













Online Assessment Tracking Database

Sam Houston State University (SHSU)
2014 - 2015

Political Science BA/BS

Goal	Students' Skills  Upon completion of the undergraduate program students will possess skills relevant to employment fields associated with the study of political science.
Objective (L)	Develop Students' Skills  Students will be able to analyze and present empirical data, explain key concepts of research design, and write coherent reports and research papers.
Indicator	POLS 3379  POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course. Faculty members who teach the course will receive and review 5 randomly selected papers POLS 3379 courses. Faculty members will review the papers using a rubric. Papers will be scored on a scale of 1 - 5 with 5 being the highest.
Criterion	Scoring Of POLS 3379 Assignments  We expect that 75% of the written assignments selected for committee review will receive a score of three or better.
Finding	Scoring Results  80% of the papers reviewed by the committee were scored at or above 3. However, faculty reviewing assignments felt that the nature of the written assignments scored varied a great deal, thus rendering assessment across POLS 3379 sections somewhat difficult. For example, one set of assignments emphasized key concepts of research design over analysis and presentation of empirical data. Faculty teaching 3379 agreed that the the content of POLS 3379 courses needs to be more consistent across sections. For example, similiar assignments, class activities, etc. This will help improve the assessment process and allow faculty to determine what set of skills students are lacking and how best to improve students' skills.
Action	Students' Skills  Faculty teaching POLS 3379 agreed to establish more course content consistency across 3379. This will allow faculty to engage in more thorough assessment of students' skills and provide faculty the information needed to determine how best to improve students' skills.

Goal	Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics  Build students' knowledge of government and politics, citizenship skills, and civic engagement
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Objective (L)	<p>Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics </p> <p>Throughout their enrollment, students will explore the following themes in a national and international context: the structure and operation of various forms of government, political philosophies, informal and formal political organizations and actors, public policies, and political behavior</p>
Indicator	<p>Grading Rubric For Upper Division Courses  </p> <p>Each field of study will be assigned a team of 2 faculty members who have expertise in the particular field. Each semester the individual teams will receive and review 5 randomly selected papers from an upper division course in their respective fields. Faculty members from each subfield will evaluate the papers using the attached rubric. The papers will be scored on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.</p>
Criterion	<p>Develop Students' Knowledge Of Government And Politics </p> <p>We expect that at least 75% of the essays will score a 3 or above. This will represent an increase of over 5% from the previous year.</p>
Finding	<p>Evaluation Of Students' Knowledge </p> <p>Although the procedures used to assess student knowledge of government and politics produced results in the past, faculty support for the procedures has never been strong (i.e., faculty abide by the procedures but question the effectiveness of the results). This year faculty lack of support for assessment procedures resulted in explicit discussions (both in department meetings and one on one faculty member meetings with chair) about the need to change the existing assessment procedures. One area of concern for faculty, obtaining and sharing randomly selected papers from courses, proved problematic in AY 2014/2015. year. Evaluation of students' knowledge is best done using an assignment given at the end of the course. However, the current assessment procedures require sharing written papers and not all faculty relied on written papers for final assignments. Thus, assessment data for AY 2014/2015 was not obtained.</p> <p>Although faculty objected to current assessment procedures, they expressed a willingness to adopt new procedures. These new procedures will be adopted and implemented in fall 2015.</p>

There are no actions for this objective.

Previous Cycle's "Plan for Continuous Improvement"

Goal 1: Develop Concrete Plans for Improving Students' Knowledge and Skills: The current method is useful for evaluating students' knowledge and skills. However, the method has failed

to result in concrete actions designed to address weaknesses in students' knowledge and skills. In AY 2014 - 2015 the following actions will be taken to resolve the problem:

1. All faculty have consistently agreed that students' writing and data analysis skills need improvement. POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course that addresses writing and data analysis skills. However, students tend to take the course during their last semester in the program. The department will begin taking steps to require that all majors take POLS 3379 as one of their first upper division courses.
2. Officials from the Professional and Academic Center for Excellence (PACE) will be asked to give a presentation to faculty addressing best practices for improving students' writing skills.
3. Faculty will be encouraged to make better use of SHSU resources, such as the Writing Center.

Goal 2: Students Knowledge of Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility: One goal of the department's five year strategic plan is to create a climate that encourages civic engagement. In F14 faculty teaching American Government and Texas Government courses as well as all ACE courses will be asked to develop an agreed upon definition of civic engagement, introduce learning material into their courses related to civic engagement, and develop and implement a tool for measuring students' knowledge of civic engagement.

Please detail the elements of your previous "Plan for Continuous Improvement" that were implemented. If elements were not implemented please explain why, along with any contextual challenges you may have faced that prevented their implementation.

ASSESSING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Faculty teaching American Government and Texas Government developed pre/post tests as assessment instruments.

POLS 3379

It was not logistically possible to require students to take POLS 3379 during their second year as the department would have to offer enough 3379 sections to fit into students' different course schedules (i.e., days and hours). A review of past enrollment in 3379 suggested that additional sections would encounter low enrollment problems.

Plan for Continuous Improvement - Please detail your plan for improvement that you have developed based on what you learned from your 2014 - 2015 Cycle Findings.

ASSESSING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Last year the department revised its six core hours, specifically the department moved from offering American/Texas Government and Topics in Public Policy to American Government and Texas Government. Pre/post tests were designed by faculty to assess students' knowledge of course material as well as students' knowledge of civic engagement. In fall 2015 students enrolled in American Government courses will complete pre/post tests and in spring 2016 students enrolled in Texas Government courses will complete pre/post tests. The department agreed to allow the SHSU Planning and Assessment Office to score the tests as the office has hardware and software that will allow for the test data to be mined in ways helpful to the department and the assessment office.

ASSESSING POLS MAJORS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The POLS degree plan does not have a capstone course. However, POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course, its assignments require students to demonstrate the broad skills and knowledge associated with the discipline of political science, and most students take the course in their senior year. For these reasons, POLS 3379 is the best course to use for assessment purposes. POLS 3379 will become the primary vehicle for assessing POLS Majors' knowledge and skills. Faculty teaching 3379 agreed upon a set of pedagogical approaches to be used by all faculty teaching 3379 beginning fall 2015. Two faculty members teaching 3379 received SHSU assessment mini-grants that will help with the implementation of the new pedagogical approaches.