***STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM***

***SUMMARY FORM AY 2016-2017***

Please complete a separate worksheet for each academic program (major, minor) at each level (undergraduate, graduate) in your department. Worksheets are due to CASA this year by **June 15, 2017**. Worksheets should be sent electronically to [kjsanders@eiu.edu](mailto:kjsanders@eiu.edu) and should also be submitted to your college dean. For information about assessment or help with your assessment plans, visit the Assessment webpage at <http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/> or contact Karla Sanders in CASA at 581-6056.

Political Science (B.A.)

**Degree and**

**Program Name:**

# Submitted By:

Richard Wandling and Jeffrey Ashley

**PART ONE**

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| What are the learning objectives? | How, where, and when are they assessed? | What are the expectations? | What are the results? | Committee/ person responsible? How are results shared? |
| 1. Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of politics, government and public policy. | Student writing samples in AY16-17 were assessed in PLS PLS 4600 -Political Science Capstone (N=20, Spring 2017).  The primary writing assignment for assessment was a semester-long research paper project (10-12 pages) that required students to advance through key stages: a research proposal; scholarly literature review draft; research paper draft; and submission of final version of the paper.  The faculty member teaching the course completed an evaluation of a writing assignment for each student in the course. The evaluation is filled out without identifying the particular student, in order to establish general trends that will help us determine the effectiveness of our program in meeting key learning objectives. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).  Two questions on the evaluation rubric relate to learning objective #1:   1. *How well did the student develop his/her literature review, or use relevant documents and sources in his/her writing sample?* 2. *How would you rate the student’s knowledge of the subject area, based on this writing sample?* | For the writing sample analysis, students should understand how to use scholarly literature, documents, and other sources to conduct Political Science research. In addition, students should demonstrate knowledge of their subject area through their writing samples.  For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #1 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**   1. Development of literature review/use of documents and sources.: 4.05 2. Knowledge of the   subject area: 4.5 | The Assessment Coordinator, working with the Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee, is responsible for analyzing the learning objectives.  The results are shared with and discussed by department faculty during the 1st faculty meeting of the Fall semester. Results are also shared with the student representative to College of Sciences Dean’s advisory board.  The Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee members use these results to continue discussions and guide curriculum changes during the next academic year. |
| 2. Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically. | The same analysis described in learning objective #1 (above) is used here. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).  One question is included in the rubric:   1. *How well did the student demonstrate critical thinking and writing skills through his/her writing sample?* | To demonstrate critical thinking, faculty members were directly asked to evaluate students’ critical thinking and writing skills.  For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for the question relevant to learning objective #2 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**   1. Evaluation of critical   thinking skills:  4.45  **Additional Results**:  Although a student perception-based measure of critical thinking skills, one item from the PLS Major Exit Survey (administered in PLS 4600) has direct relevance. Based on a scale with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree, the mean score was 4.7 for *“The PLS Major helped me develop my critical thinking skills” (N=19).* | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |
| 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively. | The same analysis described in learning objective #1 (above) is used here. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).  Three questions are included in the rubric:   1. *How well developed was the student’s research question, hypothesis, or focus of his/her writing sample?* 2. *How well written was the student’s writing sample?* 3. *How well did the student apply consistent, appropriate citations in the writing sample?* | To demonstrate writing skills, students should be able to develop specific, appropriate hypotheses or research questions. They should be able to communicate and argue effectively through their research and writing. They should be able to cite appropriate sources related to their topic.  For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #3 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**   1. Development of research question/ hypothesis: 4.1 2. Quality of writing: 4.3 3. Consistent and appropriate citations: 4.2   **Additional Results**:  1: The Department Honors Coordinator has been working toward an assessment data base for PLS Majors involved in Departmental Honors. Although the N on annual basis may be small, it nonetheless bears noting that in Spring 2017 there were two successfully defended Departmental Honors Theses, preceded in Fall 2016 by a successfully defended University Honors thesis coordinated through the PLS Department.  2: A PLS Exit Survey item also is directly related to this area. Based on a 5 point scale, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree, the Mean was 4.5 (N=19) for the following statement: “*The PLS Major helped me develop my writing skills”* | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |
