

Annual Program Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2017-18

Department: Political Science

Program(s) Assessed:

Indicate all majors, minors, certificates and/or options that are included in this assessment:

Assessment reports are to be submitted annually by program/s. The report deadline is September 15th.
 The use of this template is optional, however, any assessment report submitted must contain the required information provided in template.

Majors/Minors/Certificate	Options
Political Science Major	Options were eliminated in the new curriculum beginning 2017-18; previously were International Relations, Political Theory, Policy Analysis, and Political Institutions

Annual Assessment Process

1. Data are collected as defined by Assessment Plan
2. Population or unbiased samples of collected assignments are scored by at least two faculty members using scoring rubrics to ensure inter-rater reliability.
3. Areas where the acceptable performance threshold has not been met are highlighted.
4. The scores are presented at a program/unit faculty meeting for assessment.
5. The faculty reviews the assessment results, and responds accordingly.
 - a. If an acceptable performance threshold **has not been met**, possible responses:
 - o Gather additional data to verify or refute the result.
 - o Identify potential curriculum changes to try to address the problem
 - o Change the acceptable performance threshold, reassess
 - o Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome
 - b. If acceptable performance threshold **has been met**, possible responses:
 - o Faculty may reconsider thresholds
 - o Evaluate the rubric to assure outcomes meet student skill level (example – classes with differing learning outcomes based on student level)
 - o Use Bloom’s Taxonomy to consider stronger learning outcomes
 - o Choose a different assignment to assess the outcome
6. **Demonstrate the impact of the assessment response in next assessment cycle.**
7. Submit Assessment reports annually to report assessment activities and results by program. The report deadline is September 15th.

1. What Was Done

a) What learning outcomes were reviewed? (Please include the description of the learning outcomes from assessment plan)

The learning objectives are:

1. Evaluate conflicting arguments;
2. Assemble empirical evidence and analyze normative concepts;
3. Make reasoned conclusions from evidence;
4. Communicate orally and written effectively, credit and cite sources

b) Include planning table – inform if there are changes to the assessment plan.

The Political Science Department implemented a new curriculum in 2017-18. The evaluators chose to use the assessment process and tools associated with the previous curriculum because the students whose work was evaluated here were completing their degree requirements under the previous curriculum requirements. There is one exception, and that is that the course that fulfills the “R” research component (PSCI 390R) in the new curriculum is the only option for these students to complete the core and department research requirement. The structure of this course is in some ways not entirely well aligned with the learning outcomes associated with the previous curriculum. We note that there are new outcomes associated with the new curriculum and that students enrolled in the PSCI 390R course and whose work will be assessed in 2018-19 will have had the opportunity to complete requirements under the new curriculum. The department recognizes the need to engage in a department-wide discussion and assessment of how to better align the new learning objectives with the new “R” course assignments.

2. What Data Were Collected

a) What was collected to assess learning outcomes listed above? (If multiple programs/minors are included, please indicate if different criteria was used).

The assignment used for this evaluation for both 390R classes was to motivate and pose a research question, review the literature and develop a method to test stated hypothesis. The students did not actually undertake the research, and so assessment of their ability to assemble empirical evidence, analyze normative concepts, and make reasoned conclusions

Paper 2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Paper 3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4
Paper 4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	4
Paper 5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	4
Paper 6	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3

I. Guidelines for assessing achievement of objectives:

Outcome 1: Evaluate conflicting arguments

- a) Poor means that the students did not demonstrate an ability to evaluate conflicting arguments. Conflicting arguments may have been identified, but the evaluation component was absent, confusing, or too superficial to convey any intellectually meaning evaluation.
- b) Fair means that the student identified conflicting arguments and made a cogent argument for and against each one. The paper may have some grammatical or spelling errors.
- c) Good means that the student identified conflicting arguments, made cogent arguments for and against and the content of the arguments demonstrated some intellectual depth. Few or no grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student identified conflicting arguments, made cogent arguments for and against, demonstrated intellectual depth as well as some innovative or original thinking. No grammatical or spelling errors.

