

Assurance of Student Learning Report 2024-2025		
PCAL		History Department
MA History 078		
Alexander Olson		

<i>Use this page to list learning outcomes, measurements, and summarize results for your program. Detailed information must be completed in the subsequent pages.</i>			
Student Learning Outcome 1: Graduates will showcase broad knowledge of historical events/periods and their significance.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must complete four essays and an oral examination)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	Indirect: Faculty scoring report on oral component of comprehensive exam.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met
Student Learning Outcome 2: Graduates will effectively and accurately interpret primary sources and historical data.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must complete four essays and an oral examination)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	Indirect: Faculty scoring report on oral component of comprehensive exam.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 2.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met
Student Learning Outcome 3: Graduates will identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians within defined historiographical fields.			
Instrument 1	Direct: Comprehensive Exams (each graduate must complete four essays and an oral examination)		
Instrument 2	Direct: Thesis (for those opting for thesis-track MA)		
Instrument 3	Indirect: Faculty scoring report on oral component of comprehensive exam.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 3.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met
Program Summary (Briefly summarize the action and follow up items from your detailed responses on subsequent pages.)			
Please see next page.			

The assessment for AY 2024-25 was roughly in line with the outcomes of recent assessment cycles. Using a scale of 0-3, the average rating across all objectives and artifacts was 2.51, which represents an improvement over AY 2023-24 (2.33) but a modest decline from AY 2022-23 (2.62).

Over AY 2024-25, the MA History program completed the Academic Program Review process. The final report praised our use of the assessment process to make data-driven decisions about strengthening the quality of our curriculum, specifically noting our efforts to improve scores in SLO 2 (methods) through the introduction of a second required core course (HIST 536: Sources and Methods).

This is the second assessment cycle in which faculty on comprehensive exam committees are required to complete an assessment form rating the student performance on the oral portion of the exam. This year, each committee member submitted their own individual ratings instead of requiring that committees arrive at a consensus. The purpose of this indirect instrument is to find a way to gain visibility into the oral portion of the exam, since previous ASL reports only had access to written exams.

The other benefit of including this indirect instrument is for norming purposes: it allows visibility into whether the ASL review committee differs significantly from the faculty who are present for the exams. A significant discrepancy would indicate either 1) a significant divergence in quality between the written and oral portions, or 2) differing perspectives on quality that are worth addressing as a faculty. The revised form for AY 2024-25 aligned extremely closely with the ASL scores. Across eight comprehensive exams, the written portion scored by the ASL committee generated averages of 2.48 (SLO 1), 2.42 (SLO 2), and 2.40 (SLO 3). The oral exam assessment reports completed by individual faculty supervisors generated averages of 2.50 (SLO 1), 2.42 (SLO 2), and 2.38 (SLO 3), representing very close alignment with the ASL committee.

Looking ahead, our most significant curricular task will be to consider bringing the thesis and non-thesis tracks into alignment in credit hours. There is currently a financial incentive to complete the thesis track, which is 4 credit hours shorter than the non-thesis track. Bringing both to 30 credits would ensure that the decision over whether to pursue a thesis is made strictly on academic grounds without consideration for the cost of degree. This should also reduce student confusion about degree requirements.

As noted in last year's ASL report, the 2024-25 assessment cycle removed one of the two success targets from each instrument. We retained the goal that 80% of artifacts achieving a score of "Pass" (2 points), but eliminated the goal that 100% of artifacts achieve a score of "Low Pass" (1 point). All other programs in the History Department use one instrument and one target; the MA program had been using three instruments and two targets, which introduced unnecessary complexity.

Student Learning Outcome 1

Student Learning Outcome	Graduates will showcase broad knowledge of historical events/periods and their significance.		
Measurement Instrument 1	Direct: Written Comprehensive Examination. The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Percent of Program Achieving Target	88% (7 of 8)
Methods	The artifacts were eight written comprehensive exams (N = 8) and all identifiers removed. The artifacts were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read by three different reviewers. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed (0 points) the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 2	Direct: MA Thesis. The thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research. It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Percent of Program Achieving Target	100% (4 of 4)
Methods	Four students who graduated in AY 2024-25 chose to write a thesis (N = 4). The theses were read by three full-time faculty. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 3	Indirect: Oral Comprehensive Examination. A scoresheet and report was collected from each student's exam committee.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Percent of Program Achieving Target	100% (8 of 8)
Methods	The artifact is the report form (N = 8) produced by faculty supervisors of the oral component of the comprehensive exam. The oral comprehensive examination is a one-hour exam that follows the written portion, and we are including it since student performance can vary from the written portion. The scoresheet was divided into three categories, each reflecting one of the three SLOs, and each faculty member individually scored the oral portion as follows: fail (0 points), low pass (1 point), pass, (2 points), and high pass (3 points). These reports provide an indirect assessment tool, since scoring is based on the assessment of the individual faculty, but it is not feasible for the assessment committee to directly observe oral examinations.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met

