

Human Rights BA

Educate students to understand, promote, and defend human rights

Mission Statement (Full Description):

The mission of the SMU Human Rights Program is to educate students to understand, promote, and defend human rights as responsible citizens of the world. Through a rigorous and interdisciplinary curriculum, students gain foundational knowledge of human rights while building key skills in critical thinking, policy analysis, advocacy, research, communication, and ethical leadership. The program emphasizes applied learning, cultural competency, and community-based practice, equipping students to address complex social issues across diverse local, national, and global contexts. Graduates are prepared to pursue meaningful careers in law, public service, education, journalism, international development, public health, and other fields where the protection of human dignity is central. Signature elements of the program include immersive study abroad experiences, internships with human rights organizations, long-standing partnerships with community leaders, and opportunities for collaborative research and social impact. These distinctive features empower students to advance equity, justice, and peace in a rapidly changing world. The physical geographic location of program delivery is the SMU campus in Dallas, Texas. The human rights major does not offer courses through distance education technology.

Commented [S1]: Exemplary Assessment:
Only two little considerations for improvement:
1. **Targets:** Provide a rationale for this target (e.g., is this a faculty-determined benchmark, based on previous AY data, etc.).
2. **Status Update:** Provide Status update in the Slo's you are not measuring, providing information for >1. When was last measured 2. When is scheduled to be assessed next
3. What faculty/program are working towards... are they retooling the assessment, are they scaffolding materials, are they proposing new course?

Does your program offer courses at an off-campus instructional site (not at SMU Dallas campus)?:

No

Does your program offer courses through distance education technology (e.g., asynchronous, synchronous, or both)?:

No

During which academic year were students first enrolled in this program?:

Prior to AY2023-2024

Progress:

Complete

Demonstrate understanding of foundations

Step 1A: SLO Number:

1

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to analyze and explain foundational human rights principles including dignity, equality, justice, freedom, and non-discrimination by examining their development and

Commented [S2]: Excellent!

application within the historical context of the United States. This outcome is assessed through the final exam in HRTS 3301, a required core course for all human rights majors. At least 80 percent of students are expected to score 80 percent or higher on the exam, with a median score at or above 80 percent.

Commented [SS3]: Brilliant!

Step 2A: Measure:

We measure this SLO using the final exam for HRTS 3301. HRTS 3301 is a required core course for the human rights degree that all majors must complete. The final exam specifically requires students to demonstrate an understanding of foundational human rights principles as evidenced in the historical context of the United States. Student performance on the final exam in HRTS 3301 is evaluated using a faculty-developed writing rubric. The rubric assesses four main criteria: understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing. Each category is scored on a five-point scale, with descriptors ranging from "Absent" to "Exemplary." To meet expectations, a student must present a clear and motivated argument, demonstrate familiarity with key human rights principles, support claims with relevant evidence, and write in a clear and engaging manner appropriate to the material. A score of three or higher reflects developing to exemplary achievement of the learning outcome.

Attached Files

[SLO 1 - Rubric.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Essay exam

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% will score 80% or above; median score will be at 80% or above.

Commented [SS4]: Provide a rationale for this target (e.g., is this a faculty-determined benchmark, based on previous AY data, etc.).

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator, Committee, Faculty, Staff, Student

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Commented [SS5]: Please provide information of when was this slo measure, and what is the next expected cycle to be measured.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Analyze from an interdisciplinary perspective

Step 1A: SLO Number:

2

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to analyze human rights issues using interdisciplinary methods and perspectives drawn from fields such as history, political science, sociology, ethics, and cultural studies. This outcome emphasizes the ability to integrate diverse forms of knowledge to better understand the complexity of human rights challenges. Students demonstrate this skill through a major essay assignment in HRTS 3301, a required core course for all human rights majors. Written work is assessed using a faculty-developed rubric that evaluates understanding, analysis,

presentation, and writing quality. At least 80 percent of students are expected to score 80 percent or higher on this assignment, with a median score also at or above 80 percent.