| 4. Students will demonstrate the ability to function as responsible citizens. | Students complete a survey that represents a refashioning of the earlier EIU Global Citizenship Survey. Questions were considered and adapted from the university survey to work for departmental purposes and needs.  Student survey responses are assessed in PLS 4600 - Political Science Capstone (N=20).  The survey is filled out without identifying the particular student, in order to establish general trends that will help us determine the effectiveness of our program in meeting our objectives. Ratings are based on a modified 4-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree) with no NA (not applicable) response category.  Two statements were selected for analysis in 2016-17:  1. *I fully inform myself on all aspects of a social issue before forming an opinion.*  *2. My Political Science education has taught me to consider multiple perspectives when making decisions.* | To demonstrate the ability to function as a responsible citizen, students should indicate a capacity for constructive civic engagement through informing themselves on issues before forming an opinion, as well as considering multiple perspectives when making political/policy decisions.  For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #4 will be at less than or equal to 2.0.  **(Note: T*he directionality of the Likert numerical values for the PLS 2001 and 4600 results, as summarized in Column 2 of Learning Objective 4.)*** | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 survey:**   1. Be informed on all aspects of social issue before forming an opinion: 1.6 2. Considering Multiple Perspectives: 1.2   Note: In essence, all PLS major respondents with either strongly agree or agree responses for both statements.  **Additional Results:**  An additional way of assessing PLS students on this objective is to consider data on actual student participation in activities that indicate, both directly and indirectly, embrace of the value of responsible citizenship. For this, we include evidence from the past year in three ways:  (1)From PLS student Exit Surveys which we have started a practice of administering in PLS 4600. One question item asks for the PLS seniors to indicate whether they have been involved in various types of experiential learning activities, and encouraging results are evident. For example, of 19 students completing the survey in AY16-17, 5 students participated in Volunteer Work or Alternative Spring Break; 9 in Campus Leadership positions; 11 in Internships; 9 in government simulations (Moot Court or Model Illinois Government); 8 in the Political Science Association; and 7 in Pi Sigma Alpha (PLS Honor Society). Most of the students participated in multiple activities of this genre, and of particular interest in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, 6 in Study Abroad or National Student Exchange.  (2)From the same Exit Survey (N= 19) one survey item is particularly relevant. Based on 5 to 1 scale, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree: Mean value of 4.7 for “*The PLS major strengthened my awareness of the value of political participation”.*  (3) As further evidence of the results in the Senior Capstone Survey, it must be noted that Political Science Majors are well represented at the highest levels of campus leadership positions, including Student Body President (third consecutive year); Student Representative to the EIU Board of Trustees; Student Dean of the College of Sciences Advisory Board; and PLS majors as planners/coordinators of the Student Action Team. | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |
| 5. Students will demonstrate the ability to speak effectively. | Speaking assessment is done by professors of PLS 4600, the senior capstone course for PLS majors. This course is conducted in a seminar format with numerous opportunities for speaking assessment, from assigned presentations of readings to the end-of-the-term research poster presentation program. (For this assessment the N=20.)  The instructor is asked to rate students at the conclusion of the course on a 5-point rating system, with 5 the highest rating and 1 the lowest, on the following dimensions of speaking assessment:  \**Organization*: Clear Arrangement of Ideas? Introduction, body, conclusion, transitions? Was there an identifiable structure?  \**Language*: Clear accurate, varied vivid? Appropriate standards of usage? Was language appropriate for situation and audience?....  \**Material:* Are supporting materials specific, credible, relevant, sufficient, interesting? Appropriate to the situation?....  \**Analysis*: Was the presentation adapted to the audience and the situation? Was critical thinking employed in examining the issue(s)? Was the approach and structure consistent with the overall purpose?  \**Nonverbal Delivery*: Eye Contact? Awareness to audience reaction? Do gestures seem natural? Did presenter use notes and/or audio/visual aids effectively?  \**Verbal Delivery*: Varied in pitch, volume, rate, emphasis? Enthusiastic? Free of fillers….Effective articulation and pronunciation?  The faculty rater also was asked to assign an *Overall Holistic Score* after the ratings for the above dimensions. The overall holistic score used the same 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest. Furthermore, the individual rating forms also included no student-specific identifying information—outside of academic year, semester and professor’s last name. | It is expected that for each of the six dimensions of speaking assessment (i.e., Organization, Language, Material, Analysis, Nonverbal Delivery and Verbal Delivery) that mean student ratings will be at least 3.5 or higher for PLS 4600. | **Mean ratings for PLS 4600 Speaking Assessment:**  \*Organization: 4.05  \*Language: 4.2  \*Material: 4.45  \*Analysis: 4.3  \*Nonverbal Delivery: 3.85  \*Verbal Delivery: 4.2  Overall Holistic Score: 4.15  In addition, a question on the PLS Capstone Exit Survey (N=19) is relevant to this learning goal: Based on a 5 to 1 scale, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree: Mean value of 4.1 for the statement “*The PLS Major helped me to develop my oral communication skills”.* | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |

