

MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAM
ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR 2021-22
NOVEMBER 28, 2022

Identifying Information:

Name of Program: Museum Studies M.A. Program

Type of Program: Graduate (Master of Arts)

Department: Art + Architecture

College of Arts and Sciences Arts

Submitter: Paula Birnbaum, Professor and Academic Director: pjbirnbaum@usfca.edu

Mission Statement (Mission State & PLOs were last revised in AY2016-17)

The mission of the University of San Francisco's **Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Museum Studies** is to shape leaders in museums and cultural organizations of all disciplines. Through a curriculum that emphasizes social justice, community engagement and hands-on experience, students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to strategically transform museums in a constantly changing global context.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

Students who complete the M.A. in Museum Studies will be able to:

- 1) Articulate a critical understanding of the histories, challenges and methodologies related to museums as complex public service organizations.
- 2) Analyze institutional practices in light of USF's mission of social justice.
- 3) Apply skills and knowledge essential for successful professional patterns of behavior and practice in all types of museums and like organizations.

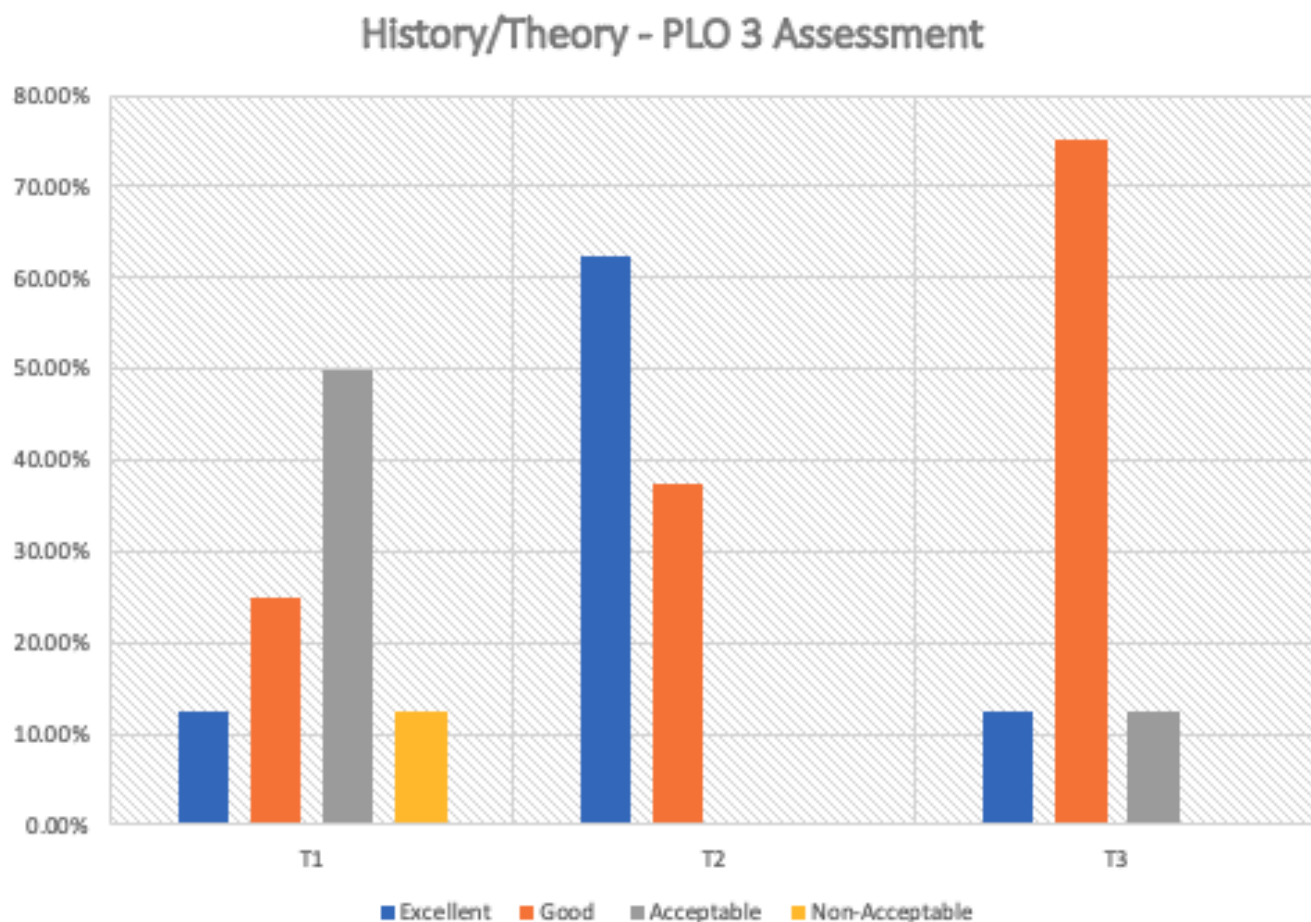
Brief summary of most recent assessment plan: Since we assessed Program Learning Outcome # 2 in Fall 2021, we decided to assess **Program Learning Outcome #3 in Fall 2022**. We assessed this PLO using three assignments from three different courses (two required and one elective). These courses are representative of how students progress through the program and, we believe, demonstrate the progression of student learning and acquisition of professional patterns of behavior and practice at the Introductory, Developing and Mastery levels. We developed a rubric (see below) using the terms "non-Acceptable," "Acceptable," "Good," and "Excellent"; these ratings of student work translate as Acceptable/Introductory, Good/Developing, and Excellent/Mastery. "Non-Acceptable" gives us an additional category for rating work that is sub-standard.

