

UW Colleges Assessment Planning and Reporting Form 2004-2005

Email your reports to SAC@uwc.edu

Department	POLITICAL SCIENCE
Assessment Coordinator(s)	RICHARD FLANNERY

NOTE: Please attach relevant supporting information used to complete the Report Summary Sheet.

PART 1: Assessment of General Education Outcomes

Section 1: Identify the Proficiencies and Performance Indicators Assessed

- at the Planning stage, mark the performance indicators to be assessed in the left hand column below
- at the Reporting stage, report the numbers of students who did not meet, met, or exceeded expectations

Proficiency	Performance Indicators	# Do Not Meet	# Meet	# Exceed
C. Communication Skills	3. Demonstrate a large and varied vocabulary combining Fall POL 101 And Spring POL 175	64	182	102

Section 3: Use of Results

1. How did individual instructors report that they plan to use these results to improve the instructional process
- 2.

Review of our number compared with other departments puts us among those with fairly high numbers of “fails to meet” results in some sections. A further check of the data indicates that the “fails to meet” group are precisely those students most likely to be ‘at risk’---- they are new to the Colleges, they rank low in overall GPA, they are often from lower quartiles of their high school classes. We focused on how we could serve those students better at an extensive meeting in July. We had been doing the analytical proficiency ((values discussions)) for some years as our college proficiency. The “communications” proficiency we did this year (expands vocabulary) is much easier to score and evaluate. We were pleased to discover that we all did the assessment in a similar matter, providing students with vocabulary terms before the assessment, spending class time discussing the terms, etc.. How much additional coaching would change results substantially? Next semester two dept members have volunteered for a kind of ‘controlled’ experiment on assessment. They will use a common assessment instrument and jointly evaluate specific student performance. One member will have an additional hour of class time per week to use coaching students in the proficiency measured. We will see how much difference additional TIME makes for student learning outcomes.

3. What recommendations would you and/or the department assessment committee make to your department for continued improvement of the assessment process, proficiencies, performance indicators, assessment activity, rubric, and/or student performance in the discipline?

One of our problems has been low levels of participation by IAS instructors while our ranked faculty have been fairly diligent about assessment. After a lengthy discussion about all this we decided that we should do 2 things:

#1..The Chair and the DAC will try to do more pointed communicating with the IAS people about the why, when, and how of assessment. IAS ARE expected to do assessment and we have been too slack making sure they do.

#2 Members believe that some IAS want to participate, but don't really know how. Accordingly, the DAC (and other Dept members if they wish) will prepare a couple of sample assessment exercises and make them available both via email and hard copy to POL staffers so they could just plug in a ready made assessment instrument if they lack time or confidence to prepare their own.

We have also been having trouble assembling results on our Departmental Learning Outcomes. This happens largely because one set of assessments----the Colleges-wide proficiencies is sent to Greg Nettesheim whole the Dept results need to be sent separately to the DAC. We will be explaining this more carefully and several members suggested it's a good thing to have a specific deadline for results since many people organize their schedules around deadlines.

4. After discussion of the results by the department, what course of action will the department take to improve student performance with respect to the assessed proficiency?

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Department will not be reporting on the Communications proficiency again until the 2006-2007 assessments, but we expect the results from next year to play a role in that assessment. Needless to say, department members are teaching the Communications proficiency continually and we use all of our discussions on improving student learning to improve all our classes. One result of our Dept meeting and discussion of the C3 proficiency is that we discovered we all do vocabulary building in just about the same way. We pass out terms that are significant. We discuss them in class. We incorporate the terms in our examinations, quizzes, etc. It's unlikely we will be able to really learn much about our teaching or improving student learning by repeating this proficiency as an assessed item in '06-'07.

The Department did agree that we perhaps focus too much in our discussions on the "fails to meet" category. We have decided to focus our assessment discussions next spring/summer on the "exceeds expectations" category. How can we get more students

in this particular group?

TO SUM UP: USE OF RESULTS

1. Department has used assessment results to discuss strengthening of student performance. We will be testing whether or not specific coaching will improve results in an experiment this year.
2. After careful review of our C3 results, Department feels it would not be useful to revisit the C3 proficiency since we all do this sort of thing in about the same way and also test for it in similar ways. Better performance here is up to better student attendance, study habits.
3. Combining our assessment results with ESFY discussions and Sotl materials, Department has embarked on a major re-focus of our Intro Pol course, POL 101. Stress will be on student engagement, citizenship, student learning and related matters even at the cost of a number of descriptive units on political structures in the usual curriculum. Our view is that this refocused syllabus will help all students, but especially those who are marginal in performance since it involves learning about themselves and the world immediately around them.
4. We will not be able to really gain much from our Dept learning outcomes unless and until we get better reporting of our results. Problem is being addressed during this 2005/06 academic year.

See Part 3 below for some special steps Dept is taking

PART 2: Assessment of Department-Specific Outcomes

Section 1: Identify department-specific outcomes/performance indicators.

Outcomes/Performance Indicators
1.
2.

Section 2: Attach the rubric/standards used to assess each outcome/performance indicator.

Section 3: Assessment Results

Departmental Outcome/Performance Indicator	# Do Not Meet	# Meet	# Exceed
7.race, class, gender	27	129	58

Section 5: Use of results

See section 3 above; we discuss both assessments in a combined way

1. How did individual instructors report that they plan to use these results to improve the instructional process?
2. What recommendations would you and/or the department assessment committee make to your department for continued improvement of the assessment process, proficiencies, performance indicators, assessment activity, rubric, and/or student performance in the discipline?
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PART 3: Additional Assessment and Contributions

Please ask for and include in the report information from Department members about any other assessment activities they have conducted, particularly in conjunction with grant-funded innovations. Also ask for and describe briefly any additional contributions to assessment such as publications, presentations, qualitative classroom innovations (such as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning activities), and other items relating to assessment that the department wishes to note.

The POL department is in the process of a major refocus/revamp of one of our courses, POL 101___Introduction to Politics. We recently sought and received a Colleges special grant for this purpose. The revamp flows from our experience discussing assessment outcomes combined with Colleges' discussions on the First Year experience. A lot of the focus in both Assessment and ESFY discussions is on student engagement. Students who get engaged probably will stay and succeed; students who don't probably will fail or leave or both.

We believe POL 101 provides us with our best chance to something about this IN CLASS for both ourselves and the UW Colleges. We intend to focus the 101 content on community and citizenship, stressing again and again the role of the students and other ordinary people in politics. Most POL classes are essentially description, observation, analysis; there is a distance and detachment from the political. We are going to try and reboot the class around participation and engagement stressing that politics is right here and now, rather than over there, and that students themselves are part of politics. We've just completed discussions on some materials we can use and topics we can take up to facilitate this switch in emphasis.

Our other introductory course. POL 104---American Politics, is less amenable to this kind of experimentation. Anyone examining the top 20 texts for this course would see that there is a broad national consensus on what topics are covered in this class. We cannot ignore this as a transfer institution . If our revamp of POL 101 does lead to positive results, we can start devising ways to use the engagement approach in other contexts and other courses. Our expectation is that this new POL 101 will benefit all students, but we hope it will be especially helpful for students most likely to have difficulty succeeding in their first year classes.

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