

2016-2017 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to james.solomon@csun.edu, Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by September 30, 2017. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. Please identify your department/program in the file name for your report.

College: Humanities

Department: Religious Studies

Program:

Assessment liaison: Amanda Baugh

1. Please check off whichever is applicable:

- A. Measured student work within program major/options.
- B. Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.
- C. Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.
- D. Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Basic Skills outcomes

2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). On a separate sheet, provide a brief overview of this year's assessment activities, including:

- an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, application, or GE assessment) that it enacted
- if your department implemented assessment **option A**, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year's measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
- if your department implemented assessment **option B**, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year's analyses and past and future assessment activities
- if your department implemented **option C**, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
- if your program implemented **option D**, exclusively or simultaneously with **options A, B, and/or C**, identify the basic skill(s) assessed and the precise learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
- in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university's commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
- any other assessment-related information you wish to include, including SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes), and/or the creation and modification of new assessment instruments

3. Preview of planned assessment activities for 2017-18. Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

2. Overview of Annual Assessment Project

In 2016-2017, in compliance with CSUN's direct assessment measurement of General Education Basic Skills, the Religious Studies Department assessed critical thinking skills in our RS 204: Religion, Logic, and the Media classes. We chose RS 204 because that is the department's only offering in GE basic skills. The two critical thinking SLO's we chose to assess were:

3. Synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions.
4. Evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.

The Religious Studies Department chose to assess our students using a multiple-choice test given to RS 204 students [See Appendix A for the assessment tool]. We chose this assessment tool because we wanted to gain understanding of students' abilities to apply the critical thinking skills taught in RS 204. The assessment tool was created with contributions of the assessment liaison, assessment committee members, the department chair, and RS 204 instructors.

In Spring 2017, students in six sections of RS 204 were given time during class to complete the multiple choice test designed to assess their abilities to synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions, and to evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data and information.

In this assignment, students were instructed to read a one-page opinion article from the *Los Angeles Times* and then answer a series of six questions multiple-choice questions designed to assess their competency in meeting the two SLOs. The first three questions were designed to assess competency in meeting SLO #3, while the second three questions were designed to assess competency in meeting SLO #4.

Summary of Results

Total students assessed: 147 [See Appendix B for results by class section. See Appendix C for results based on SLO assessed.]

Average overall score: $3.05/6 = 51\%$

Average overall score with outlier removed: **59%**

Average score based on SLO assessed:

- Questions #1-3 (SLO 3): 282 correct/441 answered = **63%**
- Questions #4-6 (SLO 4): 171 correct/441 answered = **33%**
 - SLO 4 with outlier removed: 151 correct/294 answered = **51%**

Analysis

The overall results suggest that our department needs to improve in implementing SLO #3 and SLO #4. With an average score of 51%, students failed to meet the 70% benchmark established in the Program Assessment Plan.

Our students outcomes with SLO #3 were slightly better than their outcomes with SLO #4, with average scores of 63% and 33% respectively. This result indicates that our department has been more successful at teaching students to synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions than it has been at teaching students to evaluate the logic and validity of arguments, and the relevance of data.

Question #4 of the assessment tool was an outlier, with only 13% of the students selecting the correct answer. Question #4 was the most complex of all of the questions, which likely explains students' difficulties in selecting the correct answer. With the outlier of question #4 removed the results are slightly better, with 63% correct answers overall, and 51% correct on questions related to SLO #4. Nevertheless, the results with the outlier removed are still below our benchmark of 70% correct, and still indicate there is significant area for improvement in teaching these basic skills.

Commitment to Diversity

The article students were asked to read for the assessment activity reflects CSUN's commitment to diversity in all its dimensions, but especially with respect to underrepresented groups. In this article, the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board argues for the protection of religious freedom in a Supreme Court case dealing with a conflict between Abercrombie and Fitch and a young Muslim woman seeking employment there. The assessment activity required students to think about matters of diversity and inclusion that directly pertain to religious minorities in American society.

Additional Information

The Religious Studies Department considers the outcomes of this assessment activity as an indication that there is room for improvement in our approach to teaching critical thinking skills in RS 204. An important component of the course – development of skills in logic and validity – are not being communicated to the students. We conclude that we need to reevaluate this course, and the ways that students are assessed.

