

Program Assessment: *Annual Report*

Program(s): PhD

Department: History

College/School: College of Arts and Sciences

Date: June 2018

Primary Assessment Contact: Charles Parker, chair, AND Douglas Boin, Assessment Coordinator

1. Which program student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

Learning Outcomes 1) Assess relevant literature or scholarly contributions in the field(s) of study and 2) Apply the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in the field(s) of study

2. What data/artifacts of student learning were collected for each assessed outcome? Were Madrid student artifacts included?

The mentor of the student (or another faculty member who has read the student's Dissertation) fills out a rubric/worksheet and addresses relevant questions posed at the end. The rubric/worksheet focuses on the Dissertation of students graduating from the program. This year the Department had two PhD students who graduated and wrote a Dissertation. Professor Philip Gavitt, who chaired a Departmental prize committee for the best Dissertation, filled out the rubric for each student and answered the questions with brief paragraphs. After removing all identifying information from the rubrics, I loaded them onto the Department's T Drive.

3. How did you analyze the assessment data? What was the process? Who was involved?

NOTE: If you used rubrics as part of your analysis, please include them in an appendix.

Since both students finished their dissertations late in the Spring Semester and graduated in May, faculty have not yet had the opportunity to analyze the assessment data. The faculty will assess the data at its faculty retreat in August 2018, which is in accord with the Department's Assessment Plan. Please also note that these are the first artifacts the Department has collected since the Assessment Plan went into effect.

4. What did you learn from the data? Summarize the major findings of your analysis for each assessed outcome.

NOTE: If necessary, include any tables, charts, or graphs in an appendix.

While these data will be discussed in the August 2018 Department meeting, my informal reading of Professor Gavitt's comments suggest that the structuring of coursework, emphasis on professionalization, and funding structure has enabled both students to exceed the Learning Outcomes. In 2010, the Department made a number of changes to the PhD program, one of which was the substantial reduction of coursework. At the time and since, there was a concern that such a change would reduce the quality of our PhDs. These two students were the first in the pipeline and the changes seemed to have worked well with them.

5. How did your analysis inform meaningful change? How did you *use the analyzed data to make or implement recommendations for change* in pedagogy, curriculum design, or your assessment plan?

NA. Faculty will consider the data and their implications in the August 2018 Faculty Retreat.

6. Did you follow up (“close the loop”) on past assessment work? If so, what did you learn? (*For example, has that curriculum change you made two years ago manifested in improved student learning today, as evidenced in your recent assessment data and analysis?*)

NA. Faculty will consider the data and their implications in the August 2018 Faculty Retreat.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any revised/updated assessment plans to the University Assessment Coordinator along with this report.

History Department Ph.D. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University
 Student Name: Student A
 Faculty Name(s): Philip Gavitt

	Degree of outcome-achievement demonstrated in artifact* *Please make succinct notes as appropriate, especially for scores of 2 or 1 (e.g., “minor difficulty articulating argument to a general audience”)		
<u>Outcome</u>	3: Exceeds expected achievement of outcome	2: Achieves outcome	1: Does not achieve outcome
1. Assesses relevant literature or scholarly contributions in the field(s) of study.	Surveys and evaluates well over 500 books and articles		
2. Applies the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in the field(s) of study.	Strong historical anthropology archival breadth/depth		
3. Applies knowledge from the field(s) of study to address problems in broader contexts.	Surveys evidence and draws conclusions for all social strata		
4. Articulates arguments or explanations to both a disciplinary or professional audience and to a general audience, in both oral and written forms.	The organization is extraordinarily clear, with constant interplay between minutiae of detail, broader context, and larger argument		
5. Evidences scholarly and/or professional integrity in the field of study.	Always draws conclusions appropriate for evidence		
6. Demonstrates the ability to complete an in-depth study of at least 200 pages (excluding notes, bibliography, and front-matter), using primary and secondary sources, that makes an original, defensible contribution to historical knowledge.	Ever since RW Southern’s <i>Making of the Middle Ages</i> , the connection between Crusading and affective piety at all levels of society has required fleshing out. This 500 pg. masterpiece achieves		

In the space below, please compose a brief narrative evaluation of the results. Consider answering such questions as the following: What do the results reveal about the effectiveness of our courses and advising in helping students to attain the assessed learning outcomes? What might we do differently? What seems to be working well? What relevant information do the assessment data fail to capture, in your view? How workable/user-friendly did you find the assessment process?

