Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet

Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term

Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Assessed</th>
<th>BA in Anthropology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Barbara Roth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Coordinator</td>
<td>Daniel C. Benyshek (Undergraduate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>12-18-17</td>
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</tbody>
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Contact Person for This Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Daniel C. Benyshek</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>702-895-2070</td>
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<td>Email</td>
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</table>

Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?

Please limit the narrative portion of your report to no more than four pages. You may attach appendices with data, tables, charts, or other materials as needed. Please explain the relevant conclusions from any appendices in your narrative. Please contact the Office of Academic Assessment if you have questions or need assistance.
1. Student Learning Outcomes for the program. List the Student Learning Outcomes for the program.

1. Intellectual Breadth and Lifelong Learning
   a. Demonstrating knowledge of the basic tenets of anthropology
   b. Demonstrating knowledge of Social Sciences models of individual and group behavior
   c. Demonstrating analytical grasp of social and cultural dimensions of human existence

2. Inquiry and Critical thinking
   a. Demonstrating the acquisition of the basic tenets of anthropological subfields’ methods of inquiry (data gathering and analysis)
   b. Demonstrating a good grasp of the scientific process (research questions, falsification, critical review, inductive or deductive approach) in use in the social sciences

3. Communication
   a. Demonstrating a capacity to use research resources (online, library, laboratory on campus) in the pursuit of individual research programs
   b. Demonstrating an ability to communicate results of research to the scientific community (research paper, presentation, essays, articles, conference addresses)

4. Global/Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness
   a. Demonstrating the acquisition of basic knowledge of human biology, cultural history and geography
   b. Demonstrating an awareness of the variations in human experience across time and space
   c. Demonstrating a proper knowledge of theories and models about societies’ structures, institutions and organizational principles and their impact on individual behavior

5. Citizen and Ethics
   a. Demonstrating the acquisition of a reasoned relativistic stance on contemporary cultures
   b. Demonstrating self-awareness about the consequences of one’s action (place in society, effect in the world)
   c. Demonstrating a proper grasp of such complex issues as identity, race, gender and ethnicity
   d. Demonstrating a capacity to think about cultural diversity in ethical and responsible ways

The department of anthropology has collectively decided to assess a sample of its 100- and 400-level courses every year using various instruments. In addition to traditional exams, the assessment instruments also included those listed below.
2. **Planned assessments: Methods, Instruments and Analysis.** According to the Assessment Plan for this program, what were the planned assessments to be conducted during the Spring & Fall 2017 Academic Semesters?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Instrument</th>
<th>Learning outcome(s) assessed (list by #)</th>
<th>Person responsible for instrument &amp; data collection</th>
<th>When and where will data be collected</th>
<th>Expected Measures (results that would indicate success)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANTH 103 ANTH 436</td>
<td>1a, b, c 2a, b, c 4a, b, c 5a, d</td>
<td>Data collected by instructors and given to the Undergraduate Committee to aggregate and summarize</td>
<td>Typically, every spring and fall semester</td>
<td>Analyze and compare learning curves for each learning outcome across the semesters. We are hoping for post-test evaluations that indicate at least 50% improvement in core concept competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANTH 102 ANTH 436</td>
<td>1a, b, c 2a, b, 3b</td>
<td>Data collected by instructors and given to the Undergraduate Committee to aggregate and summarize</td>
<td>Typically, every spring and fall semester</td>
<td>Direct, written responses during from students identifying primary difficulty/challenge with the course. Subsequent open discussion forum with students (mid-semester) allows instructors to identify those aspects of the course with which students are struggling most, and to modify the course, where possible, to reduce or eliminate these difficulties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANTH 473</td>
<td>1a, b, c</td>
<td>Data collected by instructors and given to the Undergraduate Committee to aggregate and summarize</td>
<td>Typically, every spring and fall semester</td>
<td>Written exercises (responses to two ‘forced answer’ and three open ended questions) that provide direct feedback to instructor, who can then modify the course materials (when possible), based on identified barriers to student learning.</td>
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3. Results, conclusions and discoveries. What are the results of each planned assessment listed above? Is the outcome at, above, or below what was expected? What conclusions or discoveries do you draw from the results? Describe below or attach to the form.