Step 2A: Measure:

This SLO is measured using a major essay assignment from HRTS 3301, a required core course that all human rights majors must complete. The essay prompt asks students to analyze a contemporary or historical human rights issue using concepts and methods from multiple academic disciplines, including history, political science, sociology, ethics, and cultural studies. This assignment is well-suited to assess the outcome because it requires students to synthesize diverse perspectives and apply them to real-world human rights challenges. Student work is evaluated using a faculty-developed writing rubric. The rubric includes four main categories: understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing. Each category is scored on a five-point scale, with performance descriptors ranging from absent to exemplary. In order to meet expectations, students must present a clear and motivated argument, demonstrate the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, support claims with relevant evidence, and communicate their ideas effectively in writing. This method provides direct, rigorous, and scalable evidence of student achievement in one of the program's core competencies.

Attached Files

[SLO 2 - Rubric.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Written paper/project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% will score 80% or above; median score will be at 80% or above.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

No data collected/reported this cycle (provided explanation in Step 4B)

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator, Committee, Faculty, Staff, Student

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

This SLO is not being assessed this year.

Commented [SS6]: Please provide information of when was this slo measure, and what is the next expected cycle to be measured.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

Not applicable for this cycle (explain in Step 6A)

Progress:

Complete

Identify abuses and explain responses

Step 1A: SLO Number:

3

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to identify human rights abuses and explain appropriate responses using evidence-based analysis, ethical reasoning, and knowledge of institutional, legal, and community-based frameworks. This outcome reflects the program's commitment to preparing students to recognize injustice and evaluate strategies for meaningful intervention. Students demonstrate this learning through a final applied project in HRTS 4343, the capstone seminar for

all human rights majors. The assignment requires students to select a real-world human rights abuse and present a comprehensive response that integrates historical, political, legal, and cultural perspectives. Faculty assess the assignment using a rubric focused on understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing quality. At least 80 percent of students are expected to score 80 percent or higher, with the median score also at or above 80 percent.

Step 2A: Measure:

This student learning outcome is assessed through the final applied project in HRTS 4343, the capstone seminar required for all human rights majors. The project asks students to identify a current or historical human rights abuse and propose a thoughtful, well-researched response. Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of relevant institutions, legal systems, advocacy strategies, and community-based solutions. This assignment was selected because it requires students to synthesize theoretical knowledge and practical tools, reflecting the real-world problem-solving focus of the program. Faculty evaluate student work using a standardized rubric. The rubric assesses four categories (understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing), each on a five-point scale ranging from absent to exemplary. To meet expectations, students must present a clear argument, provide evidence-based analysis, consider ethical implications, and communicate their ideas in a clear and compelling way. This measure provides direct, rigorous, and authentic evidence of student learning aligned with program goals.

Attached Files

[SLO 3 - Rubric.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Capstone project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% will score 80% or above; median score will be at 80% or above.

Commented [S57]: Provide a rationale for this target (e.g., is this a faculty-determined benchmark, based on previous AY data, etc.).

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Twenty-four students completed the final applied project in HRTS 4343 during the current assessment cycle. Of those, 22 students (92 percent) scored 80 percent or above. The median score was 90 percent. These results indicate that a strong majority of students are successfully demonstrating the ability to identify human rights abuses and articulate effective, evidence-based responses. Compared to the previous assessment cycle, in which 95 percent of students scored at

or above 80 percent and the median score was 95 percent, this year's results reflect a slight decrease in both measures. However, performance remains well above the program's established benchmarks, and the slight variation is likely attributable to natural fluctuations in cohort composition and assignment rigor. The current results continue to affirm the strength of the capstone project as an effective and reliable tool for assessing student achievement in this domain.

