusions in written form.

The **course** assessment measures include, but are not limited to:

- research papers (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)
- quizzes (articulate, reflective, reading, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, and chronological thinking)
- oral presentations (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, and historical research capabilities)
- examinations (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, chronological thinking, historical comprehension, and historical analysis and interpretation)
- document analysis (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)
- policy papers (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)

The **program** assessment measures include:

- Capstone (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)
- Internship (communicate effectively, engage in lifelong learning, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)

- Research paper (communicate effectively, articulate, literate, reflective, reading, writing, research, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)
- Exit Survey for Majors (communicate effectively, critical thinking, and reflective)
- Alumni survey (communicate effectively, lifelong learning, reflective, articulate, literate, and active global citizens)
- Honors and Awards (communicate effectively, lifelong learning, articulate, literate, reflective, active global citizen, writing, research, critical thinking, analytical and interpretive proficiencies, chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, and historical issues analysis and decision-making)

Program of History Conceptual Framework

Members of the History faculty are required to hold a terminal degree, to participate in professional organizations, and to remain abreast of literature appropriate to specialization(s). History faculty members are expected additionally to regularly be engaged in research activities, both to remain current in lecture and class material and to contribute new knowledge to the profession and their specialization(s).

The profession of history and historical scholarship, over the past decade, has been transformed extensively. History majors are nevertheless being instructed in the developmental concepts, structures, and issues in the history of Western civilization. However, at the present majors can also select a course setting the foundation for knowledge for the distinct cultural and social history that has contributed to intensification to the contemporary global civilization.

A notable attribute of the program is that scholars and students laboring on comparable theses from diverse methodological and theoretical propositions here unite collectively in exchange and disputation. Majors are disposed to engage in debate of extensive, correlative questions with the intellectual community of the program and the University.

Undergraduate students majoring in history should obtain an expansive education from the examination of the human experience in diverse cultures and time periods. History is an essential experience in a liberal education. A bachelor's degree in history does not create an undergraduate into a historian. However, a history degree should offer majors with skills that are very marketable in varied professions.

Undergraduate Education Program Goals

The goals of the Program of History are formulated from the Park University Mission Statement. The relation is denoted in parentheses.

- To recognize the educational requirements of our growing and culturally diverse community in Parkville, the Greater Kansas City area, the United States, and globally. (diversity, accessibility)
- To structure an accessible program of quality for traditional and non-traditional students (accessibility, academic excellence, best practice)
- To prepare traditional and non-traditional students to succeed in a diverse and technological environment (diversity, communication)
- To advance well-rounded students who will be prepared to address current historical and global issues in a professional manner (lifelong learning)

Explanation of Data Sources

Alumni Survey—Alumni will be surveyed periodically (exit survey during last semester and every five years thereafter) to determine the effectiveness of the program in achieving the objectives set forth.

Course Evaluation—Students complete course evaluations at the conclusion of each semester/term to assess the effectiveness of the course objectives, teaching, and instructional resources.

Cumulative GPA—The graduation requirement is a 2.0.

Perspectives—Monthly magazine published by the American Historical Association.

Praxis—Students must pass the appropriate PRAXIS II content area to perform student teaching.