ANTH 102: Introduction to Biological Anthropology (Spring 2017)

Dr. Alyssa Crittenden

Students enrolled: 120

Quantitative Data (summative)

A pre-test was given the second week of class to evaluate students’ degree of knowledge about core concepts in biological anthropology. The same three questions were posed at the end of the semester.

The following three questions were asked:

Q1: Is there a "missing link" in human evolution?
Q2: Is culture distinct from biology?
Q3: What is lactase persistence?

While there was not a significant difference in the scores for Q1 (t= -.96, p= .17), there was a significant improvement, however, in the scores for Q2 (t= -2.2, p= .02) and Q3 (t= -3.0, p= .002). Meaning, while most of the students correctly answered “no” to Q1 during the pre-test, the majority answered Q2 and Q3 incorrectly the first time – only to answer correctly at the end of the semester.
Qualitative Data (formative)

In addition to the true false (forced choice) and short answer questions asked above, students were also asked the following open ended question, “What is one of the most difficult things about this class so far?”

This question was posed at the beginning of the semester in order to better assess where students were struggling – whether it be conceptually or with the work-load. My aim was to determine effective ways to close the loop. Using the information provided by students in their free response questions and during an open discussion forum held during class in the middle of the semester, I was able to take the following actions, based on their responses:

- I was able to reevaluate the learning goals for the course in the module on genetics, which appears to be a recurring theme in teaching this particular course. Every semester students come into the course with variable backgrounds in basic human biology – warranting a discussion on how deep to delve into population genetics in the first weeks of the course.

- I revisited material that was particularly confusing – such as mutation – using augmented slides and a video tool found online.

- Several students commented that keeping up with the notes was difficult – so I made sure to slow down my lecture pace and frequently remind the students that all lecture materials are posted to UNLV WebCampus each week. This enabled many students to stop taking vigorous notes and focus on following along with the lecture.

Finally, another recurring issue for some students is in regard to their faith based beliefs. Many students in the course believe that the earth is much younger than the dates discussed in class and do not believe in the principles of natural selection. This is a challenging aspect of teaching this course, as it is an introduction to human evolution. One student commented that the single most difficult aspect of the entire course was, “having to know answer and learn evolution when I believe in creationism.” The way that I handled this concern – as with every other semester that it has arisen – is to remind the students that their personal beliefs are not what is tested and that their exams are testing their comprehension and retention of the scientific data covered in class. I remind them that my door is always open if they wish to discuss any topic in more detail.
Course Pre/Post Test of Key Concepts (summative assessment)

The first week of class (9-7-2017) the students were given a questionnaire with 12 questions. Some were open-ended written responses and others yes, no, or don’t know. These questions broadly surveyed some of the key concepts that would be discussed and developed during the course. The students were asked the same questions during the last week of class (12-5-17).

Questions:
1. What is the age of the Earth?
2. What force is responsible for the movement of the earth’s plates?
3. What conditions are necessary for the origin of life?
4. What is the technical definition of evolution?
5. How many chromosomes does a human have?
6. What skeletal changes are associated with bipedalism?
7. What is the oldest evidence of human religious/ritual behavior?
8. How do we know an animal has self-consciousness?
9. What is relationship between literacy and birthrate?
10. What is modernity?
11. What affect does population density have on health, knowledge, and power?
12. Why do humans have trouble making decisions with long-term effects?
RESULTS:

Figure. Percent of students providing correct ‘key concept’ answers, by answer, in first (pre) and last (post) class sessions.

![Bar chart showing percent of students providing correct answers, by answer, in first (pre) and last (post) class sessions.]

