

Memorandum

To: William Myers, CAS Assessment Coordinator

From: Ryan Harrod, Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology

Date: 15 October, 2019

RE: Assessment of BA/BS Program for Anthropology

Assessment Process

During the 2013-2014 academic year the Department of Anthropology realized that we were not effectively tracking how well our students were progressing through the BA and BS programs. Between 2015 and 2018 we focused on our required courses and highlighted which assignments were useful for measuring student success and we collected grades that students received in these classes as a way to track the information they learned. What we found was that our assessment measure were not nearly effective enough to allow us to track student progress.

During the Fall 2017 semester Dr. Kristen Ogilvie chaired a curriculum committee for the department that recommended we standardize the way we measure student success in our program. The problem with the old program was that simply tracking increases or decreases in grades over the semester does not reflect whether a student improved as they advance through the course. The new assessment tools proposed by Dr. Ogilvie are designed to provide baseline, formative, and summative data. The new program still tracks progress of students in the classes but it includes assessment surveys at the 200-level, 300-level, and 400-level.

At the beginning of a 200-level course, students will take a survey in class or on Blackboard to determine a baseline for that student's knowledge of the discipline of anthropology, and then there will be a follow-up survey at the end of the course. Surveys will also be given to two ethnographic, two topical/theoretical, and two methodology courses at the 300- to 400-level. Finally, in the final capstone course (ANTH A410) students will complete an Anthropology ePortfolio in which students will reflect on their accomplishments in each of the five program outcomes. Additionally, a final exit survey will also be given in this course that asks about anthropological knowledge and skills, building on the formative assessments for comparison.

Revised Student Learning Outcomes (May 2018-2019):

1. Describe current understandings about human behavior and language, cultural processes, the evolution of humans, biocultural diversity, and trajectories of cultural change.

Measures:

- a) % of anthropology majors correctly answering questions about knowledge of the four subfields of anthropology.
- b) % of anthropology majors reporting growth in knowledge of the four subfields of anthropology.

Evidence

- a) Artifacts of four-field knowledge presented by graduating anthropology majors in ePortfolio reflections.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical approaches in anthropology, their foundations, and the issues they are designed to address.

Measures:

- a) % of anthropology majors correctly answering questions about anthropological theory.
- b) % of anthropology majors reporting growth in knowledge of anthropological theory.

Evidence

- a) Artifacts of anthropological theory knowledge presented by graduating anthropology majors in ePortfolio reflections.
3. Explain ethical practice in anthropological research and issues encountered in the discipline.

Measures:

- a) % of anthropology majors correctly answering questions about anthropological ethics.
- b) % of anthropology majors reporting growth in knowledge of anthropological ethics.

Evidence

- a) Artifacts of awareness of anthropological ethics presented by graduating anthropology majors in ePortfolio reflections.
4. Exhibit proficiency in documenting, evaluating, and communicating anthropological information, including perspectives relevant to Alaska and the Circumpolar North.

Measures:

- a) % of anthropology majors who meet GER proficiency standards for communication skills and information literacy skills on select assignments at different levels in the program.

- b) % of anthropology majors reporting growth in knowledge of finding and communicating anthropological evidence.

Evidence

- a) Artifacts of information literacy and communication skills presented by graduating anthropology majors in ePortfolio reflections.

5. Apply anthropological methods and techniques to research questions and practical problems.

Measures:

- a) Average # of anthropological methods/techniques anthropology majors can identify.
 b) % of anthropology majors reporting growth in knowledge of anthropological methods.

Evidence

- a) Artifacts of methodological skills and experience presented by graduating anthropology majors in ePortfolio reflections.

2018-2019 Assessment:

For the first year of this new assessment protocol we administered baseline knowledge surveys in several 200-level courses, one 300-level and one 400-level course. In most of the 200-level courses and the 300-level course (ANTH A390B) students were not given follow-up knowledge surveys. We did however give follow-up knowledge surveys in two sections of ANTH A202) and one of our 400-level courses (ANTH A430). Finally, we evaluated the ePortfolio reflections in the capstone course (ANTH A410).

