

California State University, Stanislaus  
**Department of Sociology**  
Assessment Report  
2007-08

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The sociology program assessment plan includes the collection of data and the analysis of data to inform program improvement and student learning. The methodology is designed to gather feedback from students about the quality and effectiveness of the program, about what students have learned, and the program's relevance to their career goals and actual vocations.

**ASSESSMENT IS PROGRAM REVIEW**

The assessment process will be ongoing and will use multi-method strategies. The outcome data will be used for determining what faculty considers the most important learning goals and objectives for students to be, and for determining how well students who major in sociology achieve these learning goals and objectives. The outcome data will also be used to identify and determine the ways in which the program (the curriculum, course content, and pedagogy) might be improved to enhance student learning. The focus is on what students know and on what they are able to do after completing the sociology major. Ultimately, the purpose of assessment is program review and improvement.

**ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

The department will use multi-method strategies. However, to begin, the department will approach student-learning assessment through two techniques. First, sociology majors will be identified and will be administered a sociology entrance assessment (pre-test), and upon completion of the sociology major and prior to graduation, students will be given a sociology major assessment (post-test). The entry/exit assessment will focus on measuring the student's sociological knowledge that the department faculty considers critical for their sociological education. Put simply, sociology majors will be measured on what faculty considers the fundamental knowledge base to be with a B.A. in Sociology. These assessments are not graded, and are not entrance and exit exams that students must pass in order to graduate. Rather, the entrance assessment is to provide baseline data against which the exit assessment can measure sociology major's increase in knowledge.

The department faculty has developed a question item bank from where to draw a battery of items to assess students' knowledge in the following core content areas of the sociology program: classical theory, contemporary theory, research methods, research analysis, and social inequality. All entering and declared sociology majors will be administered an entrance assessment. The entrance assessment will serve as the cohort baseline. The entering cohort will be assessed again at time of exit (graduation). (All seniors not administered the entrance assessment, will be administered at exit-only assessment.) The second approach will track sociology majors who have completed the sociology program and have graduated. These students will be surveyed to learn about their actual career outcomes and their perceptions of the sociology program, and the relationship between the two. This approach will likely encompass a longitudinal approach and follow sociology graduates, one year, three years, and five years after graduation.

**PROCEDURE**

The procedure for data collection will be as follows: All new students in the Sociology Program must be assigned an Academic Advisor when they first enter the program. The department will administer the

pre-assessment during the student academic advising period. During advising, the student will be referred to the department assessment coordinator who will administer the assessment. The department assessment coordinator will aggregate, analyze and report the results. At the time of graduation-clearance by the department, all graduating student majors must obtain the department chair's signature. Again, the exit-assessment will be administered during this time, and again the department assessment coordinator will analyze and report the results. The department assessment coordinator will also conduct comparison pre-and post-assessment, and post-test only analyses and the reporting of results. Assessment data will also be collected from current postgraduates. The department assessment coordinator will work with the alumni office to access and/or build a sociology alumni contact database. The database will be used to contact recent postgraduates for interview (methodology to be determined). Upon administration of the postgraduate assessment, the data will also be aggregated, analyzed, and reported by the assessment coordinator.

### **IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT IN SOCIOLOGY**

The department of Sociology faculty views the assessment activity more than simply the collection and analysis of quantitative data. Faculty members view the current assessment program as a process-oriented system of activity. The assessment process is impacting the department program first in a "qualitative" way, even before the gathering of quantitative data has been completed. This is a desirable effect.

First, the assessment process has caused the department to strengthen student advising. A key strength in the department is the time faculty spends building rapport and faculty-student relationships during the advising process. Faculty members recognize the importance of having a strong presence in student advising, and that this process is directly related to strengthening the students' engagement in the learning process and advances campus climate. The sociology faculty members wish to strengthen the student advising process even more so.

As a result, the department is developing a department "guide to advising sociology majors" for faculty. As communicated in a meeting of the sociology faculty, the guide will outline the steps faculty "must take" to provide excellent advising to students and help prevent them from "falling through the cracks."

A second impact is in the form of "strengthening instructional strategies" when it comes to the teaching of core sociology courses for the major. This item was also discussed in a sociology faculty meeting. Faculty agreed to review the internal consistency of teaching objectives and learning outcomes in the core courses mentioned previously.

SOCIOLOGY: Curriculum Map

	Social Theory (Core)	Research Methods (Core)	General Concentration	Human Services Concentration	Drug and Alcohol Studies	Social Deviance and Criminology	Social Inequality
Sociological knowledge competency	H Exams; Papers	H Exams; Written research proposal					
Diversity awareness	H		H Exams; Written papers; class discussion	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion			H Exams; Written papers; class discussion
Historic & theoretical grounding of the field	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion		M Exams; Written papers; class discussion				M Exams; Written papers; class discussion
Theoretical construction	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion		H Exams; Written papers; class discussion				
Critical thinking: separate myth from reality	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion		H Exams; Written papers; class discussion	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion	H Exams; Written papers; class discussion
Methodological analysis of social complexity		H Exams; Written research proposal	M Exams; Written papers; class discussion	M Exams; Written papers; class discussion	M Exams; Written papers; class discussion	M Exams; Written papers; class discussion	M Exams; Written papers; class discussion