Table. Number (and percent) of students providing correct answers, by answer in first (pre) and last (post) class sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Responses first class</th>
<th>Responses last class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Raw</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>12</td>
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The pre-post test results show that the students made dramatic gains in terms of basic understanding of the course core concepts.
Written-Feedback (formative assessment)

I focused on a formative assessment tool that was discussed in the UNLV assessment workshop that I took in 2016 called “Assessment for Learning.” I wanted to attempt to get feedback from the class during the semester so that I could assess how well they were doing and be able to change things based on their needs and learning issues as the semester went on, not at the end of the semester.

Questions given to students in class a week prior to the mid-term exam.

1. Do you feel the class is moving too fast, too slow, or just right?
2. What has been the most difficult thing for you in this class?
3. What would you recommend the professor do to help you learn the material better?
4. How much time do you spend outside of the class working on the readings and reports?
   1-2 hours a week
   3-4 hours a week
   5-6 hours a week
   6-7 hours a week
   8+ hours a week
5. What are you most worried about with the upcoming take-home essay mid-term exam?

RESULTS: 20 out of 22 students responded to the questions on Wed Oct. 11.

Responses to the questions were:

1. too fast (10%), too slow (0%), just right (90%)
2. This open-ended question was answered generally around two themes -- doing all the required reading, and writing reports for which there was no “right” answer.
3. Students felt they wanted copies of the PPTs (30%), they wanted more coverage of the readings (30%) and 50% said there was nothing the professor should do differently.
4. Students on average spent 3-4 (50%) hours a week on the readings and assignments with 25% spending 1-2 hours and 25% spending 5-6 hours.

5. Students were worried about their ability to write clearly and respond to the open-ended essay questions (50%), while others were worried about not understanding all the various theories on violence with enough confidence (50%).

OUTCOMES: On Mon Oct 16 we discussed these findings in class. Students discussed how the pace of the readings and report was just right, although challenging. They discussed how they got the work done, which hopefully helped the students who felt that the class was moving too fast, to see what they needed to do to feel caught up. This merged into the 2nd question about the reports which were “critical thinking” based, so there was no right answer, just a thoughtful well-articulated and balanced answer. Student talked about how they had not done very much writing that asked them to think through issues and come to a conclusion and back it up with info/data from the readings, so that no answer was wrong, but it meant really thinking through a response and then making sure the writing was clear and forceful. We discussed the role of PPTs, the professor’s philosophy (not to post them or hand them out) and the student’s desire to have them. We talked about how this isn’t a course where you learn facts, but rather where you learn to interrogate ideas using a range of theoretical frameworks about human capacities for violence.

We discussed how much time students should spend outside of class on their course work, and while 3 hours is the national average for a 3 credit class, I urged them to see the reading now as “work” but something more interesting and that they could do anytime. Students also shared tips on how the read the assigned readings such as taking notes, summarizing main points and putting questions they had to the side. Finally, we discussed their worries about the upcoming exam and they all shared strategies for how to overcome the challenges of writing essays that drew on the readings but also asked them to make informed opinions about broader issues in the study and understanding of violence.

CONCLUSIONS: Students continued to do well in this class, and we often came back to some of these issues at the ends of class, where I might ask how students were feeling about the pacing and the upcoming final exam. Having the open discussion of their concerns, and having them address each other’s concerns really made the class cohere in interesting ways. Students who were better at writing gave tips to students who hadn’t been asked to do much writing. I tried to institute a peer-review process for the 10 reports, but it was very informal and only about 5 students participated in that.
Quantitative Data (summative assessment)

A pre-test was given the third week of class to evaluate students’ degree of knowledge about core concepts in anthropological theory. The same two questions were posed at the end of the semester.

The following two questions were asked:

Q1: What does the term “tabula rasa” refer to?

Q2: Compare and contrast “emic” versus “etic” perspectives.

