



Course-Level Assessment Project Final Report

To complete the Final Report, type your responses to the prompts below. Share a copy of the document with your supervisor and the Associate Vice President of Curriculum and Assessment.

Faculty Name(s): Dr. Roxanna Harlow
Division/Department: Social Sciences
Course Assessed: SOC 101

Step 1. Define

Explain the purpose or rationale for assessing the selected course.

Identify which course objective(s) were assessed. Briefly explain why you selected these course objectives for assessment.

Identify to which program goal(s) selected course objective(s) align.

Purpose/Rationale

At the institutional level, Introduction to Sociology (SOC 101) is being assessed because it is a high volume course with around 24 sections serving approximately 500 Carroll Community College students per year. It also fulfills a general education requirement and transfers to any institution as a sociology major course for students pursuing sociology. At the division level it is being assessed because it is the introductory/survey course for sociology, a core discipline in the social sciences, and provides the foundation for sociological knowledge, thinking, and analysis.

Objectives to be assessed

- Summarize and explain what sociology is and demonstrate, orally or in writing, the use of the sociological perspective in studying human behavior. (Aligns with General Ed Goals 1, 2, 3; Program Goals 1 & 3)
- Use the major concepts of sociology to analyze social phenomena and to develop solutions to social problems. (Aligns with General Ed Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 7; Program Goals 1 & 2)
- **Why these?:** These objectives were chosen because they best capture the scope of knowledge and skills that students should take away from the course. These objectives are the most holistic and comprehensive in regard to measuring students' overall mastery of the course material using all six cognitive skills from Bloom's Taxonomy (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation).

Program Goal Alignment: See above.

Step 2. Design

*Describe the instrument (project/assignment) used to assess identified course objective(s).
What benchmarks and/or controls were established?
Explain how the assessment instrument was externally reviewed and validated.*

Signature Assignment: All SOC 101 students are required to complete a signature assignment. It also serves as our course assessment tool. Students are required to do research on a social issue and analyze it from a sociological perspective.

Instructors are provided with the criteria that all Signature Assignments must meet; however, they are given a certain degree of flexibility in how they design their specific assignment to meet those criteria.

Evaluation tool and benchmarks: A scoring rubric was used to measure core SOC 101 objectives. The benchmark for each objective is for our students to average a score of **3 - "Proficient"** or above.

Review of assessment instrument and evaluation tool: The assessment instrument and evaluation tool has been reviewed by full-time SOC 101 faculty at Carroll and the Division Chair.

Step 3. Implement

Explain how the assessment was implemented.

Did any unexpected challenges arise in implementing the assessment?

Instructors assign their version of the signature assignment in class.

When the assignment was first implemented in Fall 2018, there was some confusion about how the assignment and reflection should be labeled in Blackboard to be pulled for assessment, and reflection instructions were still in flux as signature assignments and assessment processes were still in the pilot stage. In addition, not all adjuncts followed the new instructions, and we were all trying to adapt existing assignments to meet the new signature assignment expectations.

This process was a little smoother over the next three semesters.

Step 4. Analyze

Explain the data that was collected and how the data was analyzed.

To what degree did students meet the established benchmarks?

Consider intention of learning activity and assessment as compared to results.

On January 14, 2019, three SOC 101 instructors, Barry Thomas (adjunct), Mel Hall, and Roxanna Harlow scored a sample of papers from the Fall 2018 semester based on a rubric to measure core SOC 101 objectives.

Collectively, we read a sample of 42 papers that were pulled for us from, I believe, seven sections of SOC 101. Barry read papers 1-23 and 38-40. Mel read papers 11-37, and Roxanna read papers 1-10 and 24-40. We all read papers 41 & 42 first for norming purposes. Papers were assigned such that only two of us read the same paper, and we overlapped with each of the other two faculty for a portion of the sample.

We first read the papers independently, then the two faculty who read the same papers shared their scores, discussed, and resolved inconsistencies. If a discrepancy in how a paper was scored on one or more of the criteria could not be resolved, the third person scored it to resolve it.

Data, scale, and measures are included with this report. Our scale was out of 4 and our target average was 3 or above.

Students met or exceeded the target in understanding and explaining what sociology is.

However, there were the following problem areas:

A) Demonstrate, orally or in writing, the use of the sociological perspective in studying human behavior.

Average score of 2.88/4 for using a sociological approach to analysis and 2.77/4 for writing.

Students who scored low on this usually lacked explicit sociological reasoning and didn't properly cite material (usually had few to no citations).

B) Use the major concepts of sociology to analyze social phenomena.

Average score of 2.75/4 for using language of sociology and 2.54/4 for providing evidence and data.

Students were scoring low on this because of a lack of supportive evidence or data. The lack of data usually occurred if the assignment for a class didn't require it.

C) Use the major concepts of sociology to develop solutions to social problems.

Average score of 2.6/4 for suggesting a clear strategy, 2.48/4 for its effectiveness, and 2.33 for examples substantiating that strategy.

Students primarily scored low on this because at this level students aren't equipped to develop solutions to social challenges that we know will be effective.

Step 5. Modify/Maintain

Based on analysis of data, describe changes made to the course and/or course materials.

Summarize the results of implementing changes, re-administering the assessment, and collecting and analyzing new data.

Changes Made

Mike Stovall (Division Chair), Sharon Brunner (rising Division Chair), Mel, Barry and I met on May 22, 2019 to talk about possible changes to SOC 101 for the fall to address the problem areas that emerged from the Fall 2018 course assessment. I shared copies of the outcomes data.

After the discussion, we agreed that I'd ask all SOC 101 faculty to emphasize and enforce proper APA citation in assignments and to ensure that students are doing some degree of sociological analysis where they provide supporting evidence through research and use sociological language.