Outcome 2: Assemble empirical evidence and analyze normative concepts

- a) Poor means that the student did not demonstrate an ability to assemble evidence and analyze normative concepts. Assembled evidence was incomplete or was not effectively evaluated and/or the normative concept was poorly explained.
- b) Fair means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and cogently analyzed the evidence vis vis the concept.
- c) Good means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and analyzed the evidence vis-à-vis the concept, demonstrating some intellectual depth. Few or no grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student assembled relevant evidence, proposed the relevant normative concept, and analyzed the evidence vis-à-vis the concept, discussing with intellectual depth the extent to which the evidence supports the concept and demonstrating innovative or original thinking. No grammatical or spelling errors.

Outcome 3: Make reasoned conclusions from evidence

- a) Poor means that of the three elements – thesis statement, evidence, and conclusion linking the two – some or all of these elements are absent or too weak to achieve the outcome.
- b) Fair means that all three elements are present, the thesis is clear, there is adequate evidence pertaining to the thesis statement, and the conclusion effectively links the evidence and thesis statement together.
- c) Good means that the thesis statement is clear, sharp, and focused; adequate and appropriate evidence is marshaled to evaluate the thesis, and the conclusion links the two. The paper overall reflects a high degree of intellectual depth and substance.
- d) Excellent means that all three elements are outstanding or exceptional and the paper reflects not only intellectual depth, but also innovative or original thinking.

Outcome 4: Communicate orally and written effectively, credit and cite sources

- a) Poor means that the student’s performance on written and oral work does not demonstrate the level of competence expected from a college-educated individual. Thinking is superficial, intellectually shallow, and/or unclear or confused. Sources are improperly credit and cited.
- b) Fair means the student’s performance on written and oral work demonstrates a minimum level of competence; the work is structured in a logical manner, moving from thesis to conclusion, presentation is clear and sources are properly credited and cited.
- c) Good means that the student’s performance on written and oral work is competent (as described for “fair”), intellectually engaging, and substantive. Sources are properly credited and cited. There should be very few and only minor grammatical or spelling errors.
- d) Excellent means that the student’s performance on written and oral work is outstanding; including competence as described above, demonstrates intellectual substance, and shows evidence of original or innovative thinking. Sources are properly credited and cited. There are no grammatical or spelling errors.

4. What Was Learned

Results:

The Political Science Department implemented a new curriculum in 2017-18. The evaluators chose to use the assessment process and tools associated with the previous curriculum because the students whose work was evaluated here were completing their degree requirements under the previous curriculum requirements. There is one exception, and that is that the course that fulfills the “R” research component (PSCI 390R) in the new curriculum is the only option for these students to complete the core and department research requirement. The structure of this course is in some ways not entirely well aligned with the learning outcomes associated with the previous curriculum.

We note that there are new outcomes associated with the new curriculum and that students enrolled in the PSCI 390R course and whose work will be assessed in 2018-19 will have had the opportunity to complete requirements under the new curriculum. The department recognizes the need to engage in a department-wide discussion and assessment of how to better align the new learning objectives with the new “R” course assignments.

Overall, the randomly selected papers demonstrated either “good” or “excellent” achievement of the four learning outcomes with one outlier (paper 1). Paper 1 was assessed as “poor” on all four outcomes. The evaluators assessed Papers 4 and 5 slightly differently, in the “good” to “excellent” range on Outcome 4 relating to effective communication.

b) Describe how results were communicated to the department and used to develop plans for improvement.

The results will be discussed at an upcoming department meeting dedicated solely to assessment and revision of our process based on the new curriculum.

5. How We Responded

a) Based on assessment, are there any curricular plans for the following year? (Such as plans for measurable improvements, or realignment of learning outcomes).

Discussed above. This is a transition year where the students in the course in the new curriculum that is now the “R” core requirement was used to assess students who were completing requirements under the old curriculum

b) When will the changes be next assessed?

2018-19 cycle of assessment with papers from Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 PSCI 390R

6. Closing the Loop

a) Do any of the outcomes this year represent improvements based on assessment from previous years (show multi-year use of progress).

No.

Submit report to programassessment@montana.edu