Attached Files

[SLO 3 - Prompt.pdf](#)

[SLO 3 - Example.pdf](#)

[SLO 3 - Evidence.pdf](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

The results of this year's assessment indicate that students continue to demonstrate strong proficiency in identifying human rights abuses and formulating thoughtful, evidence-based responses. A full 92 percent of students met or exceeded the performance benchmark, and the median score remained high at 90 percent. These outcomes suggest that students nearing graduation are largely achieving this critical program objective, which reflects their readiness to engage in human rights work in academic, professional, and advocacy contexts. Compared to the previous assessment cycle, in which 95 percent of students met the benchmark and the median score was 95 percent, the current results represent a slight decline. However, this modest difference is not cause for concern, as the performance remains well above the established threshold. Variations of this kind are to be expected and may reflect differences in course section composition, student experience levels, or the complexity of chosen project topics. In prior years, the program introduced two key improvements that remain in place: the addition of a second course section to broaden the sample size, and the refinement of the rubric to better align with program expectations around ethical reasoning and practical application. These changes appear to be sustaining their intended impact, and the consistency of results across both assessment cycles provides evidence of long-term curricular strength. Looking ahead, it will be important to continue monitoring this outcome not only on its own terms but also in relation to other student learning outcomes, such as foundational knowledge and interdisciplinary analysis. Doing so may help clarify whether students are effectively synthesizing knowledge gained throughout the program and applying it in complex, real-world contexts.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Assessment results have been discussed among program leadership and core faculty during planning communications and meetings, including multiple interactions since the end of the spring semester. Program staff have begun reviewing the findings in preparation for fall advising and capstone coordination. Results were also shared with the Human Rights Council, the program's student leadership organization. While individual data remain confidential, students were given a general overview of performance trends and invited to share their perspectives on areas for improvement and emerging priorities. Their input helps ensure that program enhancements reflect both academic goals and student experience. The data affirm that the final

applied project in HRTS 4343 remains an effective measure of students' ability to identify human rights abuses and propose meaningful responses. Although the outcome exceeded the program's benchmarks, we are committed to continuous improvement and plan to pilot two targeted enhancements. First, we will revise the project guidelines to encourage greater attention to underexplored forms of systemic harm, including environmental racism, digital surveillance, authoritarianism, and gender-based violence. This update is intended to reflect current global human rights priorities and help students engage with emerging issues in the field. Second, faculty will expand a scaffolded pre-assignment workshop that provides structured guidance on identifying credible sources, building ethical arguments, and integrating interdisciplinary perspectives. These improvements will be implemented during the next offering of HRTS 4343 in the 2025-2026 academic year. The capstone instructor and program staff will be responsible for coordinating revisions, evaluating their effectiveness, and reporting outcomes in the next assessment cycle. By refining content and support structures within the assignment, the program aims to further strengthen students' applied human rights capacities and their readiness for postgraduate work.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Additional emphasis or time on content,Redesign of activities or assignments,Program leadership involvement ,Faculty involvement,Other

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator,Committee,Faculty,Staff,Student

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Assessment results and related student learning discussions take place consistently and often throughout the academic year in both formal and informal settings. Program leadership and faculty regularly communicate about student performance before, during, and after each course offering. These conversations occur through departmental emails, planning meetings, and ongoing curriculum development discussions. The most recent communication regarding assessment results took place earlier today and involved the program director, associate director, and coordinator. In addition, the program's assessment coordinator attended a seminar hosted by the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness on March 3, 2025, and remained in regular email contact with OIPE representatives throughout the year to ensure alignment with university-wide assessment expectations and best practices.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Catalog update,Change to pre and co-requisites,Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Several curriculum enhancements were introduced during the assessment cycle to support student learning and progress toward this outcome. New courses were added and cross-listed to expand students' access to relevant material earlier in their academic journey and to provide more opportunities for aligning coursework with their intended career paths. Given the diversity of