Regarding solutions, we agreed that this objective should be changed to something like "suggest" instead of "develop" solutions to social problems. However, until changes to objectives can be submitted and approved, we'd evaluate that objective by focusing on students' ability to come up with possible solutions.

I met with SOC 101 faculty including adjuncts at the Division meeting before the start of the Fall 2019 semester to go over findings, problem areas and solutions.

Analysis of Changes Implemented

On May 27 and June 4, 2020, Courtney Sargent (adjunct), Mell Hall and I met online by Teams to score a sample of Signature Assignments from Fall 2019 and Spring 2020. Following the same procedure as before (outlined above), we did norming on the 27th, then came back together to compare scores on the papers on the 4th.

For the rubric, we eliminated the “effectiveness” measure for solutions and instead looked at whether a solution was proposed, and if they gave examples. The rubric still assessed levels of accuracy of solution.

Results are as follows:

	STATEMENT 1 Summarize and explain what sociology is Understand def Explain		STATEMENT 2 Demonstrate, orally or in writing, the use of the sociological perspective in studying human behavior Sociological Writing		STATEMENT 3 Use the major concepts of sociology to analyze social phenomena Lang. of Soc Data Analysis		STATEMENT 4 Use sociological thinking to suggest solutions to social problems Strategy Examples	
	PART A	PART B	PART A	PART B	PART A	PART B	PART A	PART B
Fa.'19 Ave.	3	2.9	3	2.8	2.7	2.95	2.525	2.275
Sp.'20 Ave.	3.3	3.225	3.475	2.825	2.9	2.65	2.65	2.5
Fa'19/Sp'20	3.15	3.06	3.24	2.81	2.8	2.8	2.59	2.39
Fall 2018	3.2	3	2.88	2.77	2.75	2.54	2.6	2.3

Second Round Assessment – Fall 2019 vs Spring 2020

In general, performance on the Spring 2020 assessment was slightly better than that from Fall 2019. This could have been because instructors had more time to tweak instructions as they got more familiar with what did and didn't work with signature assignments. However, given the radical changes to instruction that had to take place in Spring after the COVID-19 outbreak, I think it is also likely that less prepared students either dropped their classes after everything moved online in a short period of time, or they didn't complete a lot of the work, including the signature assignment.

First Round vs Second Round Assessment

In general, students' understanding of sociology remained consistent between the first and second assessments.

Students did a little better on using the sociological perspective in their analysis, and there was a negligible improvement in writing. What the numbers don't show is that in Fall 2018, we had a large number of papers with no citation at all, or with made up formats. With the 2019/2020 papers, most had some citation and most close to APA, but the problem is that there were still enough papers that left large sections of information uncited, even while they included one or two citations in the paper.

There was no change in using the language of sociology and only a marginal improvement in data analysis. This, I believe, is due more to the particulars of each assignment than to inadequate instruction. “Language of sociology” and sociological analysis can take many forms (especially at this level), and it's hard to fit it into the Course Level Assessment Project Report 04 2018

round holes of these types of assessments. For example, some assignments combined needed historical elements as part of analyzing an issue, and/or required analysis from a sociological lens that doesn't necessarily include specific rhetoric that is clearly identifiable as specific only to sociology. As a result, we struggled with scoring the degree to which the topic and analytical perspective was sociological vs the degree to which specific sorts of language and analysis appeared in the paper.

There was no change in students' solutions to social problems. As mentioned in the Fall 2018 assessment, this isn't really a good objective to measure in an introductory course, and despite having changed the wording of the measure to de-emphasize the importance of developing an effective solution, we could not give a proficient rating to solutions that were based on completely incorrect or inaccurate information. In addition, some assignments put a strong emphasis on solutions while others required solutions, but as part of a conclusion, particularly where the issue may not have a clear-cut solution. In those cases, papers were scored poorly even when the responses fit the parameters of what was reasonable for the assignment.

Final Results and Recommendations

There were some minor improvements from the first course assessment to the second, but we still did not meet our benchmark on 75% of our measures. It's a challenge to create a valid assessment of this type. Because of the rigidity of rubrics, you end up measuring assignment instructions and whether some specific word or phrase in each part of the rubric was captured in the documents, rather than whether or not students actually meet the objective. Alternately, you end up changing the rubric to fit the kind of data you're getting.

- My first recommendation would be a uniform signature assignment for SOC 101 that is a short and quick straightforward assignment for the sole purpose of assessment. That would allow us to design an assignment that will produce round pegs for the round holes of these sort of assessment tasks (whether at the course, general education, or program level) while also providing time and space for instructors to use their original assignments and creativity that work better for pedagogical purposes.

The objectives for courses are often captured across various types of work. Even though we're not measuring all objectives simultaneously, we still have to artificially slate a certain combination of objectives into a particular assignment. This doesn't always work best for students, and it's frustrating for faculty.

In order to design the assessment purpose, quick and dirty signature assignment that I describe above, the requirements for signature assignments would have to change. There are ways I think this could be accomplished while also maintaining the spirit of signature assignments, but that's a different discussion than what's asked for here.

- If we're unable to change the nature of the signature assignment, my alternative recommendation is for us to change the rubric to account for the variations and complexity of what counts as sociological analysis and data. We also need to keep emphasizing citation and APA format to students, showing them examples of what that format will look like, and repetitively explaining when you're supposed to cite work (not just with quotes and not just at the end of a paragraph!).
- My second recommendation, regardless of the assignment, is for us to eliminate the solutions objective from SOC 101.

Supervisor Signature _____ Sharon Brunner _____ Date _____ 6/25/2020 _____

Please forward a copy of the signed report to the Associate Vice President of Curriculum and Assessment.