

Qualitative Assessment Report 2017-18

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The History Department is halfway through a two-year qualitative assessment project where each faculty member chooses one course, one learning goal, and one assignment related to that goal to assess. Results from the first year of this qualitative data collection and reflection project are posted on the department's webpage under assessment, and this first year includes 15 courses from history and religious studies that span the range of survey and upper-division courses. The data also includes courses taught in a variety of formats from fully online classes to face-to-face.

What follows are three points of evaluation from our first year of this project:

- 1) **High Impact Practices and Interactive Class Assignments:** The assessment reflections all reiterate the value of encouraging High Impact Practices that empower students to take charge of their own learning. In particular, many faculty assignments focused around discussion techniques that built basic historical knowledge and engagement. Students themselves often perceived that they were gaining new knowledge and mastering critical thinking skills.
- 2) **Digital Literacy and Evaluation:** Several of the exercises provide clear evidence of student learning in relationship to digital literacy, including assignments that ask them to evaluate online or digital resources and those that asked them to produce a digital object.
- 3) **Knowledge Acquisition:** Some faculty focused their assignments around tests (often a pre- and post-test) to gauge students' ability to meet learning outcomes regarding acquisition of specific content, skills, and competencies. These simple exercises, as faculty explain, do show improvement in basic literacy in the field.

Perhaps most valuable in these qualitative assessments are the individual faculty reflections on the learning outcomes. Faculty took just one assignment to assess against just one learning outcome, but it provided an opportunity for reflection about future assignments and ways of reaching students with all of their stated learning objectives and goals.

Preliminary Recommendations:

- 1) Continued qualitative assessment of assignments with more faculty involved in the project.
- 2) REPEAT assessment by some of these faculty of the same assignment in multiple semesters.
- 3) Discussion of best practices regarding some of these assignments among faculty; those with more successful tools could share their ideas with colleagues.
- 4) Coordination across sections of courses (e.g. RELS 1010) to see how these assessments might inform the broader curriculum.