professional directions human rights students pursue (including law, public policy, social work, health, education, and international development), this expansion allows students to shape a more targeted and meaningful educational experience. In addition, the program is actively exploring ways to strengthen its global travel education offerings. These immersive, high-impact learning experiences play a vital role in connecting classroom knowledge to real-world human rights problems and solutions. However, it is essential to note that the program's financial situation remains dire, with staffing and operations continuing at less than 30% of their former funding level, as documented in several previous assessment reports. Limited staffing and operational support are significantly curtailing the program's ability to sustain improvements and expand student learning opportunities. Despite these constraints, the Human Rights Program continues to deliver exceptional outcomes relative to its size and resources; pound for pound, it remains one of the most effective and impactful programs in the college. To build on this success and meet growing student demand, increased investment in faculty, staff, and program infrastructure is urgently needed.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

In the previous assessment cycle, the program committed to maintaining the use of the final applied project in HRTS 4343 as the core measure for this outcome, while also exploring an increase to the performance threshold and evaluating the potential for continued expansion of course offerings. These actions were designed to ensure that all students, and especially those completing the program, are prepared to identify human rights abuses and propose viable, ethical responses. During the current cycle, these commitments were sustained and modestly expanded. Two sections of HRTS 4343 were again offered to maintain a robust sample size, and assignment expectations were reviewed to ensure clarity and alignment with evolving human rights concerns. Performance remained strong, with 92 percent of students meeting the benchmark and a median score of 90 percent, slightly below the prior year but still well above the program's threshold. These results suggest continued success in student achievement and support the value of the capstone project as a culminating learning experience. However, implementation of additional enhancements (such as increased mentorship, broader interdisciplinary support, or elevated performance targets) has been limited by ongoing financial constraints. As noted in prior reports, the program has seen its budget reduced by approximately 70% over the last decade and remains severely under-resourced relative to its scope, enrollment, and outcomes. Despite these challenges, the faculty have preserved a high standard of education and accountability. Conversations are underway to revise the capstone assignment prompt to better reflect emerging issues in the field, and to pilot a new workshop designed to support students in developing stronger evidence-based responses. These updates are expected to be implemented in the next cycle, with outcomes reassessed in the next cycle.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

Complete

Apply conventions of writing (Writing in the Major)

Step 1A: SLO Number:

4

Step 1C: SLO Statement (Full Description):

Students will be able to apply conventions of writing appropriate to the interdisciplinary field of human rights. This includes developing clear arguments, integrating evidence from relevant sources, demonstrating awareness of audience and purpose, and adhering to ethical and stylistic standards common to professional and academic writing in the field. This outcome supports SMU's Writing in the Major initiative and reflects the program's commitment to preparing students for graduate study, advocacy, and public engagement. Students demonstrate this learning through a final applied project in HRTS 4343, where they select a human rights issue and respond through a substantive written product. Work is evaluated using a detailed writing rubric designed to apply across a range of writing formats and genres, in keeping with the interdisciplinary nature of the field.

Step 2A: Measure:

This SLO is assessed through the final applied project in HRTS 4343, the required capstone seminar for all human rights majors. The project requires students to select a human rights issue and respond through a substantial written work that reflects disciplinary writing conventions. Students may choose from a range of formats, including policy briefs, advocacy reports, research essays, or strategic proposals, allowing them to tailor their writing to professional goals and audience expectations. This flexibility acknowledges the interdisciplinary nature of human rights while ensuring that students meet shared standards for clarity, coherence, and ethical reasoning. The assignment is evaluated using a universal writing rubric developed by program faculty. The rubric includes four criteria: understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing. Each category is assessed on a five-point scale ranging from absent to exemplary. This measure provides direct and authentic evidence of students' ability to write effectively within the field of human rights. It is especially appropriate for assessing advanced undergraduate performance in support of the university's Writing in the Major initiative.

