**Boston University Outcomes Assessment Inventory of Practice**

Please assist us in building an inventory of useful approaches to assessment to share with other members of the Boston University community by describing a tool or approach that has worked for your School, College, or Program.

**School/ College:** *College of Arts & Sciences* **Program:** *BA in Religion*

**Title of Practice**: *Exit Interviews*

**Purpose:** (What prompted you to design this approach? What information were you seeking? How did the program intend to use results?)

*We initially designed an exit interview approach for two reasons. First, we used exit interviews in order to target two (out of five) learning outcomes for our program. Second, we used exit interviews to gather information at a more general level about our program.*

*Regarding our targeting of learning outcomes, we specifically sought to gauge the extent to which students could (a) demonstrate knowledge of multiple religious traditions, including their history, ideas, rituals, and vocabulary, and (b) apply understanding of major theoretical models for the study of religion to religious events, phenomena, ideas and texts.*

*Regarding our assessment at a program level, we used as a template the questionnaire presented by Richard Light of the Harvard Assessments Seminar, which is administrated to all Harvard students at the end of their first year. Specifically, we asked questions about the effectiveness of courses, teaching methods, co-curricular activities, and advising.*

*We intended to use exit interview results as one method for gathering data about the program and for considering implications for the program.*

**Implementation:** (Briefly, what were the steps for putting the project into practice and what tools or resources did you use? What was the timeline?)

*In spring 2016, we instituted exit interviews in an event for all graduating seniors. Members of the department interviewed each graduating religion major.*

*In spring 2017, we expanded these exit interviews to one hour. In the first half hour, we assessed three (of our five) learning outcomes. In the second half hour, we assessed the effectiveness of our curriculum as a whole.*

*In spring 2018, students will be encouraged to bring their best Religion paper to the exit interview and to discuss their major findings. Students will also be asked to bring an example of an important contemporary event and discuss its significance using models they have learned in their study of religion. The interviewer will assess learning outcomes based on these two pieces of evidence. Interviewers will then probe the student to demonstrate any additional outcomes that have not yet been demonstrated. For example, if students demonstrate the ability to interpret critically religious texts (Learning Outcome B) and the ability to apply understanding of major theoretical models for the study of religion to religious events (Learning Outcome C), the interviewer will then ask students to demonstrate knowledge of multiple religious traditions (Learning Outcome A), the ability to research religious events/phenomena/ideas (Learning Outcome D) and to demonstrate an advanced knowledge of at least one religious tradition (Learning Outcome E).*

*The evidence is interpreted annually by a Learning Outcomes Assessments committee, including the Chair of the Religion Department, the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and the Learning Outcomes Assessment Liaison.*

**Summary of Results**:

*After two years of exit interviews, we have found these insufficient for gathering the data we need to assess learning outcomes. In the past two years, we have scheduled these interviews near graduation time, when students are beleaguered by graduation details, perhaps exhausted intellectually, and unaccustomed to conveying what they have learned in the format of a formal interview. Thus, we have decided as a department to institute a capstone course in the fall semester of the senior year, through which we can better assess Learning Outcomes A-E. In the meantime, for this year’s assessments, we will schedule the interviews early in the spring semester of 2018, when students are perhaps fresher and less pressured than at graduation time.*

*In fall 2018, we will institute a new 400 level capstone course, Writing Religion, which will be a culminating experience for all religion majors. This will require the kind of analytical papers we will assess for Learning Outcome B; students will analyze religious phenomena in light of theoretical models. It will also give students an opportunity to analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and apply comprehension of religious phenomena through a variety of genres of writing in religion. This will allow us to assess Learning Outcomes A, C, D, and E. Students in a focus group of the RN 200 course and graduating seniors in their exit interviews expressed enthusiasm about the prospect of coming together again as seniors in a capstone course. The course will be designed as part of the Writing Program’s goal of teaching writing across the curriculum and throughout the years of the student’s BU education, including at an advanced level of sophistication specific to each academic discipline.*

**Comments**:

Note: Please also include any related documents or materials you are willing to share, such as a survey instrument or rubric.