2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office by Monday, September 30, 2013. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: Humanities

Department: Religious Studies

Program: Undergraduate

Assessment liaison: Mustafa Ruzgar

1. **Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s).** Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

In 2012-2013, in compliance with its "Program Assessment Plan, 2011-2016," the Religious Studies Department assessed SLO2, "Ability to think both empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims," in Fall 2012 (RS 307: Religion in America and eight sections of RS 150: World Religions) and Spring 2013 (RS 307: Religion in America and six sections of RS 150: World Religions). For each class, ten multiple-choice questions were asked to assess students' competency in empathetic and critical thinking about conflicting religious claims. Each question consisted of four options, one correct answer and three incorrect ones. The ten questions were created with the contributions of the assessment liaison, assessment committee members, the chair, and individual faculty members teaching the relevant courses. For each class, students were given twenty minutes to answer all the ten questions. Students' answers were quantified and evaluated by the assessment liaison. The results were initially discussed among the assessment liaison, members of the assessment committee, and the chair of the department.

2. **Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

The chair, assessment liaison, assessment committee members, and individual faculty members were actively involved in every step of the assessment process. This involvement included, but not limited to, deciding which classes to be assessed, creating assessment

questions, discussing assessment results, and determining what concrete steps to be taken based on assessment results. Each step was conducted through both informal meetings with relevant faculty and through discussions at department meetings.

3. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

   3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

   SLO2: "Ability to think both empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims."

   3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

   - Critical Thinking
   - Oral Communication
   - Written Communication

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University's commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

SLO2, "Ability to think both empathetically and critically about conflicting religious claims," aligns with University's commitment to supporting diversity by incorporating diverse perspectives related especially to religious and cultural identity/orientation.

Out of ten questions, questions #3 and #10 were specifically designed to assess which ethical attitudes studying various religions culminate towards the multiplicity of conflicting religious claims, and which model of relationship is the ideal one among world religions.

The remaining eight questions were designed to assess students' competency of correctly identifying various conflicting religious claims with regards to ultimate reality/ies, death, rituals, scriptures, communities, history, and God-world relationship.

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3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

Students were asked ten multiple-choice questions. Each question consisted of four possible answers (one correct, three incorrect). Students were asked to circle the best/correct answer for each question.

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

Assessment was conducted using a cross-sectional methodology comparing lower division general education courses (fourteen sections of RS 150 in Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 semesters) with upper division courses (two sections of RS 307 in Fall 2012 and Spring 2013).

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

A. PROCESS

For RS 150 (eight sections in Fall 2012 and six sections in Spring 2013) and RS 307 (one section in Fall 2012 and one section in Spring 2013), students were asked to circle the best/correct answer in the following ten multiple-choice questions. And then each answer was evaluated on the basis of "correct/incorrect" criterion.

1) Which concept refers to the existence of more than one personal deity?
   a) Monism
   b) Monotheism
   c) Polytheism
   d) Non-theism

2) The Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam differ from the Eastern religious traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism in that the Abrahamic traditions believe:

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a) In the oneness of God

b) In rebirth based on karma

c) In the Four Noble Truths

d) In specialized forms of knowledge made known through yoga and meditation

3) Studying world's religions helps me:

   a) Learn differences/similarities and grow fair-mindedness towards the members of other religions and cultures

   b) Learn all the incorrect claims religions other than mine make

   c) Acquire the knowledge to convert the members of other religions into my religion

   d) Teach the ways I can marginalize the members of other religions

4) Which religion commonly believes in reincarnation?

   a) Judaism

   b) Christianity

   c) Hinduism

   d) Islam

5) As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, Hajj is an example of:

   a) Ritual

   b) Sacred book

   c) Religious leader

   d) Religious symbol

6) Which religion allows the most number of sacred scriptures?

   a) Islam

   b) Any single one of the indigenous (native) religions

   c) Christianity

   d) Hinduism

7) "Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform" are the groups in which of the following religion?

   a) Judaism

   b) Islam

c) Buddhism

d) Christianity

8) Which religion does not have a historically identifiable founder/initiator?

a) Islam

b) Hinduism

c) Buddhism

d) Christianity

9) Which religious tradition believes that God entered into a covenant with them and that faithfulness to God is through observance of the Law:

a) Buddhism

b) Judaism

c) Catholicism

d) Jainism

10) In your opinion, which of the following would be the most desirable relationship among the members of world's religions?

a) Conflict

b) Mutual appreciation

c) Lack of knowledge

d) Labeling

B. RESULTS

Overall Results

All 16 Courses
Total number of students: 554
Total number of answers: 5540 (10 questions)
Correct answers: 4105 **(%74)**[*]
Incorrect answers: 1435 **(%26)**

Upper Division (RS 307—2 Courses)
Total number of students: 57
Total number of answers: 570 (10 questions)
Correct answers: 442 **(%78)**
Incorrect answers: 128 **(%22)**

Lower Division General Education (RS 150—14 Courses)
Total number of students: 497
Total number of answers: 4970 (10 questions)
Correct answers: 3663 **(%74)**
Incorrect answers: 1307 **(%26)**

Contrast between Lower Division (RS 150) and Upper Division (RS 307)
There is a **%4** increase in correct answers from lower division courses to upper division courses.

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[*] All the percentages in this report are rounded up.