Attached Files

[SLO 4 - Rubric.pdf](#)

Step 2B: Type of Measure (check all that apply):

Capstone project

Step 2C: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

80% will score 80% or above; median score will be at 80% or above.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

Twenty-four students completed the final applied project in HRTS 4343 during the current assessment cycle. Of those, 22 students, or 92 percent, scored 80 percent or higher. The median score was 90 percent. Compared to the previous assessment cycle in 2022–2023, when 89 percent of students scored at or above 80 percent and the median score was 91 percent, this year's results reflect a slight improvement in the overall success rate and a marginal decrease in the median. These differences are minimal and within expected ranges for cohort variation. The data continue to show that students are effectively applying conventions of writing in the human rights discipline. Their performance demonstrates consistent success in meeting the expectations of the Writing in the Major initiative and indicates that the final applied project remains a strong and reliable tool for assessing this outcome.

Attached Files

[SLO 4 - Evidence.pdf](#)

[SLO 4 - Prompt.pdf](#)

[SLO 4 - Example.pdf](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

The results from this assessment cycle indicate that students continue to demonstrate strong proficiency in applying disciplinary writing conventions within the field of human rights. With 92 percent of students scoring at or above the performance threshold and a median score of 90 percent, the data show sustained success in meeting the expectations of the Writing in the Major initiative. Students are producing written work that is well-organized, clearly argued, and appropriately tailored to their chosen format and audience. This SLO was assessed for the first time in the previous cycle, meaning longitudinal data is still limited. In 2022–2023, 89 percent of students met the benchmark, with a slightly higher median score of 91 percent. The small differences between the two cycles fall within a normal range of variation and do not indicate any concerns about performance. However, more data over time will be needed to determine whether refinements to curriculum or instructional support are necessary. In response to initial concerns about consistency across varied writing formats, the program implemented a shared writing rubric that is used across multiple courses. The rubric assesses four dimensions: understanding, analysis, presentation, and writing. It continues to serve as a reliable tool for evaluating diverse forms of writing such as policy briefs, advocacy reports, and traditional research papers. Its application has helped maintain equitable standards while allowing students to write in formats relevant to their academic and professional goals. Looking forward, the program will continue to monitor this outcome across multiple cycles. Future discussions may focus on identifying opportunities to support writing development earlier in the student

experience, potentially through scaffolded assignments, peer feedback, or workshops in partnership with the writing center. These efforts would further strengthen student readiness for the capstone and reinforce writing as a core element of the human rights curriculum.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Assessment results were shared with program leadership, core faculty, and staff during a series of planning conversations in summer 2024, including the most recent conversation on July 10. General findings were also shared with the Human Rights Council, the program's student leadership organization, where students were invited to offer feedback and reflect on their writing experiences in the major. While individual student data remain confidential, students were given an overview of performance trends and invited to contribute ideas for strengthening writing instruction across the curriculum. Although the outcome exceeded both components of the performance target, the program remains committed to continuous improvement. In the upcoming cycle, faculty will begin reviewing writing expectations and scaffolding strategies across the required courses in the major to ensure that students receive consistent guidance and feedback on writing well before reaching the capstone. Special attention will be given to the ways in which human rights writing can vary by intended audience and professional application. These conversations may inform future curricular or instructional adjustments that help students prepare more intentionally for the written component of HRTS 4343. Additionally, the program will explore opportunities to pilot or revise peer review exercises and low-stakes writing assignments in earlier courses, such as HRTS 3301, to promote deeper writing engagement and skill development over time. These efforts will be coordinated by faculty teaching required courses in collaboration with program leadership and staff. Results will continue to be tracked annually to identify trends and guide future improvements.

Step 5B: Type of Action:

Additional emphasis or time on content, Additional activities or assignments, Redesign of activities or assignments, Program leadership involvement, Faculty involvement

Step 5C: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator, Committee, Faculty, Staff, Student, Other

Step 5D: Evidence of Dialogue:

Assessment results and plans for improvement were discussed across several meetings and informal communications throughout the academic year. Most recently, results were reviewed during a planning meeting on July 10, 2024, attended by program leadership and faculty. Assessment-related conversations have also taken place through ongoing email correspondence and informal check-ins during regular program operations. In addition, the Human Rights Council, the program's student leadership body, received a general summary of findings and offered feedback on writing support within the major. While no formal meeting minutes or documentation are attached here, assessment dialogue is a continuous and integrated part of program planning and decision-making.

