

Asian Studies Program
Annual Assessment Report

August 25, 2017

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 the 2016-2017 academic year, seven students have graduated with either a major or a minor in Asian Studies. There are 17 students that are enrolled in Asian Studies at the beginning of Fall 2017. In summer 2017, we conducted a survey of the students' experience with the Asian Studies program. Nine students completed the survey, including three graduates and six currently enrolled students. Below is the result of analysis of each of the student learning outcomes specified in our assessment plan based on the above data.

Learning Outcome #1: Language Proficiency

All of the students graduating with a major or a minor in Asian Studies in the 2016-2017 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. It is noticeable that student satisfaction with both of these programs, especially the Japanese program, is very high. Almost all of the students who have completed the survey indicated that they are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the Japanese program. Similarly, 70% of the students who have completed assessment of the Chinese language program indicated that they are "very satisfied."

In addition, the University of Arkansas is one of only 15 of the sites for administering the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) in the United States. The exam, which measures the Japanese language proficiency of non-native speakers, provides students with the most internationally recognized credentials of their Japanese language proficiency. The Japanese program at the U of A considers the JLPT to be a very important instrumental goal for its students and strives to certify its students' proficiency at a career-ready level (generally JLPT Level N3 or above) before graduation. The central administration of JLPT does not provide student test data by institution. However, it is estimated that in the 2016-2017 academic year, 10-12 students have passed level 5 of the JLPT test, 5 students have passed level 6 of the exam, and another 3-4 students have achieved proficiency at even higher levels. The above data thus points to the effectiveness of the language program in helping students achieve the desired proficiency in the target language.

Learning Outcome #2: Working Knowledge of Asian History

All of the students who graduated with either a major or a minor in Asian Studies in the 2016-2017 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 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. The mean student response to this question is 3.17 out of 4.0, which is somewhat lower than the score from last year (3.6). We are somewhat intrigued by this result given that we have been able to maintain the same number of history course offerings in the past. We plan to implement follow-up surveys or engage in direct discussions with the students in order to identify the sources of this relative decline.

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

All of the students who have graduated 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. Furthermore, over 60% of the students have completed the AIST survey have studied abroad in an Asian country. Almost all of these students are “very satisfied” with their study abroad experience. 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 Asia. Once again, it is intriguing that student responses have been slightly less positive than last year, as they were in the range of 3.0-3.17 compared to 3.0-3.40 in the previous year. Consistent with the results reported for previous years, student satisfaction with their exposure to Asian arts has been lower compared to other areas, with a mean score of 2.83. This result continues to reflect our relative lack of faculty resources 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	Mean
1	Asian languages and literature	3.17
2	Asian politics and economics	3.00
3	Asian social and cultural issues	3.17
4	Asian history	3.17
5	Asian arts	2.83
6	Asian intellectual thought/philosophy	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 of the students who have graduated from the program in the 2016-2017 academic year 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 survey asked students to assess the usefulness of the speakers' series for improving their understanding of Asian culture and society. The mean student response to this question is 3.2. This score, while somewhat lower than that from last year, should nevertheless provide an opportunity for us to reflect on the series so as to come up with more programs that more specifically address student concerns next year.

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

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 survey asked students to rate the preparation the program has provided with them with respect to analytical, critical thinking, and research skills. The results, which are presented in Table 2 below, indicates that the mean score of student response to this question is 3.83, 4.0, and 3.5 (on a 1-5 scale) with respect to writing abilities, research abilities, and analytical skills, respectively. Student rating for analytical skills tend to be lower than that for other questions. These survey results should prompt us to explore strategies for improving student skills in these areas, including, for example, through more focused written assignments or closer faculty supervisions over research projects.

Table 2: Student response to the following question: “How would you rate the preparation provided to you in each of the following areas?”

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
<i>Writing effectively</i>	3	5	3.83
<i>Understanding written information</i>	3	5	4
<i>Speaking effectively</i>	2	5	4
<i>Research ability</i>	3	5	4
<i>Thinking logically/resolving analytical problems</i>	3	5	3.5
<i>Working independently/learning on your own</i>	3	5	4.33
<i>Working cooperatively in a group</i>	2	5	4.17
<i>Gaining a broad education about different fields</i>	3	5	4
<i>Respecting different philosophies and cultures</i>	3	5	4.33

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

Assessment results for the 2016-2017 academic year suggests several areas for improvement. First, the results continue to suggest the need to provide students with greater exposure to Asian arts, intellectual thoughts, and philosophy. This is an area that we will continue to work on in the coming year. In the absence of additional faculty resources that will enable us to offer courses in these areas in the near future, we may need to work more actively to bring external speakers to campus to delivers talks

on these topics as a partial strategy to address our deficiency in this area. Second, the lower student self-assessment of their analytical, critical thinking, and research abilities and the effectiveness of the program in preparing them in these areas this year suggests that we may need to critically reflect on their pedagogical strategies and come up with more assignments that more specifically focus on developing student skills in these areas. Our faculty may need to engage in collective discussions to develop a strategy for addressing these issues. Third, the survey contains additional questions that asked students about their experience in the program (see Table 3 and Table 4 below). As we can see, while student assessment of their academic and social experience as well as with faculty quality and accessibility is generally very positive, they seem to be less satisfied with the range of courses offered by the program or with academic advising. These are areas we plan to improve in the coming year, potentially through the development of new courses that will be made possible through our Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language (UISFL) grant project and by providing students with more opportunities to interact with faculty member on issues related to grades, assignments, and academic and career plans. It is expected that our faculty will collectively discuss these issues and develop an action plan for addressing them in the near future.

Table 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the courses in the AIST major or minor?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
the courses I needed were available	2	5	3.5
there was a good range of courses	2	5	3.83
my professors were good teachers	4	5	4.33
my professors were available for help outside of class	4	5	4.33

Table 4: How would you rate your experience with the Asian Studies program in each of the following areas?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Your academic experience	3	5	4.17
Your social experience	1	5	4
Responsiveness to student academic problems	3	5	4.17
Academic advising	3	5	3.5
Faculty accessibility	3	5	4.17
Opportunity to discuss grades or assignments with faculty	1	5	3.83
Opportunity to discuss career plans with a faculty member	1	5	3.83

III. Any changes to the assessment process made or planned

While the current assessment process generally works well for its intended purposes, we also plan to collect additional data on student language proficiency (such as test scores on language proficiency tests), the number of students presenting at undergraduate research conferences or publishing in undergraduate research journals, or the number of students participating in study abroad programs in the next assessment cycle. We also plan to tweak the existing questions in our survey that ask students about

the degree to which the program effectively prepares them in each of the academic disciplines under Asian Studies (e.g., Asian politics, culture, history, and art, etc.) to more directly tap students' self-assessments of their knowledge in these areas. In addition, we plan to continue to administer the survey to not only students planning to graduate each spring but also to currently enrolled students in order to better assess student learning outcomes and gain a better understanding of the areas in need of improvement.