Actions
In AY 2024-25, across all instruments, the average for SLO 1 was 2.51. This breaks down by artifact into 2.48 for written comps, 2.58 for thesis, and 2.50 for oral comps. SLO 1 measures student mastery of historical content, as opposed to methodology (SLO 2) and historiography (SLO 3). In ASL reports from 2019 to 2022, the scores for SLO 1 were notably higher than the scores for SLO 2 and SLO 3, and our curricular efforts have focused on improving the latter two categories. In AY 2024-25 (as in AY 2023-24), the scores for all three SLOs were roughly similar (2.51 for SLO 1, 2.56 for SLO 2, and 2.49 for SLO 3).
Follow-Up
The History MA has undergone significant curriculum revision and growth over the past four years, and a priority will be to increase faculty awareness of changes in the graduate program in order to effectively mentor students for the comprehensive examinations and thesis. Expanded enrollment in the History MA has also made it possible to offer a wider array of electives, which contributes to SLO 1 with greater breadth of content.
Next Assessment Cycle Plan
No major changes will be made to the assessment plan. Faculty will be encouraged to consistently prepare an oral examination report immediately after the exam and in accordance with the approved scoring sheet.

Student Learning Outcome 2

Student Learning Outcome	Graduates will effectively and accurately interpret primary sources and historical data.		
Measurement Instrument 1	Direct: Written Comprehensive Examination. The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	88% (7 of 8)
Methods	The artifacts were eight comprehensive exams (N = 8) and all identifiers removed. The artifacts were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read by three different reviewers. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed (0 points) the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 2	Direct: MA Thesis. The thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research. It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	100% (4 of 4)
Methods	Four students who graduated in AY 2024-25 chose to write a thesis (N = 4). The theses were read by three full-time faculty. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 3	Indirect: Oral Comprehensive Examination. A scoresheet and report was collected from each student's exam committee.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	88% (7 of 8)
Methods	The artifact is the report form (N = 8) produced by faculty supervisors of the oral component of the comprehensive exam. The oral comprehensive examination is a one-hour exam that follows the written portion, and we are including it since student performance can vary from the written portion. The scoresheet was divided into three categories, each reflecting one of the three SLOs, and each faculty member individually scored the oral portion as follows: fail (0 points), low pass (1 point), pass, (2 points), and high pass (3 points). These reports provide an indirect assessment tool, since scoring is based on the assessment of the individual faculty, but it is not feasible for the assessment committee to directly observe oral examinations.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met

Actions
In AY 2024-25, across all instruments, the average for SLO 2 was 2.56. This breaks down by artifact into 2.42 for written comps, 2.83 for thesis, and 2.42 for oral comps. The scores for SLO 2 were roughly in line with the scores for SLO 1 and SLO 3. This continues a reversal from past ASL reports (pre-2023) in which SLO 2 was an area of weakness. Prior to the curriculum revision that took effect in Fall 2022, the program's course offerings focused almost exclusively on historical content (Outcome 1) and historiography (Outcome 3), with no dedicated course offerings providing training in the use of primary sources (Outcome 2) at the graduate level. In Fall 2021, we offered a new course, HIST 536: Sources and Methods. In Fall 2022, this class became the second core course in the MA History curriculum. The results of this assessment suggest that the curriculum revision has succeeded in strengthening SLO 2. The scores for the four thesis students are notably higher than that of students on the non-thesis track, suggesting that their engagement with sources for the thesis project has resulted in improved learning in historical methods.
Follow-Up
The History MA has undergone significant curriculum revision and growth over the past four years, and a priority will be to increase faculty awareness of changes in the graduate program in order to effectively mentor students for the comprehensive examinations and thesis.
Next Assessment Cycle Plan
No major changes will be made to the assessment plan. Faculty will be encouraged to consistently prepare an oral examination report immediately after the exam and in accordance with the approved scoring sheet.

