General Education Assessment Report
2020-2021 Results for Interpreting the Past

Executive Summary
In May 2021, faculty assessed 90 artifacts to determine the extent to which students were achieving the specified outcomes for general education in Interpreting the Past courses. The highest rated Interpreting the Past outcome was *learning how historians interpret the past.* The lowest rated outcome was *assessing and analyzing historical sources to construct an argument.* Raters recommended creating assignments that directly address the student learning outcomes, instead of open-ended research papers. Raters also recommended using smaller primary source analysis assignments as a foundation for papers over the course of the semester.

Interpreting the Past Assessment Report
As part of Old Dominion University's general education requirements, students must complete three credit hours of Interpreting the Past courses, also known as the Interpreting the Past (H), at the lower division level. The lower division Interpreting the Past skills are taught in the department of History. The criteria approved by Faculty Senate for H courses includes the following student learning outcomes (SLO):

    A. Students will be able to learn how historians interpret major events, people, processes, and ideas from the past
    B. Students will be able to explain the importance of key historical concepts such as change and continuity over time, chronology, causation, historical context, and the difference between primary and secondary sources
    C. Students will be able to assess and analyze historical sources to construct an argument

Recommendations from the previous assessment in 2013-14 were used to inform this cycle of planning and assessment for Interpreting the Past. See Table 1 below for recommendations and associated actions.

Table 1. Interpreting the Past assessment recommendations and actions

2013-14 Recommendations	Actions
Department needs to clarify the outcomes and make a few modifications to the rubric.	Outcomes were revised by a small group of faculty in 2019-2020. Rubric was developed by faculty and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment.
Communicate outcomes to faculty teaching the Interpreting the Past courses and engage faculty early in the assessment process.	The department was notified of the assessment process a year before artifacts were collected. Instructions and examples were provided to support faculty with the selection of assignments.

Methodology
A rubric developed by faculty teaching H courses was used to assess Interpreting the Past. In fall 2020 and spring 2021, faculty teaching general education Interpreting the Past courses were asked how and where students demonstrated the Interpreting the Past outcomes. Faculty

members were able to identify an artifact or a series of artifacts that aligned with the outcomes and embedded within the courses.

The University switched to many remote and hybrid learning options during the 2020-2021 academic year because of COVID-19 concerns. With this, faculty selected which semester to include in the sample to accommodate for major revisions that may have taken place. Artifacts from the following courses were included in the random sample: HIST 100H, HIST 101H, HIST 102H, HIST 103H, HIST 104H, and HIST 105H.