Step 5E: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Change to pre and co-requisites,Other

Step 5F: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Several updates to the curriculum were implemented during the assessment cycle that are expected to support student development in writing and communication. New courses were added and cross-listed to expand options for students seeking more targeted preparation in areas such as advocacy, policy, and international human rights work. These additions give students greater flexibility in aligning their coursework with their professional goals and allow for earlier engagement with writing-intensive content. Since the last time this student learning outcome was assessed, HRTS 3301 was formally designated as a prerequisite for HRTS 4343. While the courses had functioned in that sequence informally for several years, this administrative change ensures greater consistency in student preparation. Students now enter the capstone seminar with a shared foundation in human rights theory, historical context, and academic writing practice, which supports more advanced written work in the final applied project. Preliminary conversations have also begun regarding the creation of a formal pre-capstone writing workshop or the integration of targeted writing support into earlier courses. These ideas are still under consideration but reflect growing interest among faculty in providing more structured opportunities to build writing skills across the curriculum. The program also continues to explore ways to expand global immersion and travel learning opportunities, which often include reflective or analytical writing and contribute meaningfully to students' development as writers. At the same time, the program's ability to implement broader improvements remains severely constrained by long-standing financial limitations. Over the past ten years, the program's operational budget has decreased by approximately 70 percent. This reduction has placed significant strain on staffing, programming, and planning capacity, even as student interest and achievement continue to grow. Despite these challenges, the Human Rights Program consistently delivers high-impact learning experiences and measurable student outcomes. Additional investment is urgently needed to sustain this success and to meet the increasing demand for interdisciplinary, writing-intensive, and experiential learning in the field of human rights.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

In the previous assessment cycle, the program committed to maintaining the use of the final applied project in HRTS 4343 as the primary measure for this student learning outcome, while implementing a universal writing rubric to evaluate student work across diverse formats. The action plan also emphasized the need to gather multiple years of assessment data before determining whether broader curricular or instructional changes were warranted. During the current cycle, those commitments were carried forward. The writing rubric, developed by program faculty, was used again to evaluate student work in HRTS 4343. It continues to serve as a strong and adaptable tool for assessing writing across a range of formats including policy briefs, advocacy reports, and research papers. The rubric's consistent use has helped ensure equity in grading and clarity in expectations, despite the flexibility offered in assignment

structure. The program also formalized HRTS 3301 as a prerequisite for HRTS 4343. While this course sequence had long functioned informally, the administrative change strengthens continuity in writing instruction and ensures that all students enter the capstone seminar with shared foundations in human rights theory and writing practice. Results from this year's assessment suggest that this change has contributed to continued high levels of student achievement. Ninety-two percent of students met the performance benchmark, with a median score of 90 percent, indicating that the integration of writing skills across the major is having a positive and measurable impact. Additional action items proposed last cycle, such as further scaffolding of writing instruction and the development of pre-capstone writing support, are still under discussion. Conversations are ongoing among faculty about how best to implement those supports, given current staffing and resource limitations. The program expects to re-assess this outcome during the next cycle, at which point several years of data will be available to guide a more detailed evaluation of progress and future needs.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

Complete

Increase internships

Step 1A: PG Number:

1

Step 1C: PG Statement (Full Description):

The program will increase the number of human rights majors completing internships by 10 percent over the next two academic years. To support this goal, the program will strengthen communication around available internship opportunities, expand advising support for students pursuing experiential learning, and work with the Human Rights Council to offer peer-led workshops focused on internship preparation and application strategies. While financial and staffing constraints continue to limit large-scale outreach and partnership development, the program remains committed to supporting student access to high-impact, career-relevant learning experiences. Progress toward this goal will be evaluated annually through enrollment data, self-reported internship participation, and student advising records.