Baseline Knowledge Survey (summary of the types of questions asked)

This class had 34 students who were assessed on 10 true or false questions.

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
Cultural relativism means that some cultures are relatively better than each other	2	31	1	F	91.18
Anthropologists never study their own culture	0	34	0	F	100.00
Sex refers to biological features while gender is social construct	30	4	0	T	88.24
Anthropology focuses only on past cultures and civilizations, not modern-day people	0	33	1	F	97.06
Despite our differences, human beings everywhere define family the same way	11	23	0	F	67.65
Cultural anthropologists often collaborate with scientists from different disciplines in their research	30	4	0	T	88.24
The biocultural approach in cultural anthropology emphasizes the genetic basis for human behavior	27	6	1	F	17.65

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
The hallmark of cultural anthropology as a field science is participant observation	25	8	1	T	73.53
Anthropologists have demonstrated that all societies have powerful men who control politics and important social institutions	15	19	0	F	55.88
Economic and political systems greatly affect other social institutions like family, kinship, and religion	30	3	1	T	88.24

In this ANTH A205 class 28 students were assessed on 10 true or false questions.

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
Primates include lemurs, monkeys, apes, and humans.	18	9	1	T	64.29
The first anatomically and culturally advanced humans are found in Europe.	1	27		F	96.43
Neanderthals were slow, dumb cavemen based on reconstructions of the skeletal remains.	2	26		F	92.86
Skin color changes as humans migrate, inhabit different parts of the world, and adapt to the local environment.	26	2		T	92.86
Evolution was a concept invented by Charles Darwin.	20	8		F	28.57
Race is a biologically valid concept.	7	21		F	75.00
Natural selection is one of several mechanisms of evolution.	28	0		T	100.00
A scientific hypothesis is simply an educated guess and is not often rigorously tested.	7	21		F	75.00
Bones can reveal if diseases were present in the past.	28	0		T	100.00
The ideal habitat for chimpanzees and gorillas is in research facilities because experiments on them can tell us a lot about human evolution.	1	27		F	96.43

In this ANTH A210 class 18 students were assessed on 10 true or false questions.

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
Children are taught how to speak by their caregivers.	14	4	0	F	22.22
Archaeological evidence suggests that humans have used language since the beginning of time	10	8	0	F	44.44
Some languages are more grammatical than others.	15	3	0	F	16.67
The way speakers in a community use language tells us quite a bit about how they live their lives	17	1	0	T	94.44
The way speakers in a community live their lives tells us quite a bit about the kind of language they use	15	3	0	T	83.33
Written language is more linguistically precise than spoken language.	5	13	0	F	72.22

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
Hockett's Design Features suggest that written language is easier to understand in certain fonts	12	6	0	F	33.33
Without a written standard for a language, we would not be able to understand each other	1	17	0	F	94.44
Linguistic relativity is the concept that the language one uses is relative to the social context in which they learned that language.	16	2	0	F	11.11
There is virtually no difference between a language and a dialect.	2	16	0	T	11.11

In this ANTH A211 class 17 students were assessed on 10 true or false questions.

Question	T	F	Blank	Answer	% Correct
Archaeologists study dinosaurs	0	17		F	100.00
Most archaeological work takes place in Egypt and the Near East	0	17		F	100.00
Archaeology is primarily about excavation	3	14		F	82.35
Archaeologists keep the artifacts they find	3	14		F	82.35
Archaeology is primarily about finding artifacts	0	17		F	100.00
Archaeology is useful only for periods before written records	2	15		F	88.24
Archaeologists are running out of things to dig	0	17		F	100.00
Archaeological practice is regulated by local, state, and national laws	1	16		T	6.25
Archaeological methods have remained largely unchanged over the last century	1	16		F	94.12
Archaeologists have recovered evidence of alien visitation	2	15		F	88.24

OUTCOME ASSESSMENT

The base knowledge surveys given at the beginning of each class do not assess how well the students learned each outcome but they are invaluable in that they provide us with a general idea of where students are starting when they are taking the lower division courses. For example, assessment of Outcome 1 highlights the value of having pre-surveys in our base courses.