Academic Program Review: The Museum Studies Program had its first Academic Program Review in Spring 2019. The reviewers found our assessment process cumbersome, and so we have since streamlined it, creating one single rubric to evaluate each PLO across 3 courses.

Rubric for MUSE PLO# 3 (Fall 2022): Apply skills essential for professional patterns of behavior and practice in all types of museums and similar organizations.

PLO 3	Excellent	Good	Acceptable	Non Acceptable
T1: Apply skills individually (may include writing short texts, developing overall concept or design, developing practical skills such as working on exhibition or collections platforms)	Performs to a very high level of achievement (meets deadlines, works well independently, writes and communicates well, work needs minimal revision)	Performs to a high level of achievement (meets deadlines, works independently, writes and communicates sufficiently, work needs reasonable or minimal revision)	Performs to an adequate level of achievement (may meet deadlines but may need extensions, works independently but may need extra guidance, writes and communicates adequately, work routinely needs some revision)	Struggles to perform to an adequate level
T2: Apply skills collaboratively as part of a team (may include writing short texts, developing overall concept or design, developing practical skills such as working on exhibition websites or collections data bases, organizing opening event or other public events)	Able to work with others to perform at a very high level of achievement (meets deadlines, works well collaboratively, writes and communicates well, able to come to consensus with partners, work needs minimal revision)	Able to work with others to perform to a high level of achievement (meets deadlines, works collaboratively, writes and communicates well, able to come to consensus with partners with some supervision or guidance, work needs minimal revision)	Able to work with others to perform to an adequate level of achievement (may need extensive supervision or faculty guidance, work often needs revision)	Struggles to collaborate with others
T3: Performs appropriate skills in an academic or professional (internship) environment, including writing, communication, social media, collaboration, exhibiting ability to perform to workplace expectations	Very competent, completes tasks with minimal supervision, takes on additional responsibilities, exceeds expectations	Competent, completes tasks with minimal supervision, meets expectations	Meets expectations but may need extensive instruction or guidance,	Struggles to meet basic expectations

In what follows, we will review the data and measurement tools used for each of the three courses and their respective assignments:

