

Asian Studies Program
Annual Assessment Report

May 31, 2016

Report annually to the Dean of the college/school the following:

- **Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcome**
- **Any changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis**
- **Any changes to the assessment process made or planned.**

I. Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcome

The Asian Studies (AIST) program relies mainly on student academic records and the Asian Studies exit survey in our assessment of student learning outcome. In Spring 2016, seven students have applied for graduation with either a major or a minor in Asian Studies. Five of these students have completed the exit survey. Below is the result of analysis of each of the student learning outcomes specified in our assessment plan.

Learning Outcome #1: Language Proficiency

All of the students graduating with a major or a minor in Asian Studies in the 2015-2016 academic year have successfully completed Intermediate II (or the equivalent of at least two years of postsecondary study) in either Chinese or Japanese. Many of the AIST graduates have also completed upper-level courses in either of these languages. Furthermore, the AIST exit survey asked students their level of satisfaction with the Chinese and Japanese language programs at the University of Arkansas. Four of the students who have taken Chinese language classes were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the program. The other two students who have taken Japanese language courses answered either “very satisfied” or “neutral” to this question. These data suggest that the program generally does a good job providing students with the necessary language training and helping them achieve the desired proficiency level in the target language.

Learning Outcome #2: Working Knowledge of Asian History

All of the seven students applying for graduation with either a major or a minor in Asian Studies in the 2015-2016 academic year have completed 6 hours of coursework in Asian history. A couple of students have taken more than 6 hours of Asian history courses as required by the major. The AIST exit survey further asked students the extent to which courses in the AIST major or minor have contributed to their knowledge in, or exposure to Asian history. Three of the five respondents answered “a great deal” while the other two students answered “a fair amount” to this question. The mean score of this question is 3.6 out of 4.0 which is the highest among all of the academic disciplines surveyed. In addition, as a result of the recruitment of Prof. Kelly Hammond to the history department in Fall 2015, the program has been able to offer a couple of new history classes such as “Islam in Asia,” “World War II and the Pacific,” and “Mao Zedong and the Chinese Cultural Revolution” in the past year. These courses have greatly expanded our existing history course offerings, thus allowing us to more effectively achieve our goal of providing our students with working knowledge of Asian history.

Learning Outcome #3: Nuanced Understanding of Contemporary Asian Culture and Society

All of the students who have applied for graduation with a major or minor in Asian Studies in 2015-2016 have successfully completed the Asian Studies core colloquium which seeks to provide students with in-depth understanding of Asian culture and society. Out of the five students who have completed the AIST exit survey, four have studied abroad in an Asian country during their undergraduate study at the U of A. This suggests that in addition to providing students with the necessary information about study abroad opportunities, the program has generally done a good job preparing them for study abroad programs so that they can gain first-hand experience with Asian cultures and societies. Table 1 below further presents student responses to the question about the degree to which courses in the AIST major or minor contributed to the student's knowledge in, or exposure to, various aspects of Asian culture and society. Student responses to this question were very positive as the mean score for this question was 3.40 out of 4.00. Similarly, students indicated a relatively high level of satisfaction with the degree to which the program has prepared them to better understand the political and economic systems, languages and literatures, and intellectual thought and philosophy in Asia. However, in a pattern that is consistent with that from last year, most students felt that the program has been less effective in providing them with exposure to Asian culture as the mean student response to this question was only 2.20 out of 4.00. This points to the continued need for us to enhance our faculty resources and strengthen our instruction in this area.

Table 1: Student response to the following question: “To what extent did courses in the AIST major or minor contribute to your knowledge in, or exposure to, the following areas:”

#	Question	Not at all	A little	A fair amount	A great deal	Total Responses	Mean
1	Asian languages and literature	0	1	3	1	5	3.00
2	Asian politics and economics	0	1	1	3	5	3.40
3	Asian social and cultural issues	0	0	3	2	5	3.40
4	Asian history	0	0	2	3	5	3.60
5	Asian arts	1	2	2	0	5	2.20
6	Asian intellectual thought/philosophy	0	1	3	1	5	3.00

Learning Outcome #4: Knowledge of an Asian Culture that Spans More Than One Disciplinary Perspective

The AIST major requires that students must complete at least 6 hours of history and 6 hours of social science courses and that no more than 9 hours may be submitted from any given department in order to make sure that students receive broad-based training that spans more than one academic discipline. Indeed, all four of the students who have applied for graduation with an AIST major have completed this requirement. Student self-assessment of the knowledge they have gained in our program presented in Table 1 above also generally indicates that they are broadly exposed to Asian history, politics, economics, and society.

