

Program Assessment Plan  
 American University  
 Academic Program: CAS: Sociology - MA

**Academic Program: CAS: Sociology - MA**

**Contact Person for** Kim Blankenship

**Assessment:**

**Unit's Primary Department:** Sociology

**COLA Reader -1:** Brian Yates

**COLA Reader -2:** Melissa Becher

**Learning Outcome: Theory**

Students will demonstrate a command of sociological theories and their relevance to the research area.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 11/05/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
A comprehensive examination that evaluates the learning and application of theory and methods, as well as their integration. Note: The graduate assessment plan currently focuses on outcomes after year 1 of the program. In faculty discussions planned for the next several months, we will determine additional measures and related outcomes for assessing learning in year 2. <b>Measure Type:</b> Other	100 % of MA comprehensive exams (the material utilized in the assessment) will be rated as Excellent or Acceptable on this learning outcome.  Excellent. Demonstrates a strong command of the learning outcome, and an ability to critically challenge the material. Acceptable. Demonstrates a strong command of the outcome. Weak. Demonstrates a superficial, weak, or uneven command of the outcome. Unacceptable. Does not demonstrate a command of the outcome.	Data are collected once a year and reviewed by a team of two faculty members who serve on the department graduate studies committee.	Yes
Faculty meeting(s) to discuss the results of the assessment and their implications the graduate program <b>Measure Type:</b> Other	All department faculty will engage in a discussion of the assessment results and consider (1) what the results indicate about program strengths as well as challenges in the graduate program and (2) what other possible learning outcomes and measures might be appropriate given the goals of the graduate program.	One annual faculty meeting for all faculty to provide feedback on the process.	Yes

**Related Action Steps**

\* Supporting Assessment: other - comprehensive exam

**Description:** Because the challenges in student learning continue to vary (last year, the methods item was assessed as weaker; this year, the weakest rating is in the theory item), we continue to monitor the learning in these two separate areas.

**Learning Outcome: Logic of Research**

Students will demonstrate facility in the logic and reasoning of social research, data collection, and data analysis.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 11/05/2010  
**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>A comprehensive examination that evaluates the learning and application of theory and methods, as well as their integration. Note: The graduate assessment plan currently focuses on outcomes after year 1 of the program. In faculty discussions planned for the next several months, we will determine additional measures and related outcomes for assessing year 2.</p> <p><b>Measure Type:</b> Other</p>	<p>100 % of MA comprehensive exams (the material utilized in the assessment) will be rated as Excellent or Acceptable on this learning outcomes.</p> <p>Excellent. Demonstrates a strong command of the learning outcome, and an ability to critically challenge the material.            Acceptable. Demonstrates a strong command of the outcome.            Weak. Demonstrates a superficial, weak, or uneven command of the outcome.            Unacceptable. Does not demonstrate a command of the outcome.</p>	<p>Data are collected once a year on the comprehensive exam and reviewed by a team of two faculty members who serve on the department graduate studies committee.</p>	Yes
<p>Faculty meeting(s) to discuss the results of the assessment and their implications the graduate program</p> <p><b>Measure Type:</b> Other</p>	<p>All department faculty will engage in a discussion of the assessment results and consider (1) what the results indicate about program strengths as well as challenges in the graduate program and (2) what other possible leaning outcomes and measures might be appropriate given the goals of the graduate program.</p>	<p>One annual faculty meeting for all faculty to provide feedback on the process</p>	Yes

**Related Action Steps**

\* Supporting Assessment: other - comprehensive exam

**Description:** Because the challenges in student learning continue to vary (last year, the methods item was assessed as weaker; this year, the weakest rating is in the theory item), we continue to monitor the learning in these two separate areas.

Note: A curriculum change put forward in AY 2009-10 and implemented in AY 2010-11 was the expansion of data analysis courses, from 1 (a survey course for all data analyses) to 2 (one based on qualitative and another on quantitative analysis).

**Learning Outcome: Integrate Theory and Methods**

Students will demonstrate an ability to integrate both theory and methods.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011  
**Start Date:** 11/05/2010  
**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>A comprehensive examination that evaluates the learning and application of theory and methods, as well as their integration. Note: The graduate assessment plan currently focuses on outcomes after year 1 of the program. In faculty discussions planned for the next several months, we will determine additional measures and related outcomes for assessing year 2.</p>	<p>100 % of MA comprehensive exams (the material utilized in the assessment) will be rated as Excellent or Acceptable on this learning outcomes; at least 50% will merit an Excellent rating on this learning outcome</p>	<p>Data are collected once a year on the comprehensive exam and reviewed by a team of two faculty members who serve on the department graduate studies committee.</p>	Yes

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<b>Measure Type:</b> Other	Excellent. Demonstrates a strong command of the learning outcome, and an ability to critically challenge the material. Acceptable. Demonstrates a strong command of the outcome. Weak. Demonstrates a superficial, weak, or uneven command of the outcome. Unacceptable. Does not demonstrate a command of the outcome.		

Faculty meeting(s) to discuss the results of the assessment and their implications the graduate program. <b>Measure Type:</b> Other	All department faculty will engage in a discussion of the assessment results and consider (1) what the results indicate about program strengths as well as challenges in the graduate program and (2) what other possible learning outcomes and measures might be appropriate given the goals of the graduate program.	One annual faculty meeting for all faculty to provide feedback on the process.	Yes
---	--	--	-----

### Related Action Steps

\* Supporting Assessment: other - comprehensive exam

**Description:** Continuing challenges are situated in the integration of theory and methods, with fewer exams rated as excellent than rated as acceptable on this item.  
 At present, students complete all theory and methods courses during year 1, and use the summer to prepare the research proposal, which is both the basis for the comprehensive exam and the assessment tool. In addition to sustaining previous activities for student research development (e.g., the day-long research proposal workshop), the graduate committee is considering further restructuring the curriculum to better serve the students' preparation for the comprehensive exam and the integration of theory and methods, in particular.

### Learning Outcome: Integrate theory and methods in original research

Students will demonstrate the capacity to integrate theory and methods in a research study

**Outcome Year:** 2011-2012

**Start Date:** 04/30/2012

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
The abstract and the conclusions of the thesis or project report will be used to assess this learning outcome. <b>Measure Type:</b> Final Paper/ Final Project	100 % of the theses and project reports will be rated as Excellent or Acceptable on the learning outcome.  Excellent ? demonstrates thoroughgoing integration of theory and methods in both the overview and the conclusions of the study. Acceptable ? shows capacity to integrate theory and methods but	At the beginning of the fall semester abstracts and conclusions of MA Theses and Master's Research Projects for the preceding AY will be read by two members of the graduate assessment committee.	Yes

### Assessment Plan

Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
	the integration is not thoroughgoing. Weak ? presents superficial or uneven attempt to integrate theory and methods. Unacceptable ? gives no evidence of integrating theory and methods		

---