OUTCOME 1: Describe current understandings about human behavior and language, cultural processes, the evolution of humans, biocultural diversity, and trajectories of cultural change.

Assessing the true and false questions in the baseline knowledge surveys indicates that students begin the courses with a basic understanding of the concepts but that there are some misconceptions about the concepts. For example, less than twenty percent of the students in ANTH A202 understood

that a biocultural approach does not emphasize genetic bases for human behavior, and nearly thirty percent of the students in ANTH A205 believed Charles Darwin invented the concept of evolution.

The surveys also identify topics that we can focus on in our courses to improve student learning outcomes. For example, one of our major program outcomes for students in archaeology is to understand the way that local, state, and national laws guide a majority of the work they will perform in their careers. We have a 400-level course that focuses on teaching students these laws. The baseline knowledge survey in ANTH A211 clearly indicates that entering students are not aware of the importance of the laws. An exit survey after the upper division course like the one we did for ANTH A390B this year should indicate that students understand this relationship better as the progress through the archaeology tract of the BA/BS program.

In each of the courses (ANTH A202; ANTH A205; ANTH A210; ANTH A211; ANTH A390B; ANTH A430) students were asked how confident they were they could meet the student learning outcomes of the program. Data from all 7 agreement questions was assessed in one of teach of the classes this year but one section of ANTH A202. D = definitely, P = probably; PN = probably not; DN = definitely not. These questions can provide some insight into how well we are addressing Outcome 2, Outcome 3, and Outcome 5. The following is an example of the types of questions asked in each course and the responses that we got from students. I am highlighting only ANTH A205, ANTH A210, and ANTH A211 here because I want to point out how one questions can inform us about what students know when they begin the class.

Question	D	P	PN	DN
ANTH A205				
Without referring to the textbook, other course materials, or any outside references, I can name the four subfields within anthropology.	12	6	4	6
I understand the discipline of anthropology well enough that I could explain it to another person and make sense.	10	8	9	1
I could explain to another person how a biological anthropologist collects and analyzes data from the field.	1	6	16	5
I can describe at least one example of recent work done by an anthropologist.	6	7	7	8
The field of anthropology is relevant to my future career, job, or pursuits.	11	8	8	1
I am familiar with and know how to use at least one major citation style for anthropology.	11	7	4	6
I am confident in my ability to find reliable sources and conduct literature searches in anthropology.	11	12	4	1

Question	D	P	PN	DN
ANTH A210				
Without referring to the textbook, other course materials, or any outside references, I can name the four subfields within anthropology.	7	8	0	3
I understand the discipline of anthropology well enough that I could explain it to another person and make sense.	3	9	6	0
I could explain to another person how a linguistic anthropologist collects and analyzes data from the field.	0	2	10	6
I can describe at least one example of recent work done by an anthropologist.	5	6	0	4
The field of anthropology is relevant to my future career, job, or pursuits.	13	4	1	0
I am familiar with and know how to use at least one major citation style for anthropology.	7	9	2	0
I am confident in my ability to find reliable sources and conduct literature searches in anthropology.	11	6	1	0
ANTH A211				
Without referring to the textbook, other course materials, or any outside references, I can name the four subfields within anthropology.	11	4	2	0
I understand the discipline of anthropology well enough that I could explain it to another person and make sense.	9	7	1	0
I could explain to another person how an archaeologist collects and analyzes data from the field.	1	8	7	1
I can describe at least one example of recent work done by an anthropologist.	6	8	1	2
The field of anthropology is relevant to my future career, job, or pursuits.	10	2	1	4
I am familiar with and know how to use at least one major citation style for anthropology.	6	7	1	3
I am confident in my ability to find reliable sources and conduct literature searches in anthropology.	10	5	0	2

OUTCOME 2: *Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical approaches in anthropology, their foundations, and the issues they are designed to address.*

OUTCOME 3: *Explain ethical practice in anthropological research and issues encountered in the discipline.*