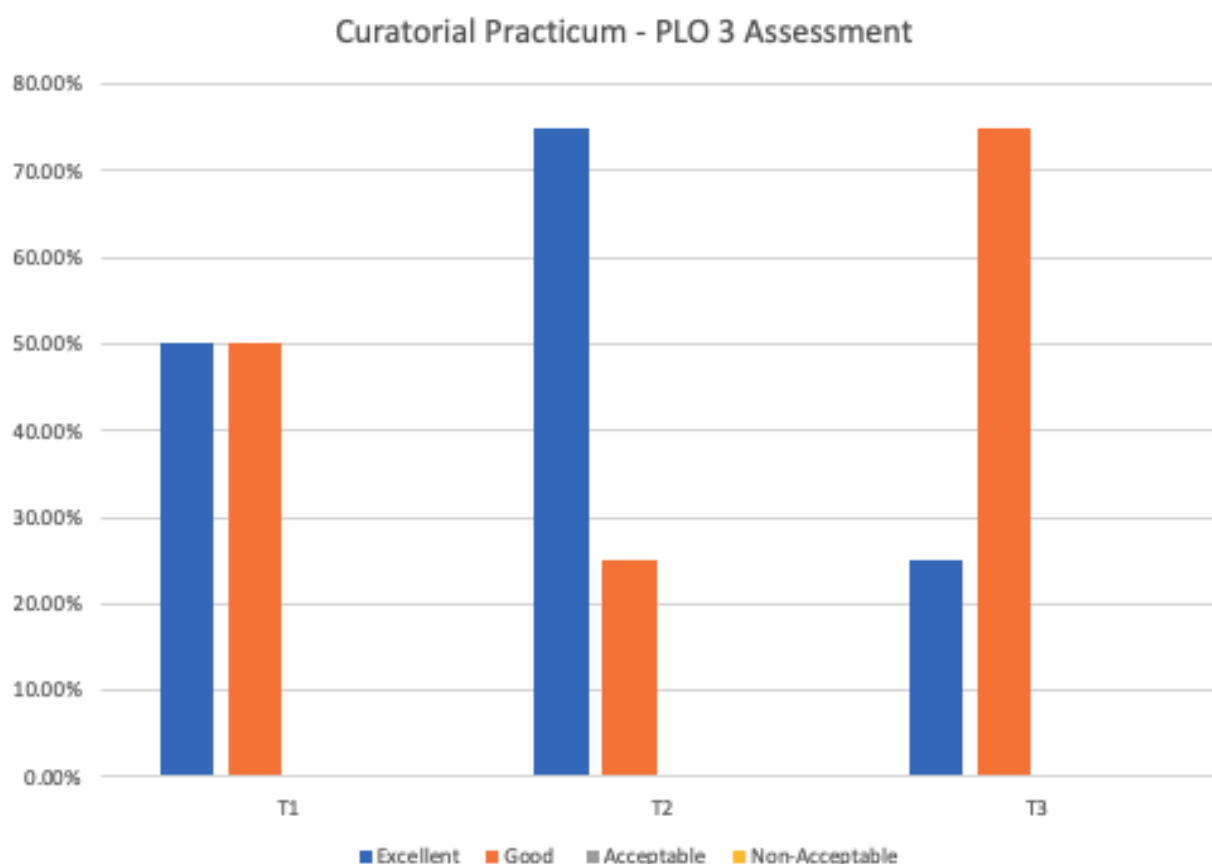


Direct Data & Analysis for MUSE 600: Museum History & Theory: Two of the stated learning outcomes for this course that align directly to PLO#3 are that students will: *Write a critical response to a museum visit* and *Have gained practice in discussing, leading discussions and writing critically about museum studies literature and critical museum functions and issues.*

Faculty used the written work students completed for both the individual “Museum Visit Essay” and the group “Museum, Missions & Communities” assignments to assess this learning outcome from the Fall 2021 course, MUSE 600 course. In short, the “museum visit” assignment required the students to *Choose one specific object, or installation (in person or virtually) or display of the museum’s holdings that you wish to theorize and critique.* The components of this assignment included researching and writing a thesis question relating to a specific display or exhibition and writing a short essay putting the object/display in context within the larger mission of the museum. The “Museums, Missions & Communities” assignment required students to work in teams to assess two museums with similar missions and compare and contrast their missions. The students

were also tasked to explain how these museums served their communities through their permanent collection (if they have one), exhibits, and public programs (both in-person and virtual).