A two-day assessment summit was convened in May 2021, where four faculty, read and rated a random sample of student artifacts from H courses. During the morning of the first day, a calibration session was conducted. First, faculty thoroughly reviewed and discussed the rubric and then independently applied the rubric to four sample artifacts. Raters shared their ratings and discussed any differences that arose after each "round" of rating. This discussion helped faculty come to a common understanding of what the outcomes meant and what to look for when rating the artifacts using the rubric's scale: exceeds standard, meets standard, approaches standard, needs attention. Once individual ratings on a shared artifact did not differ by more than one point, raters were given a set of 40 artifacts to rate. The artifacts were read twice by faculty and scored using the rubric. If faculty ratings differed by more than one point on the majority (50% or more) of the outcomes, the artifact was sent to a third reader.
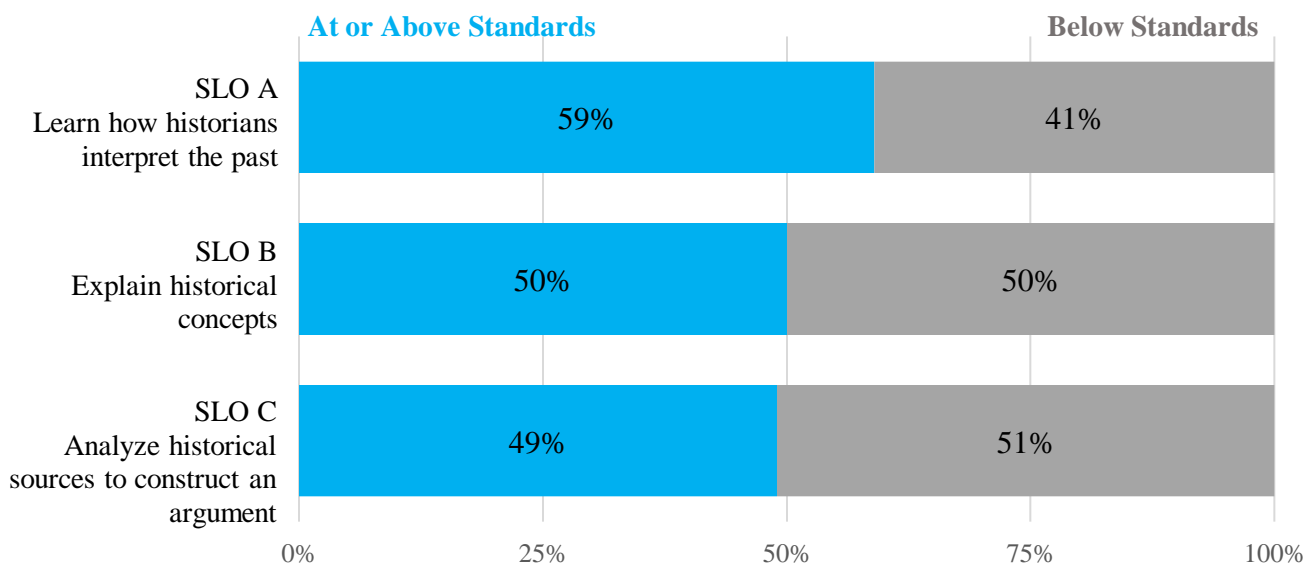
Eight of the 90 artifacts reviewed required a third read due to discrepancies in ratings. A full description of the methodology, including inter-rater reliability data and the rubric, will be made available on the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Assessment's website: https://tinyurl.com/geneduc

Results

An overview of the findings by SLO is presented in Figure 1. The highest rated Interpreting the Past outcome was *learning how historians interpret the past* (SLO A: 59% exceeds and meets standards; 41% approaches standards and needs attention). The lowest rated outcomes were *assessing and analyzing historical sources to construct an argument* (SLO C: 49% exceeds and meets standards; 51% approaches standards and needs attention) and *explaining the importance of key historical concepts* (SLO B: 50% exceeds and meets standards; 50% approaches standards and needs attention).

Figure 1. Interpreting the Past assessment results

	At or Above Standards	Below Standards
SLO A — Learn how historians interpret the past	59%	41%
SLO B — Explain historical concepts	50%	50%
SLO C — Analyze historical sources to construct an argument	49%	51%

Faculty Rater Discussion and Recommendations

Discussion
At the end of the second day, faculty were asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of student learning. Students showed strength in their ability to use and synthesize multiple sources and interpretations to adequately describe major events, people, processes, and ideas from the past (SLO A). Student performance was weaker in explaining key historical concepts and in analyzing historical sources to construct an argument (SLO B & C). Raters found that students were able to summarize historical sources, but they struggled with constructing and understanding arguments. Raters noted that students did better in response to assignments with curated questions rather than on open-ended research papers, where many student ideas were often undeveloped. Faculty raters mentioned the potential impact of the COVID pandemic on the quality of student work.

Recommendations
Faculty raters identified the following recommendations to improve Interpreting the Past outcomes:

Teaching or Assignments
- Create assignments that directly address the student learning outcomes.
- Suggest rethinking midterm/final departmental requirements to better support the demonstration of the student learning outcomes.
- Use smaller primary source analysis assignments as foundation for other papers over the course of the semester.
- Require the consultation of 4-5 primary sources.
- Develop assignments to help students use correct sources and interrogate questionable sources.

Assessment Process
- Include more adjuncts in the assessment process.
- Make the rubric available to faculty while they are creating assignments and designing courses.
- Provide guidance about selecting assignments in future communication with faculty (e.g., papers were often a better demonstration of student learning than the midterm/final exam questions).