OUTCOME 5: *Apply anthropological methods and techniques to research questions and practical problems.*

Assessing the agreement questions in the baseline knowledge surveys we can determine how prepared our students feel to begin developing the skills that we identify in Outcome 2 and Outcome 3. For example, the question “I could explain to another person how (cultural anthropologist/biological anthropologist/linguistic anthropologist/archaeologist) collects and analyzes data from the field” in each course was answered with only moderate

confidence. As students progress through the program and we exit surveys in our 300-level and 400-level courses to identify if they have a better idea of the work researchers in each of the four sub-disciplines perform. When the question was asked among students in ANTH A390B about biological anthropologists, fifty percent felt confident they could describe how they collect and analyzes data from the field. This compares to twenty-five percent of students reporting they could at least probably explain the work biological anthropologists do.

How students answer a particular question can illustrate a lot about what we are assessing but it does not reveal how students perceive their own knowledge outcomes as they progress through the course. To get at this data we looked at aggregate scores on the baseline knowledge surveys given at the beginning and end of the course. These data are derived from 2 sections of ANTH A202, ANTH A390B, and ANTH A430.

	BL Know	P Know	BL Conf	P Conf
ANTH A202	91%	91%	2.29	3.38
ANTH A430	46%	78%	2.47	3.58

BL= Baseline; P = Post; Know = Knowledge; Conf = Confidence

Looking at these three courses (2 sections of ANTH A202 and one section of ANTH A430) we can clearly see that students are more confident in their responses to the 7 agreement questions and knowledge either improved or stayed the same on the true and false questions in the knowledge surveys. One limitation we found with the knowledge surveys was that our questions for the students in the 200-level questions may have been too rudimentary, which is evident by the high baseline scores in the ANTH A202 course above.

For Outcome 4, which both deal with applying anthropology, we can use the and more nuanced assessment measures like the ePortfolios in ANTH A410 to assess how students are meeting these program outcomes.

OUTCOME 4: Exhibit proficiency in documenting, evaluating, and communicating anthropological information, including perspectives relevant to Alaska and the Circumpolar North.

Assessing the ePortfolios for Outcome 4 indicates that having the students identify what they learned contributes to understanding how anthropological knowledge can be relevant to Alaska and the Circumpolar North. Looking at the assignments that they have done in their classes, especially applied anthropology activities, we can capture, and highlight to them, the ways that their ideas and efforts completed during their BA/BS in Anthropology have contributed to our understanding of issues in Alaska and the Circumpolar North. As in past semesters, this assessment measure is exceedingly useful because it

allows the individual student to reflect on what they learned. For this assessment four faculty members in our department independently scored the section of the ePortfolio called “Anthropological Informational and Communicative Competency” where students are prompted by the instructor (Dr. Ogilvie) to provide the following:

Provide your reflection here of the mastery of the fourth program outcome:

- Students should be able to exhibit proficiency in documenting, evaluating, and communicating anthropological information, including perspectives relevant to Alaska and the Circumpolar North.

Provide artifacts as evidence of your mastery by adding pages or modules to this page.

Using a written communication rubric developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) for the LEAP outcomes we assessed the student answers in the following categories:

- Context and Purpose for Writing
- Content Development
- Genre and Disciplinary Conventions
- Sources and Evidence
- Control of Syntax and Mechanics

The results of the assessment of this assignment indicated that for the most part faculty agreed with how the writing of the students reflected their ability to meet the knowledge outcome. While some students were at the capstone level of performance all the students who could be assessed (i.e., had completed the assignment) had reached the milestone level indicated they had met Outcome 4.

Recommendations for Anthropology Assessment AY19:

Recommendation for the 2019-2020 year is as follows:

- 1) Continue to administer these baseline knowledge surveys at the beginning and end of each of the required 200-level courses.
- 2) Give the students exit surveys in our 300 and 400-level courses like Dr. Paul White did in ANTH A390C.
- 3) Use the products produced by the ePortfolios to see if our students are producing papers, working on projects, and performing activities that demonstrate they are meeting our program outcomes.