Step 2A: Measure:

This program goal will be measured by tracking the number of human rights majors who complete internships each academic year. The program aims to increase this number by 10 percent over a two-year period, using the 2023–2024 academic year as a baseline. Data will be collected through enrollment in internship-designated courses (such as HRTS 4385), student self-reporting through advising meetings, and internship confirmation emails or documentation submitted to program staff. This mixed-method approach allows the program to capture both for-

credit and non-credit internships and provides a fuller picture of student engagement with experiential learning. Annual progress toward the 10 percent increase will be reviewed each summer to guide future outreach and advising strategies.

Step 2B: Is Measure direct or indirect?:

Direct

Step 3A: Target for Measure:

The number of internships completed by students will increase by 10% over a two-year period.

Step 4A: Was the target met for this Measure?:

Met

Step 4B: Results and Findings for this Measure:

During the 2024–2025 academic year, 16 human rights majors completed internships, compared to 14 in the baseline year of 2023–2024. This represents a 14.3 percent increase in internship participation over one year. The growth exceeds the program’s stated goal of a 10 percent increase over two years, indicating strong progress toward expanding experiential learning opportunities for students. These results suggest that recent efforts to promote internships through advising, peer mentorship, and program communication have had a positive impact, even amid ongoing challenges related to budget and staffing capacity.

Attached Files

[PG - Evidence.pdf](#)

Step 4C: Interpretation of Results:

The program experienced a 14.3 percent increase in internship participation among human rights majors between the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 academic years. This growth exceeds the program’s stated goal of a 10 percent increase over two years and reflects encouraging progress in expanding access to experiential learning. A key strength in this area is the continued integration of internship awareness into advising, programming, and peer mentorship through the Human Rights Council. These efforts have helped normalize internships as a meaningful component of the undergraduate experience, despite challenges in formal funding and infrastructure. At the same time, program operations in this area remain constrained by structural limitations. The program does not currently have dedicated internship staff or funding to support stipends or placement services. This makes it more difficult to track unpaid or informal internship experiences and to provide targeted outreach to students with financial or logistical barriers. As enrollment in the major fluctuates and overall program resources remain limited, it is essential to sustain low-cost, high-impact strategies that can be managed within current capacity. In response to previous discussions and student feedback, the program made several informal adjustments in the past year. Program staff began including internship prompts in

academic advising conversations and encouraging students to share internship updates with peers during public events. Members of the Human Rights Council also hosted a panel discussion on internship experiences and created a living document of opportunities and application timelines. These actions were designed to build a culture of peer-driven guidance and to increase the visibility of options that align with students' career interests. Moving forward, the program will continue tracking annual internship participation and evaluating how this growth aligns with trends in student enrollment and advising. The results from this year's assessment provide a positive foundation for future planning and underscore the importance of sustained support for experiential learning, even in a context of limited institutional resources.

Step 5A: Use of Results for Seeking Improvement (Action Plan):

Although the program exceeded its stated goal for internship growth this year, the data collection method was limited to students enrolled in the formal internship course, HRTS 4385. As a result, internships pursued informally or through other departments were not captured, and the total number of human rights-relevant internships completed by majors is likely higher than reported. To improve the accuracy and usefulness of future data, the program will implement a standardized question during advising sessions asking students whether they have completed, are currently completing, or plan to pursue an internship related to human rights. This question will be incorporated into advising documentation and reviewed during each advising cycle. In addition to improving data collection, the program will begin expanding and organizing its internal internship opportunity database. This resource will include information on where students have interned in the past, whether positions are paid or unpaid, relevant application details and deadlines, and brief reflections or evaluations when available. This tool will help students identify options that match their goals and reduce barriers to access, especially for students seeking opportunities with financial support or scheduling flexibility. The Human Rights Council will assist in compiling and maintaining the database and may invite recent interns to contribute their insights during future public events. These efforts are designed to support more comprehensive advising, better-informed decision-making, and stronger integration of experiential learning into the student experience. They will also help the program continue to evaluate internship participation beyond course registration alone, supporting more inclusive and accurate assessment in future cycles.

