

The faculty scored 20 student research papers from SOC 176: Qualitative Research Methods in Sociology. Both Dr. Jones and Dr. Kubal scored 90 percent of the papers at or above 3/5, which meets our benchmark of 80% of the papers scoring at or above 3/5 in upper-division courses. The average score was 3.8/5. On average, the results were encouraging with the students demonstrating an ability to think critically and clarify main points, apply appropriate methodology using a variety of techniques and analyze data, and structure their papers as would be expected for a sociological research paper. The student papers were weakest on evidence, with an average score of 3.65/5 as compared to average scores of 3.8 to 3.9 in other areas. After consulting with the faculty who teach this course, we found that the students struggled with both primary and secondary evidence for different reasons. The issues with primary evidence were largely based on the time at which they turn in their collected data, which is close to the end of the semester when there is less time to receive and incorporate feedback, and also with the students getting overwhelmed either because they are taking on too broad of a research question, they are collecting too much data, or because they get busy with other coursework. The issues with using secondary evidence are primarily due to some students being unfamiliar with how to conduct a literature review.

4. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?

After consulting with the faculty who teach SOC 176, we agreed on the following changes to address the issues that students face with gathering and incorporating both primary and secondary evidence. First, it is best if students are given a specified limit on how much data they collect so that they have a manageable amount to analyze within the time given in a semester. Second, students should be expected to turn in their data with enough time left to receive and incorporate feedback. Third, there needs to be a greater emphasis on the literature review in SOC 176, with more training and instruction on how to gather and review secondary evidence. Finally, as we go forward with our assessment we will be looking at how the literature review is handled in our writing course, SOC 130W, which students are required to complete before they take the Tier 3 research methods courses. We will revisit this last point after we assess SOC 175: Quantitative Research Methods in Sociology, which is structured similarly to SOC 176 but with a focus on quantitative methods.

5. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in last year's assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year's report please write N/A as your answer to this question.

The faculty who teach SOC 125 are now requiring students to include an expanded conclusions section in their final project in which they think broadly about the implications of their findings, as recommended in last year's assessment report.

6. What assessment activities will you be conducting during the next academic year?

As per the timeline in our SOAP, in 2019-2020 we will be assessing the following learning outcomes:

SLO 4: utilize quantitative and qualitative techniques for the purpose of interpreting and communicating research results

SLO 5: demonstrate information literacy in evaluating social phenomena in socioculturally diverse communities and perceiving patterns and relationships within them.

Our SOAP specifies that we will assess these learning outcomes using data from SOC 174: Computer Data Analysis and SOC 161: Population Analysis. However, these courses are not offered in the 2019-2020 academic year. We will instead draw data from student projects in SOC 170T: Demography (in place of SOC 161) and SOC 170T: Visual Sociology (in place of SOC 174). We will again collect 20 student papers and evaluate them using our rubric. The benchmark is 80% of the papers at or above an overall score of 3/5.

7. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan

The sociology Program has made progress on our Program Review Action Plan in the following areas:

1. Work to improve tenure density: We intend to propose a new search for a tenure-track faculty member to improve tenure density and meet the teaching demands of our growing major and minor.

2. Department should consider declaring impaction: We have discussed this issue as a department over the past academic year and are continuing to consider our options for managing the growth of our majors and minors, which includes the possibility of declaring impaction as well as revising our prerequisites.

3. Increase the number of computers at the university with SPSS and N-Vivo software and add an additional computer lab for the College of Social Sciences: The College IT staff are testing a virtual desktop software package called Apporto which would allow students to virtually access the software available in the computer labs, including SPSS and NVivo, from their own devices. This could potentially improve access for students outside of class so that they can complete coursework and projects without having to work around the lab schedules. We still plan to pursue more lab space as well because two computer labs cannot well accommodate the needs of every department.