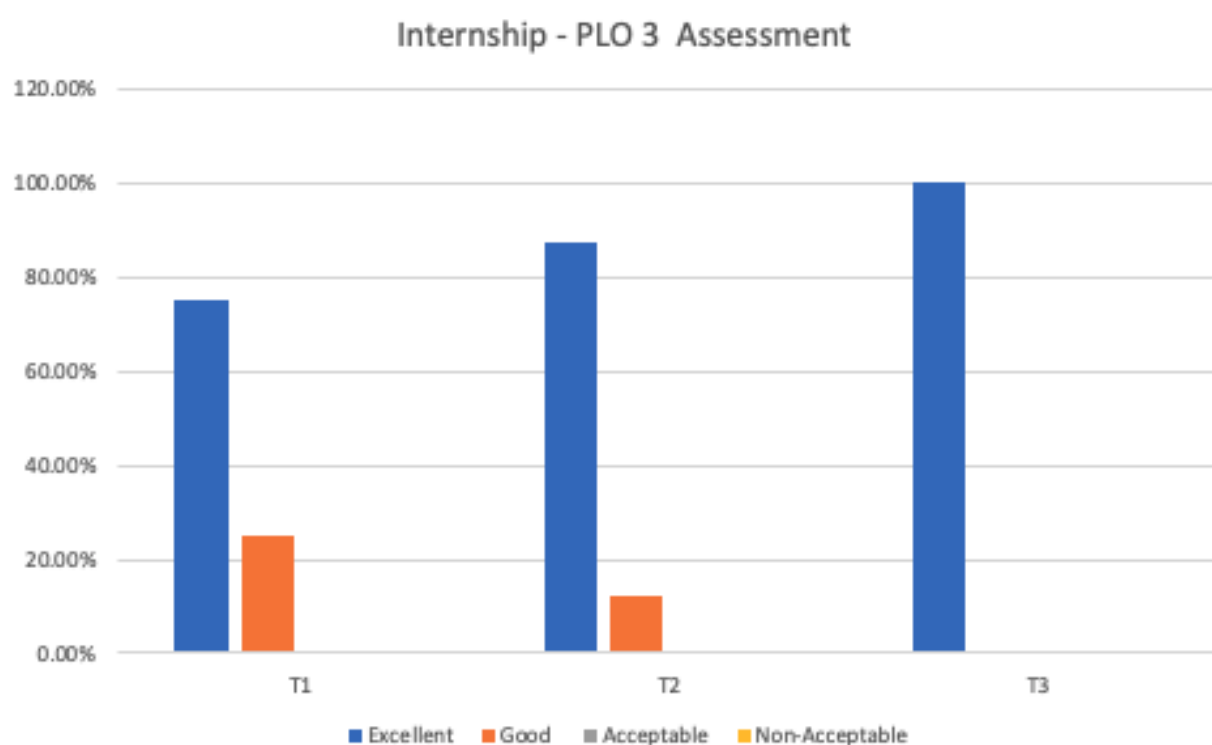
The data shows that in this introductory course, 50% of the students demonstrate Introductory levels of skills for Trait 1, with 25% Developing, and 12.5% Mastery, and 12.5% non-Acceptable. Trait 2 shows 38% with Developing skills and 62% of the students with Mastery; Trait 3 shows 12.5% Introductory, 75% Developing, and 12.5% Mastery. This range of abilities and demonstration of professional skills in their very first course in graduate school reflects our students' wide range of prior professional experiences as well as educational backgrounds. We expected this wide range based on the diverse experiences and backgrounds of our newly admitted students, and feel these results show their potential for growth in our graduate program.



Direct Data & Measurement Tools for assessing PLO# 3 at the Developing level in MUSE 605, Curatorial Practicum: One of the stated learning outcomes of this course that aligns directly to PLO#3 is that students will *Collaborate with class members and the instructor to install a professional, public exhibit of fine art in the Thacher Gallery or other public space.*

Faculty used the students' "final reflection paper" assignment to assess this learning outcome for Fall 2022. In short, the assignment required the students to evaluate their own participation in the class exhibition project, reflect on the exhibit's successes and shortcomings, and present their assessment of the exhibit to their peers in the class. The results of this assignment, including the students' confidential written assessments of their own learning and growth, was assessed in Fall 2022 with the results demonstrated in the above graph.

This course usually enrolls 50% second-year students in their final semester in the program, and 50% first-year or students in their very first semester in the program. This data set reflects that the students in the Curatorial Practicum are indeed at different levels of ability in demonstrating their professional skills, but all within the “Good to Excellent” or “Developing to Mastery” range. Trait 1 shows the students in the class divided equally, with 50% Developing, and 50% Mastery. Trait 2 shows them at 25% Developing and 75% Mastery and Trait 3 shows them at 75% Developing and 25% Mastery. These results are what we expect for student work in this collaborative curation class that enrolls students in different cohorts, with a wide range of prior professional and educational experiences, and half of the class with a full-year of graduate coursework behind them. Note that the second-year students enrolled in this course already completed a graduate internship, which should put them at the Mastery level.