Step 5B: Dialogue Participants (check all that apply):

Administrator ,Committee, Faculty, Staff, Student, Other

Step 5C: Evidence of Dialogue:

Program faculty and staff discussed internship participation data and related advising practices during a summer planning meeting on July 10, 2024. Ongoing dialogue about internship opportunities and data collection also occurred throughout the academic year in one-on-one advising sessions, staff coordination meetings, and regular conversations with the Human Rights Council. Internship access and visibility were frequent topics of discussion with the previous Human Rights Council board and are scheduled for the agenda of the first meeting of the incoming board. In addition, the program's Associate Director held numerous conversations throughout the year with representatives from internship placement organizations to gather

feedback, strengthen existing partnerships, and explore new opportunities for student engagement. These ongoing conversations directly informed the decision to implement a standardized advising question and to strengthen the internal internship database. Assessment planning remains a collaborative and continuous part of program operations.

Step 5D: Type of other Improvements (check all that apply):

Enhanced recruitment effort, Improved efficiency by incorporating technology and automation, Other

Step 5E: Other Improvements (Full Description):

Several efforts were launched to improve the program's ability to support internship access and participation. First, the existing internal database of internship opportunities is being actively updated and expanded to include more detailed information about placement sites, application logistics, student feedback, and characteristics such as paid versus unpaid status. This enhanced resource will help faculty and staff provide more personalized advising and make prior student experiences more accessible to future applicants. Second, we began integrating artificial intelligence tools to assist in identifying new and emerging internship opportunities, particularly those that align with students' evolving career goals. Third, we expanded student-to-student recruitment by encouraging Human Rights Council leaders and peer advisors to share their internship stories and suggestions during advising conversations and outreach events. These improvements aim to strengthen the program's infrastructure for experiential learning, even in the face of continued resource constraints.

Step 6A: Status Update on Action(s) Identified in the Previous Assessment Cycle (Full Description):

The previous action plan remains in progress. As the internship course (HRTS 4385) continues to mature toward full implementation, we have taken multiple steps to strengthen infrastructure, improve communication, and support student success. 1. Database Expansion: The internship database, originally developed as a central resource, has been actively updated and enhanced. New entries have been added, and existing records now include more detailed information about compensation, site expectations, feedback from past students, and application logistics. We are also working to better categorize opportunities by issue area and career path to help students target placements that align with their goals. 2. Communications and Advising: We continue to improve proactive communication with students about the unique registration requirements for HRTS 4385. Since enrollment requires an approved contract, early and frequent reminders have been built into advising conversations and email outreach. We have also added a standard internship inquiry question to advising protocols to better track informal or externally registered experiences. 3. Course Infrastructure and Materials: We have made ongoing updates to the Canvas site, contract form, and timesheet used in the course to improve usability and clarity. We also created a pre-enrollment Box folder with vital documents so that students can access materials before they are officially registered, addressing a gap created by Canvas access limitations. 4. New Partnerships and Employer Engagement: The program's associate director has held numerous conversations with representatives from internship placement organizations

over the past year to gather feedback, deepen relationships, and explore new opportunities. These engagements are helping shape future placements and advising practices. 5. Student Engagement and Promotion: The Human Rights Council student leadership group has made internships a frequent topic of discussion, and outreach plans for the coming year include a dedicated segment on internships at the Council's first meeting. Peer advising and student storytelling have also been strengthened to increase awareness. We are encouraged by the 14.3% year-over-year increase in internship enrollment, suggesting that these actions are having a positive impact. Nevertheless, we remain in a phase of infrastructure-building and will reassess this PG in the next assessment cycle to evaluate long-term trends and identify any necessary course corrections.

Step 6B: Status Update on Previously Identified Action Plan(s):

In progress

Progress:

Complete