Answer: The graduate program in the Department of History is one of the premier medieval and early modern programs in the country. Its particular strength comes from the sequential organization of courses in which students receive two years of intensive study, first in mastering the literature in the broader field, then mastering the literature in the more narrowly defined fields, and finally two seminars in the major and minor fields that require students to write and publish (or deliver at conferences) article-length papers that lead directly into their dissertation research. The quality of the advising is evidenced by the dramatic improvement in this student's writing from his early years here to his production of a deeply researched, clearly organized, and beautifully-written dissertation, which won the Thomas Neill Award for best dissertation in the Department this year. Because of the enormous richness of primary sources in our Special Collections area of Pius Library, we give our students first-hand acquaintance with the very sophisticated research skills needed to navigate medieval Latin, old and sometimes nearly indecipherable handwriting, and vernacular languages in various states of linguistic development. In addition to the emphasis on grant-writing that we have in all our courses, a departmental grants advisor meets with graduate students, who critique each others' proposals, a process reinforced by the professional development courses we offer in the third year, a model that our department pioneered. Student A visited archives in Baltimore, Bologna, Cortona, Douai, Graz, Madrid, Monte Cassino, Orvieto, Paris, Reggio-Emilia, Rome, Subiaco, Toledo, and Vienna. In addition, financial support from the Department, he also received prestigious fellowships to travel to many of these sites, an experience that is far from unusual for our graduate students.

The only reflection I have on the assessment process is that it is difficult to ascertain the precise impact of the Department's methods and practices. Although the mentoring this student received certainly helped improve his writing, the quiet determination and persistence of this student to succeed, and his evident love for his topic and field, cannot be underestimated.

History Department Ph.D. Assessment Rubric, Saint Louis University
 Student Name: Student B
 Faculty Name(s): Philip Gavitt

	Degree of outcome-achievement demonstration Student B in artifact*		
<u>Outcome</u>	*Please make succinct notes as appropriate, especially for scores of 2 or 1 (e.g., “minor		
	3: Exceeds expectations	2: Achieves outcome	1: Does not achieve outcome
1. Assesses relevant literature or scholarly contributions in the field(s) of study.	Starts with relevant major figures in field. Thorough.		
2. Applies the major practices, theories, or research methodologies in the field(s) of study.	Attentive to nuances of text and textual production		
3. Applies knowledge from the field(s) of study to address problems in broader contexts.	Analyzes response of other monarchs to Ferdinand III's use of symbolic self-presentation in kingship		
4. Articulates arguments or explanations to both a disciplinary or professional audience and to a general audience, in both oral and written forms.	Clearly written, though addressed more to scholarly and professional audience than to a general audience. Given the nature of the evidence, which is highly paleographical and codicological, this is fine.		
5. Evidences scholarly and/or professional integrity in the field of study.	Meticulously sourced		
6. Demonstrates the ability to complete an in-depth study of at least 200 pages (excluding notes, bibliography, and front-matter), using primary and secondary sources, that makes an original, defensible contribution to historical knowledge.	This 304-page masterpiece demonstrates the importance of Ferdinand III's mastery of the symbolic power of Castilian kingship. Inclusion of Islamic-Arabic sources from N. Africa is wholly innovative		

In the space below, please compose a brief narrative evaluation of the results. Consider answering such questions as the following: What do the results reveal about the effectiveness of our courses and advising in helping students to attain the assessed learning outcomes? What might we do differently? What seems to be working well? What relevant information do the assessment data fail to capture, in your view? How workable/user-friendly did you find the assessment process?

Answer: Student B's dissertation was nominated for the Thomas P. Neill prize for best dissertation and was in every respect equal in virtue to the dissertation that won the prize. It was a very different kind of dissertation; its author used a wide range of manuscript sources. The History Department's affiliation with the Center for Medieval and Renaissance (the Department is the Center's academic home) gives our graduate students access to Pius Library's Special Collections. Student B was one of the fortunate recipients of the Center's assistantships, and as a result he is the author of one of the Pius Library Special Collections research guides. The Department, through its connections to CMRS and Pius Library, offered him training in paleography, manuscript research, and skills in reading texts in both Spanish and Arabic.

The Department's mentoring includes an introductory course in the Theory and Practice of History, an introductory course to the historiography of the student's field, an advanced course that begins exploration of primary sources in the field, and a seminar in which students are generally required to present an original piece of scholarship and submit it to a journal or present as a conference paper. The Department also requires two semesters of a professionalization course to help prepare the student for comprehensive exams, write grant proposals, culminating in the writing of the dissertation proposal. A Departmental reading group and grants coordinator reinforce the classroom learning and practice. This preparation and professional development was instrumental in Student B winning important grants, including a grant to study at the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library. In 2015 Student B published a refereed journal article, "Cantigas de Santa María, Cantigas de Cruzada: Reflections of Crusading Spirituality in Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa María." *Al-Masaq* 27, no. 3 (2015): 207-224, which in February 2018 was awarded the Best Early Career Article Prize from the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies. Both the publication of the article and the prize are impressive achievements, indeed. Student B also benefited from the personal mentoring of Dr. Damian Smith, whose work with graduate students is exemplary. Although Student B has not yet been offered a tenure-track job (he has only just begun applying) his work has attracted sufficient notice that he is getting interviews, no mean feat in a job market as tight as this one.

In 2010, the Department of History reworked its entire graduate program to offer less coursework and more professional and practical guidance, considerably shortening time-to-degree. Judging by the quality of Student B's dissertation, and the relatively short amount of time he took to complete it, this reform of the Department's curriculum paid off handsomely and is demonstrated also by the wealth of external fellowships and prizes that our graduate students have won over the past eight years.