

Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum

Department/Program _____ History_____

- 1) **Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

The History Department continues to use two learning outcomes that stress skills taught in all History Core courses, regardless of subject matter. Through the History Core, students will know how to:

- 1) use primary sources to interpret the past
- 2) explain change over time

- 2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The learning outcomes are available on the History Department Core website. <https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/morrissey/departments/history/undergraduate/core/core-requirements.html>

In addition, the learning outcomes are printed in the syllabi for History Core courses.

- 3) **Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

The History Department had performed direct assessment of the learning outcomes, which was undertaken by instructors and teaching assistants using a quantitative scale prior to the pandemic. Since the pandemic, we have experienced large fluctuations in the TA labor pool, desire for seats in the core, and increased pressure on instructors. We will resume direct assessments when these numbers stabilize.

- 4) **Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

Data collection and initial interpretation is the responsibility of the History Core Moderator, who shares this information with the Department Chair. These data will shape future departmental conversations (via full department as well as committee meetings) about the Core.

- 5) **What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

Changes to the Core in '21-'22 were the result on the ongoing pandemic rather than being driven by longitudinal data. External factors also drove changes in grading and pedagogy. Until academic year '22-'23, the department lacked a large pool of teaching assistant labor relative to the number of core courses available to students. Put simply, TAs had too many students to grade and many instructors were forced to resort to online assessments (Canvas). We have offered fewer core seats in 2022-2023, given recent demand, allowing instructors to return more proven pedagogical models and more TA

support, but it is entirely possible that fluctuation in student population and demand for the core will require similar adjustments in the future.

In 2023-2024, the History Core tried to restore the pre-pandemic normalcy; it managed to offer more core seats. Nevertheless, data showed that the demand for seats remained high, whereas the numbers of instructors and teaching assistants remained lower than needed. This means that heavy workloads fell on a small number of people who taught the core. To relieve such pressure, to encourage more teaching activities toward the core, and secure more seats, the Department initiated the conversation on how to reform core policies. The conversation will continue in the new academic year.

6) **Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

The History Department had several conversations about the Core at department meetings. The Core Moderator Ling Zhang had several conversations with the Department Chair, the administrator of the Core and the Graduate Program, as well as former chairs and core moderators to collect opinions. She shared data and analyses with the Department Chair. Further actions toward the Core will be taken in the new academic year.