Student Learning Outcome 3

Student Learning Outcome	Graduates will identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians within defined historiographical fields.		
Measurement Instrument 1	Direct: Written Comprehensive Examination. The purpose of the comprehensive exams is to give students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery in three areas of historical inquiry as well as the handling of primary sources. The written examinations are completed over a three-day period and are followed by an oral examination. Both thesis and non-thesis students must sit for the four comprehensive exams.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	88% (7 of 8)
Methods	The artifacts were eight comprehensive exams (N = 8) and all identifiers removed. The artifacts were split among three full-time faculty so that each comprehensive exam was read by three different reviewers. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 2	Direct: MA Thesis. The thesis is a culminating research project which will demonstrate the student's mastery of historical research. It should present an original argument that is carefully documented from primary and secondary sources. The thesis should represent a contribution to the field and be of a quality suitable for submission to an academic publication.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	100% (4 of 4)
Methods	Four students who graduated in AY 2024-25 chose to write a thesis (N = 4). The theses were read by three full-time faculty. The rubric was divided into three categories: low pass (1 point), pass (2 points), and high pass (3 points). No students failed the comprehensive exam this assessment cycle. The average of all three reviewers was used as the final score for each artifact.		
Measurement Instrument 3	Indirect: Oral Comprehensive Examination. A scoresheet and report was collected from each student's exam committee.		
Criteria for Student Success	At least 80% of students to achieve an average of 2 (Pass).		
Program Success Target for this Measurement	80% (Pass)	Program Success Target for this Measurement	75% (6 of 8)
Methods	The artifact is the report form (N = 8) produced by faculty supervisors of the oral component of the comprehensive exam. The oral comprehensive examination is a one-hour exam that follows the written portion, and we are including it since student performance can vary from the written portion. The scoresheet was divided into three categories, each reflecting one of the three SLOs, and each faculty member individually scored the oral portion as follows: fail (0 points), low pass (1 point), pass, (2 points), and high pass (3 points). These reports provide an indirect assessment tool, since scoring is based on the assessment of the individual faculty, but it is not feasible for the assessment committee to directly observe oral examinations.		
Based on your results, check whether the program met the goal Student Learning Outcome 1.			☒ Met ☐ Not Met

Actions In AY 2023-24, across all instruments, the average for SLO 3 was 2.49. This breaks down by artifact into 2.40 for written comps, 2.67 for thesis, and 2.38 for oral comps. The scores for non-thesis students in this SLO (historiography) were considerably lower than that of students on the thesis track. This finding is peculiar since all electives in the program are currently historiographical seminars, and non-thesis students are expected to take more electives (9 courses, 27 credit hours) than thesis students (6 courses, 18 credit hours). This suggests that quantity of electives is not necessarily translating into quality of historiographical skill development. It is also possible that students who are succeeding in coursework are more likely to pursue the thesis. Whatever the cause, this finding that students on the non-thesis track are scoring lower than thesis students in SLO 3 is worth monitoring to see if it becomes a trend. The department is undergoing the following actions: • Discuss how and whether graduate history courses are successfully fostering the historiographical skills measured by SLO 3 as opposed to the content-driven skills measured by SLO 1. • Examine learning outcomes for all courses, making sure that the course learning outcomes align with those of the program. Where necessary and appropriate, seek to adjust course-specific learning outcomes to dovetail with program learning outcomes. • Ensure that students receive mentoring and practice for their comprehensive exams throughout their studies as part of their regular coursework.. Note on scoring: the program met 2 out of 3 success targets for this category, missing one target on the oral comprehensive examination portion. We consider the overall category to be meeting the success target since the majority of targets for SLO 3 were achieved.
Follow-Up The History MA has undergone significant curriculum revision and growth over the past four years, and a priority will be to increase faculty awareness of changes in the graduate program in order to effectively mentor students for the comprehensive examinations and thesis.
Next Assessment Cycle Plan No major changes will be made to the assessment plan. Faculty will be encouraged to consistently prepare an oral examination report immediately after the exam and in accordance with the approved scoring sheet.

Rubric for Assessment – History M.A.

	High Pass (3)	Pass (2)	Low Pass (1)
Student Learning Outcome 1: Graduates will showcase broad knowledge of historical events/periods and their significance.	The overview of historical data is both comprehensive and strategically deployed as it demonstrates a firm grasp of historical events/processes as well as their interpretation.	The overview of historical data is informative, but struggles somewhat with which facts are/are not important to mention and occasionally neglects to identify the significance of historical data.	The overview of historical data provides insufficient information about the historical event/context/process, is largely descriptive, rather than analytical.
Student Learning Outcome 2: Graduates will effectively and accurately interpret primary sources and historical data.	The analysis of sources/data is sharp, sophisticated and insightful, reflecting both an understanding of specific documents and an ability to engage with the specifics of the document to advance the argument.	The analysis of the sources/data is solid and straightforward, showing a good understanding of the content of the document but does not advance the argument fully and/or misses key aspects of the sources/data.	The analysis of the document shows some insight, but is flawed in some way, because of either failure to properly understand primary sources or factual errors in understanding/applying historical data.
Student Learning Outcome 3: Graduates will identify and describe the contours and stakes of conversations among historians within defined historiographical fields.	The variety of cited monographs and articles indicates an attempt to analyze a diverse number of historical interpretations. When analyzing individual authors, the student consistently and accurately paraphrases the authors' interpretations.	A heavy reliance on a select number of monographs and articles indicates an ability to recognize major trends in historical interpretations, but not the variety. When analyzing individual authors, the student struggles once or twice with accurately summarizing the authors' theses.	The student exhibits a heavy reliance on a small number of monographs and articles, indicating a difficulty in readily recognizing major trends in historical interpretation. When analyzing individual authors the student consistently struggles to accurately summarize the authors' interpretations.