In addition, the Asian Studies program runs an annual speakers' series that is truly interdisciplinary in nature. Under this series, we were able to invite about four to five experts to campus each year to deliver talks on various aspects of the history, politics, economics, and culture

of Asian countries. The AIST exit survey asked students to assess the usefulness of the speakers' series for improving their understanding of Asian culture and society. The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive as all five students have chosen to answer "very useful" to this question (see Table 2 below). This provides an additional indication of the breadth of knowledge that the program has been able to provide to our students.

Table 2: Student response to the following question: "Several times a year, AIST brings guest speakers to campus as part of our AIST lecture series. In your view, how useful is the speakers' series for improving your understanding of Asian culture and society?"

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Not at all useful	0	0%
2	Not useful	0	0%
3	Somewhat useful	0	0%
4	Very useful	5	100%
	Total	5	100%

Learning Outcomes #5 & 6: Analytical, Critical Thinking, and Research Abilities and

The AIST core colloquium which is mandatory for all AIST majors and minors requires that students must complete a 12-15 page research paper as part of the course requirements. Most other upper-level Asian Studies courses have similar requirements. In addition, the AIST graduation survey asked students to rate the preparation the program has provided to them with respect to analytical, critical thinking, and research skills. The results are presented in Table 3 below. As Table 3 indicates, the mean score of student response to this question is 3.60 out of 4.00 with respect to writing abilities, 4.00 out of 5.00 with respect to logical thinking and analytical abilities, and 3.60 out of 4.00 with respect to communication skills. These data suggest that we have generally met our goal of providing our students with adequate preparation in terms of analytical, critical thinking, and writing abilities.

Table 3: Student response to the following question: "How would you rate the preparation provided to you in each of the following areas?"

Statistic	Min Value	Max Value	Mean	Variance	Standard Deviation	Total Responses
Writing effectively	3	4	3.6	0.3	0.55	5
Understanding written information	3	5	3.8	0.7	0.84	5
Speaking effectively	3	4	3.6	0.3	0.55	5
Listening more closely to others	3	5	4	1	1	5
Organizing your time effectively	3	5	4	1	1	5
Thinking logically/resolving analytical problems	3	5	4	0.5	0.71	5
Working independently/learning on your own	4	5	4.8	0.2	0.45	5
Respecting different philosophies and cultures	3	5	4.6	0.8	0.89	5
Professional practices	2	5	4	1.5	1.22	5

II. Changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis

Assessment results for the 2015-2016 academic year indicate that students are largely satisfied with the training they have received in Asian language, history, politics, and economics. However, they also suggest that there remain areas of improvement. First, consistent with the results from last year, the current assessment suggests that exists considerable student demand for more courses in the areas of Asian art, literature, and philosophy. In the open-ended questions about the weaknesses of the program, a couple of students mentioned that there needs to be a wider range of courses offered such as those on the art and geography of China or on the rest of the Asian region beyond China and Japan. While we recognize that this necessarily reflects the constraints in our faculty resources, we shall try to utilize our existing sources to remedy this deficiency. For example, we can do so through the infusion of more Asian art or literature related content in our existing courses or by increasing such content in our speakers' series. Second, a couple of students also suggested the need for improving communications with incoming freshmen in order to give them information ahead of time about the opportunities provided by the program and for greater access to and interactions with professors in order to more effectively guide students toward their specific interests. We plan to address these concerns by holding more social events and by increasing opportunities for faculty-student interaction.

III. Any changes to the assessment process made or planned

The current assessment process seems to work well for its intended purposes. In the next academic year we plan to refine the survey instrument to include more questions that more directly tap other aspects of students' involvement with the program such as experience with study abroad or academic advising. We also plan to administer a survey of students currently enrolled in the program to better assess student learning outcomes and identify areas for improvement early on in the process.