Direct Data & Measurement Tools for assessing PLO# 3 at the Mastery level in MUSE 610: Internship Class:

After they complete their first year of coursework, students enroll in an internship course that helps them track their progress and learning at a host site. Faculty assessed the students’ final portfolios of their internship work which contained essays and reflections on contemporary trends within the museum landscape. In addition, faculty assessed written feedback provided via an online survey from site supervisors for 20 students.

This data shows that for Trait 1, 22% of the students demonstrated Developing skills, while 88% were at Mastery; Trait 2, 10% were rated as Developing and 90% were at Mastery; and Trait 3, 100% of the students demonstrated Mastery. None of the students in this course were rated at

Introductory. Since the Internship course is focused specifically on the development of skills pertaining to PLO # 3, we expect them to master these skills are pleased by these results.

Summary of this year's assessment results:

We feel confident that our program excels in the area of teaching practical skills and preparation for professional careers which is supported by this year's assessment. In particular it is gratifying that our students' strong preparation in this area is confirmed by the evaluation of their work by external internship supervisors: 100% of the supervisors rated the students' skills to be at a mastery level, which indicates that the internship is an essential stepping-stone to advancing classroom learning into professional mastery. This also shows a marked improvement from the last time we assessed PLO #3 in 2018, when external supervisors rated student mastery of skills at 50%. Many of the host institutions offered students from the Class of 2022 either extensions of their internships or paid work after the completion of their internships. We were very pleased by these results, which show the students' skills and ability to identify issues relevant to a specific workplace at the mastery level 100% across the cohort.

This assessment process of PLO#3 shows a strong progression in the students' growth in adopting professional skills as they move through the curriculum. The fact that roughly one quarter of our M.A. students matriculating directly from an undergraduate degree have little prior professional experience is reflected in the results of the assessment of MUSE 600, their very first course in the program.

Description of how the results were shared with faculty and how your department/program responded to the results. This is where you should lay out any plans for future improvement or assessment of your program indicated by the results.

Results of this assessment have been shared with the FT program faculty. We see a few areas to discuss and improve this PLO: we hope to improve documentation of this PLO, as the rubric can be further developed with more specifics. Assessing student performance in these classes often relies on reflection or personal narrative, for which less subjective assignments might be more appropriate.

Additionally, MUSE 605 involves a collaborative exhibition project, and assessing collaborative versus individual work poses some challenges, yet the reality of museum work is that much of it requires collaborative skill sets. Though collaboration is a very important aspect of professional skill development, it would be beneficial to discuss assessment of this type of project in more detail.

Closing the Loop:

In AY2022-23, MUSE faculty will continue to refine the curriculum. In October 2022 we held a curricular retreat where we decided as a faculty to implement a few curricular changes, including reducing the number of units of the required internship class from 4 to 2 in response to student complaints about paying tuition for internships that are often unpaid. By reducing the number of units for the internship class, we will be able to add a new 2-unit "design skills for museum professionals" course which will further enhance students' development of professional skills in

the program. By incorporating this design course, we hope to provide students with additional “hard skills” which they will take with them into the workforce.

We also plan to change a course relating to social justice in the museum field from “required” to “elective,” as social justice is embedded into the fabric of all of our courses. We believe this will address issues of under-enrollment in certain elective courses which also provide pre-professional skills. Following approval of these changes, we will revise our Curricular Map to ensure that the students have ample opportunities in all of their courses to develop professional skills.

Finally, we will consider new strategies for assessment that include online rubrics embedded in Canvas, which many of our faculty use in their courses, as they may be more effective for measuring our PLOs for courses taught by multiple faculty members. This will allow us to incorporate assessment more directly into existing course assignments so that we can capture more data with less effort.

Since we have completed assessment for all three PLOs in recent years, we propose taking a year off from assessment in 2023-24, in order to reflect upon and refine our assessment methods and processes.