**PART TWO**

*Describe what your program’s assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the CASA Director’s comments on last year’s report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.*

AY2016-17 represents a transition year for assessing the B.A. in Political Science program. While previous rounds of assessment included results from both the 1 credit hour PLS 2001 introductory research course along with the 3 credit hour PLS 4600 Senior Capstone class, assessment attention this past academic year shifted to PLS 4600 as our primary assessment vehicle in view of a departmental proposal to eliminate PLS 2001 effective Fall 2017 (approved by COSCC and CAA). AY 2016-17 also was a year in which assessment activities in the department unfortunately ended up competing with the impacts of staffing pressures and uncertainty in course scheduling from semester to semester along with time and energy associated with the broader university-level Vitalization initiative. With this in mind, the department now has a task of identifying a lower division course--or some other strategy--to broaden the net of assessment coverage due the elimination of PLS 2001, particularly to generate measures of how Political Science majors fare on core PLS learning goals in the early stages of majoring in Political Science at EIU. This, however, also includes a need to be cognizant of broader university enrollment patterns. For example, in the case of Political Science, with evidence of our major doing relatively well in attracting incoming transfer student numbers, the department should reflect on this pattern in its strategies toward assessing student performance during and over their time at EIU. Another opportunity in the assessment arena is related to the growing interest in the Civic and Nonprofit Leadership Option, now that it is entering its third academic year and demonstrating growing interest among our majors. To what extent does the department need to consider nuances in its overall assessment related to different ways a student may major in Political Science—i.e. the B.A. in Political Science; the Option in Civic and Nonprofit Leadership; and the Option in International Studies?

Beyond these challenges and opportunities, results and evidence reported in this summary demonstrate that PLS majors are doing well on our learning goals. The Political Science B.A. at EIU emphasizes and achieves the acquisition and application of knowledge of politics and government; critical thinking skills; research and writing skills; application of responsible citizenship; and cultivation of communication skills, from the written word to speaking. Having said this, there always are opportunities to strengthen student performance on learning goals/objectives; the department is fully committed to this. One candidate for the curriculum committee to consider is speaking skills. In view of emerging university level speaking assessment data which recently show Political Science majors (as assessed in CMN 1310G and senior seminars) generally in the middle range of ratings for EIU students as a whole, we might investigate classroom speaking development that takes steps toward moving our majors toward the upper tier of the ratings—but not for the purpose of the assessment ratings but for preparation for success with our majors professional and academic goals after graduation.

**PART THREE**

*Summarize changes and improvements in* ***curriculum, instruction, and learning*** *that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?*

* Elimination of PLS 2001 (1 credit hour introductory research class) emerged not just from staffing pressures but also from assessment activities of our Undergraduate Curriculum/Assessment Committee. In sum, it became evident that key elements of this course could be incorporated into the 3 credit hour PLS 2033 Research Methods course, and as a result yield a better student understanding/appreciation of connections between qualitative and quantitative research and the role of quality primary and secondary sources in quality undergraduate political science research and writing.
* Another important curriculum change to take effect in Fall 2017 also was assessment related. Specifically, it became evident that permitting the full 3 credit hours of PLS 2503 (Legal Research and Argument) had created some unintended effects for the student learning experience in the government simulation-based class, and this also had created unintended negative impacts for students exploring other ways of meeting the department’s experiential learning requirement of 3 credit hours for the Major.
* The Department continues to work on strategies toward mentoring and encouraging student participation in research and writing, from presentations at regional and state political science conferences on through campus outlets such as EIU’s Student Research and Discovery Conference, the annual Political Science Research Showcase and the department’s online EIU Political Science Review. On the latter, the department presently is involved in a substantial upgrade of the website presence of the EIU Political Science Review, through the assistance of staff and resources available from Booth Library.
* We continue to emphasize the value of experiential learning, including how it connects to the responsible citizenship learning goal. This is demonstrated in the department’s active internships program coupled with high student participation rates in its government simulations--Model Illinois Government and Moot Court. And as the assessment report shows, our majors embrace and model civic engagement, and the faculty in the department actively encourage and support this—e.g., through a Political Science Facebook Page that also showcases civic engagement not only by our majors but also our alumni.