Q1:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 495 **(%89)**
Incorrect answers: 59 **(%11)**

Q2:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 445 **(%80)**
Incorrect answers: 109 **(%20)**

Q3:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 532 **(%96)**
Incorrect answers: 22 **(%4)**

Q4:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 516 **(%93)**
Incorrect answers: 38 **(%7)**

Q5:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 364 **(%66)**
Incorrect answers: 190 **(%34)**

Q6:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 260 **(%47)**
Incorrect answers: 294 **(%53)**

Q7:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 337 **(%61)**
Incorrect answers: 217 **(%39)**

Q8:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 376 **(%68)**
Incorrect answers: 178 **(%32)**

Q9:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 326 **(%59)**
Incorrect answers: 228 **(%41)**

Q10:
Total number of Answers: 554
Correct answers: 454 **(%82)**
Incorrect answers: 100 **(%18)**

C. ANALYSIS

1. Overall Results

a) We use a %70 benchmark for expected level of success. In all sixteen courses, the correct answers (%74) exceeded the %70 benchmark.
b) In the upper division courses, the correct answers (%78) exceeded the %70 benchmark.

c) In the lower division general education courses, the correct answers (%74) exceeded the %70 benchmark.

2. Individual Questions

a) Questions #1, 2, 3, 4, 10 (%89, %80, %96, %93, and %82 respectively) exceeded the %70 benchmark.
b) Questions #5 and 8 (%66 and %68 respectively) fell marginally below the %70 benchmark.
c) Questions #7 and 9 (%61 and (%59 respectively) fell below the %70 benchmark.
d) Question #6 (%47) fell considerably below the %70 benchmark.
e) The results demonstrate that in overall courses, we surpass our expected level of achievement in implementing SLO2. In the responses to questions #7 and 9, students failed to demonstrate their familiarity with key concepts of world religions (orthodox, reform, conservative, and covenant), which indicates the necessity of underlining such notions more in the classroom setting. After discussing with faculty members who are teaching RS 150's, it was concluded that the considerable increase of the incorrect answers in question #6 may have resulted from the question's technicality in information (the number of scriptures in various religions).

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

The assessment results will be shared with faculty and be discussed in our next department meeting and the necessary measures will be implemented in improving student learning regarding SLO2. It is the chair's, assessment liaison's, and assessment

committee's initial opinion that the results of this year's assessment demonstrate an overall success in implementing SLO2. However, students' failure of demonstrating their familiarity with orthodox-reform-conservative divisions in Judaism as well as the importance of "covenant" indicates the necessity of taking minor measures to improve students' learning of key concepts in world religions. To this end, the chair will share the specific results with faculty who are teaching relevant courses and discuss the ways of improving how to teach such concepts.

The low-level success in question #6 indicates the importance of asking not-too-technical questions. This insight will be given due diligence in this year's assessment activities.

The overall success in this year's assessments results do not necessitate any drastic changes with regards to courses, SLO's, the program, and assessment instruments/plan.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.

On the basis last year's (2011-2012) assessment results, our department has undertaken a number of changes, some of which are still in the process:

a. In our March 28, 2013 department meeting, we voted for changing SLO1 from "Ability to interpret texts and other cultural phenomena (such as rituals, texts, architecture) that have religious presuppositions or implications," to "Ability to interpret texts and other cultural phenomena that have religious presuppositions or implications (such as rituals, texts, architecture) in their historical, social, and political context." School-wise administrative finalization of this change is still in process.

b. In department meetings, the results of last year's assessment activities have been discussed and the importance of emphasizing historical/contextual analyses of religious texts has been underlined.

c. During last academic year (2012-2013), the assessment committee examined the course SLO's of RS 101 to determine if the proposed changes to SLO1 are adequately reflected in RS 101 SLO's. The committee concluded that no change is necessary to RS 101 SLO's because the RS 101 SLO#3, "Students will demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in the historical, geographical, social, and political context in which biblical books were constructed," does already align with the proposed changes to SLO1.

d. The chair has recommended that individual faculty incorporate the components of historical/contextual analyses in their syllabi, class-discussions and activities.

"How all these changes resulted in improved student learning" will be available only after when SLO1 is re-assessed after the completion of Program Assessment Plan (2011-2016).

4. **Changes to SLOs?** Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

The school-wise administrative finalization of the change to SLO1 is still in process.

5. **Assessment Plan:** Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan? Please attach an updated 5 year assessment plan for 2013-2018. (Refer to Five Year Planning Template, plan B or C, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

With slight changes, our 5-Year Assessment Plan (2011-2016) was followed. In determining which SLO (SLO2) and which lower division courses (RS 150) to assess was informed by our plan. However, the following changes were also made:

a. After consultation with the chair and faculty, instead of assessing the upper division course of RS 356, we decided to assess a different upper level division course, RS 307. In making this decision, opinions of the chair and individual faculty who are teaching these courses in terms of the suitability of course-content to SLO2 was decisive.
b. Our 5-Year Plan indicated assessing all sections of RS 150's in both semesters. In Spring 2013, one section of RS 150 was not assessed due to the failure of the faculty member who is teaching this class to administer the assessment questions. Hence, in Spring 2013, instead of assessing seven sections of RS 150, we were able to assess only six sections.
c. Instead of using "Short Essay" questions, after consulting with the chair, we decided to use "Multiple-Choice Questions." Our decision was based on minimizing subjectivity of evaluating essay questions and gathering more objective data through multiple-choice questions.

We are planning to follow our 5-Year Assessment Plan (2011-2016) in this year's (2013-2014) assessment activities.

7. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

No.

8. **Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.**

N/A.