The results will be shared with the full faculty, especially those who teach RS 204, and we will discuss ways to improve our learning outcomes. We also will encourage a team of RS 204 instructors to apply for the eLearning Institute in Summer 2018.

3. Preview of Planned Assessment Activities for 2017-2018

In compliance with our Program Assessment Plan, next year we will assess SLO #1: Apply multiple interpretations to a religious text. Evidence will be gathered in RS 101, RS 383, and RS 327. This will contribute to a continuous program of ongoing assessment because we last assessed SLO #1 in 2011-2012. Having completed assessment of all five of our departmental SLO's between 2011 and 2016, this year we return to SLO #1 to assess our progress in meeting that goal since 2011.

Appendix A: Assessment Tool

INSTRUCTIONS: The goal of this assignment is to assess student learning in Religious Studies courses. Please read the following *Los Angeles Times* article and then answer the questions based on the article. Do not write your name on this paper or the scantron. You are welcome to write on this paper.

The Los Angeles Times Editorial

Religion, the workplace and the Supreme Court

By THE TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

February 26th, 2015

Should raising possible religious conflicts be the job of the employer or the job applicant?

The federal Civil Rights Act bans discrimination in employment on the basis of religion, but it does more than that: Under the law, a company must accommodate the religious practices of workers unless doing so imposes an undue hardship on the conduct of its business. This week, the Supreme Court heard a case that could significantly strengthen that protection. Abercrombie & Fitch insists that it is willing to accommodate employees' religious preferences.

In 2008, 17-year-old Samantha Elauf applied for a job at an Abercrombie & Fitch outlet in Tulsa. She was rejected after appearing at an interview wearing a modified black hijab that she regards as a "symbol of modesty in my Muslim faith." The head covering was viewed as incompatible with the "classic East Coast collegiate" look the retailer seeks to impose on its employees.

On Wednesday, the Supreme Court was asked to right that wrong. In doing so, the court must make it clear to all employers that they need to explore with prospective employees whether they might find it difficult to comply with company policies — and how such conflicts might be resolved.

Abercrombie & Fitch insists that it is willing to accommodate employees' religious preferences and in fact "has granted numerous religious accommodations when requested, including hijabs." But its lawyer argued — and an appeals court agreed — that a job applicant must volunteer the information that there might be a conflict between company policy and her religion.

It isn't enough, according to the company, that an interviewer suspects that an applicant might need a religious accommodation. (The manager who interviewed Elauf testified that she assumed Elauf wore a scarf because she was a Muslim.) The employer must have "actual knowledge" of a religious conflict.

The lawyer for Abercrombie & Fitch told the court that placing the burden on the applicant to raise the issue of religion would avoid situations in which employers might "stereotype and intrusively probe applicants' religious beliefs." It's understandable that an interviewer might not want to raise the issue. But, as Justice Elena Kagan observed, such an "awkward conversation" is preferable to a situation in which an applicant is denied a job, as Elauf was, merely because of her religion.

Both Congress and the Constitution have provided protection for religious freedom far beyond what is offered in many other societies. But it is the Supreme Court that has given practical content to those guarantees. A ruling for Samantha Elauf would be in that tradition.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements best describes the main purpose of the article?
 - a) The purpose of the article is to entertain the reader.
 - b) The purpose of the article is to convey a set of facts.
 - c) The purpose of the article is to shape the reader's opinion about a certain issue.
 - d) The purpose of the article is to shape the reader's emotions.

2. Which of the following questions best describes the issue that is discussed in the article?
 - a) Should Muslim women be allowed to wear a hijab at work?
 - b) Who should have to identify possible religious conflicts: the person applying for a job or the person looking to hire someone?
 - c) Should the Civil Rights Act ban job discrimination based on religion?
 - d) Should job applicants be required to disclose their religious beliefs?

3. Which of the following statements best describes the main conclusion of the article?
 - a) The Supreme Court should strengthen employees' rights for religious accommodation.
 - b) The Supreme Court should alleviate the burden on employers when it comes to accommodating religious preferences.
 - c) The Civil Rights Act bans discrimination in employment on the basis of religion.
 - d) Both Congress and the Constitution have provided protection for religious freedom.