While there was not a significant difference in the scores for Q1 (t= -1.32, p= .95), there was an improvement in how many students were able to answer the question correctly the second time (15% vs. 29% of students answering correctly). For Q2, the difference between the pre- and post-test was highly significant (t= -4.42, p= .000). Meaning, while most of the students were unable to correctly differentiate between emic” and “etic” perspectives at the beginning of the semester, they were able to do so at the end.

The more critical question/concept to master is Q2. It is important for undergraduate students in this course, which is the capstone course for the majors, to distinguish between the concepts of “emic” and “etic”. The foundation of this course is based on critical thinking and being able to discern between different theoretical orientations to studying human behavior and culture. The “etic” perspective is often considered to be the perspective on an outsider looking in to a culture, whereas the “emic” perspective is largely focused on the intrinsic cultural distinctions that are meaningful to the members of a given society (as stated by those members). This is a critical distinction that must be made before moving into more theoretically rigorous discussions of the tensions that exist between “emic” and “etic” perspectives. (See Figure below.)
Qualitative Data (formative assessment)

In addition to the pre- and post-test questions asked above, students were also asked in the middle of the semester to list their least favorite topic covered in the course at that point and how they thought that it could be taught more effectively. I used their answers to this open-ended question to modify my teaching throughout the remainder of the semester.

Examples of individual comments and how I shifted my teaching in response to those comments are outlined below.

- “The heavy amount of material covering white men. I know that this is out of your control.”
  - I took the opportunity to modify the course content and go beyond the textbook. While this course uses the preeminent theory text for undergraduate anthropology students, it is heavily biased towards European history and, as such, rarely includes many contributions by female scholars or scholars of color (which is particularly problematic, as UNLV is one of the most ethnically diverse universities in the country and our students are eager to learn about scholars from varied and diverse backgrounds). I included several additional units to address this lacuna in the literature. The students were particularly positive about the unit on Zora Neale Hurston and her anthropological training,
background, research, and impact outside of the discipline of Anthropology.

- “The Marxism/Communism section could be more in depth to be made more clear.”
  - I was able to reevaluate the learning goals for the unit on Marxism and we revisited the material to include an open-ended discussion and question/answer period. We also watched excerpts from a film entitled, *Karl Marx and Marxism*, and then discussed the content.

I also asked students at the end of the semester to write down the “single most significant thing” that they learned during the semester. I wanted to use this information to better inform how I structure content for the course in following years. As every Anthropology major takes this course, it is important to monitor the type of information and content that the students feel is most meaningful and then adjust the course accordingly. I will start doing this end of the semester question every semester to evaluate temporal shifts in how students view the most significant content.

Some examples of the comments are listed below.

- “I feel that the most significant thing I learned was not to be narrow minded like some of the Anthropologists we have studied, that cooperation is key, and that it’s useful and necessary to incorporate different theories together”.

- “The most important thing I’ve learned in this class is that human cognition heavily affects culture.”

- “I learned this semester that there is absolutely no single ‘right’ way to approach the field of anthropology and the study of the human animal.”

4. Use of results. What program changes are indicated, and how will they be implemented? Include a description of who will review and act on the findings. If none, describe why changes are not needed.

Our assessment instruments have not uncovered any major flaws in the way we dispense our anthropological material to our undergraduate students. Moreover, faculty are making a concerted effort to share teaching successes and failures with departmental colleagues that have been revealed by assessment instruments, with the aim of improving acquisition of targeted learning outcomes by our students.
5. Progress. Describe program changes that have been recommended in past reports. What progress has been made since the recommendation?

To date, our summative assessments have shown that the vast majority of students are meeting with good success in achieving our targeted learning outcomes -- as reflected in their grasp of critical core concepts in our classes. We have tried to balance our assessment approaches, using both summative and formative tools. Moving forward, we would like to offer a broader range of formative assessment techniques in multiple classes – both lower and upper division. As faculty we think this will further our goals of being able to assess our success in teaching critical core concepts, and also but to we can also assess our students learning during the course and alter our instruction to better meet our students’ needs.