Plan to Improve Learning Summary
- Faculty teaching Hist 1xxH will add/revise assignments in a way that student learning outcomes are directly addressed (by Spring 2023 the latest).
- Faculty teaching HIST 1xxH will revise/develop assignments to help students use and interrogate sources (historical source critique). This might be done via standalone assignments or via integrating historical source critique into already existing assignments (faculty teaching these classes will assess to what degree existing assignments can be used during Spring and Fall 2022).
- With AY 2021/2022 the Department of History has instituted a monthly retreat to discuss teaching related issues. In Fall 2022 this retreat will be focused on Hist1xxH classes and all adjuncts teaching these classes will be invited to participate.
- The Department will develop a workshop for adjuncts teaching Hist 1xxH to present and discuss the plan to improve and to develop strategies for implementation.
- The Department will dedicate a monthly departmental teaching retreat during AY 2022/2023 exclusively to the assessment process to develop a combined strategy for providing guidance to the instructors teaching Hist 1xxH as well as to assess these classes over the full cycle.

(See full Department of History Plan to Improve in Appendix A)

Faculty Senate Recommendations
[Shared with Committee A in Spring 2022]

APPENDIX A
DEPARTMENT OF HISOTRY PLAN TO IMPROVE   **Jan. 2022**

General Education: Interpreting the Past

Department Name: History[1]

Course related action(s) that will be implemented by the Department
- Faculty teaching Hist 1xxH will communicate student learning outcomes as learning goal to the class at the beginning of the term and/or via syllabus statement (by Spring 2023 the latest)
- Faculty teaching Hist 1xxH will add/revise assignments in a way that student learning outcomes are directly addressed (by Spring 2023 the latest)
- Faculty teaching Hist 1xxH will reconsider/revise midterm and final exams to assure that these exams reflect and assess student learning outcomes (ongoing)
- Faculty teaching Hist 1xxH will require the use of at least four to five primary sources over the course of the class and will use the analysis of these source analysis assignments as foundation for other assignments/tests/exams etc. (will need full departmental discussion prior to implementation, such discussion will take place in Fall 2022 the latest)
- Faculty teaching HIST 1xxH will revise/develop assignments to help students use and interrogate sources (historical source critique). This might be done via standalone assignments or via integrating historical source critique into already existing assignments (faculty teaching these classes will assess to what degree existing assignments can be used during Spring and Fall 2022)

Faculty support and communication related action(s) that will be taken by the Department
- With AY 2021/2022 the Department of History has instituted a monthly retreat to discuss teaching related issues. In Fall 2022 this retreat will be focused on Hist1xxH classes and all adjuncts teaching these classes will be invited to participate.
- The Department will proactively share information about the PLAN TO IMPROVE with all instructors teaching HIST 1xxH classes including adjuncts.
- The Department will develop a workshop for adjuncts teaching Hist 1xxH to present and discuss the PLAN TO IMPROVE and to develop strategies for implementation
- The Department is considering implementing the position of an Undergraduate Program Director to coordinate all instruction related activities on the undergraduate level and to support respective faculty (full-time, part-time) (pending Dean's approval)

Department plans for next assessment cycle

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[1] Please note: This *Plan To Improve* relates only to H courses developed and offered within the Department of History. THEA 243H has been developed without any input from the Dept of History and the department has no influence on this class at all. Furthermore, the Department questions, if this class really fulfills the full set of objectives of a class with a H-designation as it focuses on a narrow disciplinary view on the past.

- The departmental assessment committee will investigate if the current assessment process for Hist402W can be modified and used for an internal assessment of Hist1xxH classes without putting too much additional workload on the respective instructional faculty (next 402W assessment cycle)
- Departmental portfolio committee will add gen ed learning outcomes to the list of topics to be addressed during regular portfolio review (to be integrated into portfolio review process beginning AY 2022/2023)
- Dedicating a monthly departmental teaching retreat during AY 2022/2023 exclusively to the assessment process to develop a combined strategy for providing guidance to the instructors teaching Hist 1xxH as well as to assess these classes over the full cycle.