

UMBC'S ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAM
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW 2019/2020
UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT

The Asian Studies Program offers a major, a minor, and a certificate. The external reviewers offer positive feedback with a few key recommendations for the future.

In Fall 2018, the program served 66 undergraduate majors and 12 undergraduate minors. The Asian Studies Program has no faculty of its own, but the program website lists 19 affiliate faculty as of Fall 2020.

A. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The department has clear student learning outcomes, which they assess through senior portfolios and an exit survey. The assessment methods offered limited data for evaluation and revealed some areas of weakness. The external reviewers indicate that the objectives are appropriate. Affiliate faculty agree that “senior portfolios on their own are not enough for the program to meet its goals with a high degree of success.” The external reviewers recommend the addition of a capstone course to the curriculum to improve student outcomes in key areas, particularly writing.

B. STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE; PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS; PROGRAM CHANGES

The reviewers state, “The overall quality of the program compared to peer universities is high,” and praise the “outstanding” scholarly work of affiliate faculty. They highlight the inclusion of Hindi language and courses on South Asia as a “unique point” relative to other Asian Studies programs.

The reviewers recommend the addition of a 400-level capstone course that would address gaps in the current curriculum. A capstone course would bring together Asian Studies majors in their final year and provide a writing-intensive option, giving students opportunities for “improving critical reading and writing skills, incorporating diversity perspectives into their writing, and producing a research paper.”

C. UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

ASIA 100 currently serves as the core introductory course for the program, along with HIST 103: East Asian Civilization. Students study an Asian language through the 302 level and complete 15 credits of electives across at least three disciplines.

The reviewers emphasized the need for a 400-level capstone course, as described above. The reviewers also recommended the addition of a study abroad component to the major, and the department indicated a plan to explore this option in their post-APR action plan.

D. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Undergraduates have the opportunity to earn credit for research in the ASIA 400 course. The reviewers indicate that affiliate faculty are active in research and that they encourage students to participate in research opportunities.

E. UNDERGRADUATE ADVISEMENT

The Program Director advises Asian Studies majors, which adds advising 66 students to an already substantial workload. The reviewers indicate that students had little to say about advising, indicating that “advising is effective.” The reviewers did note that students were “keen to have more advisement and guidance on careers using their degrees,” and the report notes that career information could be included on the Asian Studies website. The external reviewers recommended hiring a new Lecturer or Senior Lecturer whose job responsibilities would include advising. *The UGC notes that a new faculty line is unlikely due to the hiring freeze and expresses concern that the significant advising burden continues to fall on the Program Director.*

F. UNDERGRADUATE HONORS; AWARDS; RECOGNITION

These topics were not addressed in the external reviewers’ report.

G. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT; TEACHING QUALITY

The external reviewers attended a class meeting of ASIA 100 and viewed the course syllabus. They state that “the course was of high quality.”

H. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS; SUMMARY EVALUATION

The external reviewers offer positive feedback about the department and make several recommendations for the future of the program. In the post-APR action plan, the program lists the addition of a 400-level capstone course and hiring of a lecturer as action items for AY 20-21. Future action items include increasing the number of majors, increasing connections between affiliate faculty and the program, exploring a study abroad requirement, and increasing the connections between STEM departments and Asian Studies. *The UGC notes that COVID-19 will likely impact some of these items, as a new hire is unlikely in the current hiring freeze and study abroad is limited by travel restrictions.*