4. Which of the following arguments is VALID?
 - a) If a woman is wearing a hijab, then she's Muslim. Samantha is Muslim, so she is wearing a hijab.
 - b) If Samantha interviews with Abercrombie and Fitch, then she is a qualified applicant. Samantha is a qualified applicant, so she interviewed with Abercrombie and Fitch.
 - c) If teenagers are American, then they are qualified to work at Abercrombie and Fitch. Samantha is an American teenager, so she is qualified to work at Abercrombie and Fitch.
 - d) If Abercrombie & Fitch hires Samantha, then she is a qualified applicant. Abercrombie and Fitch did not hire Samantha, so she was not qualified.

5. "All Muslims have the right to wear a hijab at all times. Samantha is Muslim, so she has the right to wear a hijab at work." This statement is:

- a) A valid argument.
- b) An invalid argument.
- c) A non-argument.
- d) A subjective viewpoint.

6. "Abercrombie & Fitch avoids awkward conversations to respect applicants' privacy. Samantha's religious identity was private, so talking about it would be awkward." This statement is:

- a) A valid argument.
- b) An invalid argument.
- c) A non-argument.
- d) A subjective viewpoint.

APPENDIX C: OVERALL RESULTS BY SLO															
# correct per question															
				1	2	3	4	5	6						
Class	Tot assessed	Class average													
Section 1	26	3.0/6	50%	19	0.73076923	21	0.80769231	12	0.46153846	3	0.11538462	18	0.69230769	7	0.26923077
Section 2	34	2.9/6	48%	21	0.61764706	16	0.47058824	16	0.47058824	2	0.05882353	26	0.76470588	18	0.52941176
Section 3	20	2.8/6	47%	12	0.6	14	0.7	7	0.35	3	0.15	13	0.65	8	0.4
Section 4	21	3.0/6	50%	13	0.61904762	16	0.76190476	12	0.57142857	3	0.14285714	14	0.66666667	7	0.33333333
Section 5	17	3.4/6	57%	14	0.82352941	16	0.94117647	11	0.64705882	2	0.11764706	11	0.64705882	4	0.23529412
Section 6	29	3.2/6	53%	18	0.62068966	26	0.89655172	18	0.62068966	7	0.24137931	19	0.65517241	6	0.20689655
	147	3.05/6	51%	97	0.65986395	109	0.80769231	76	0.5170068	20	0.13605442	101	0.68707483	50	0.34013605
				SLO #3 (Q1-3)		SLO #4 (Q4-Q6)		SLO #4, with outlier removed							
	Q1	97	Q4	20	Q5	101									
	Q2	109	Q5	101	Q6	50									
	Q3	76	Q6	50											
	TOTAL	282		171		151									
	AVG	63%		33%		51%									

APPENDIX B: OVERALL RESULTS BY SECTION															
			# correct per question												
Class	Tot assessed	Class average	1	2	3	4	5	6							
Section 1	26	3.0/6	50%	19	0.73076923	21	0.80769231	12	0.46153846	3	0.11538462	18	0.69230769	7	0.26923077
Section 2	34	2.9/6	48%	21	0.61764706	16	0.47058824	16	0.47058824	2	0.05882353	26	0.76470588	18	0.52941176
Section 3	20	2.8/6	47%	12	0.6	14	0.7	7	0.35	3	0.15	13	0.65	8	0.4
Section 4	21	3.0/6	50%	13	0.61904762	16	0.76190476	12	0.57142857	3	0.14285714	14	0.66666667	7	0.33333333
Section 5	17	3.4/6	57%	14	0.82352941	16	0.94117647	11	0.64705882	2	0.11764706	11	0.64705882	4	0.23529412
Section	29	3.2/6	53%	18	0.62068966	26	0.89655172	18	0.62068966	7	0.24137931	19	0.65517241	6	0.20689655
	147	3.05/6	51%	97	0.65986395	109	0.80769231	76	0.5170068	20	0.13605442	101	0.68707483	50	0.34013605
Average with Q4 removed:															
	# correct per question														
	Q1	97													
	Q2	109													
	Q3	76													
	Q5	101													
	Q6	50													
	TOTAL	433													
	AVG	59%													