***STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM***

***SUMMARY FORM AY 2017-2018***

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, 2018**. 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

**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 AY17-18 were assessed in PLS PLS 4600 -Political Science Capstone (Spring 2018).  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; submission of final version of the paper, along with a concluding research poster presentation.  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** (N=9 for Spring 2018)**:**   1. Development of literature review/use of documents and sources.: 4.2 2. Knowledge of the   subject area: 4.8 | 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** (N=9 for Spring 2018)**:**   1. Evaluation of critical   thinking skills:  4.5  **Additional Results**:  Although a student perception-based measure of critical thinking skills, one item from the PLS Major Exit Survey (administered in PLS 4600, N=6 for Spring 2018) has direct relevance. Based on a scale with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree, the mean score was 4.6 for *“The PLS Major helped me develop my critical thinking 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. |
| 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** (N=9 for Spring 2018)**:**   1. Development of research question/ hypothesis: 4.3 2. Quality of writing: 4.1 3. Consistent and appropriate citations: 4.4   **Additional Results**:  1: 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 4.0 (N=6 in Spring 2018) 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.  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 2017-18:  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** (N=6 for Spring 2018)**:**   1. Be informed on all aspects of social issue before forming an opinion: 2.0 2. Considering Multiple Perspectives: 1.5   Note: All PLS major respondents with either strongly agree or agree responses for both statements.  **Additional Results:**  (1)From PLS student Exit Surveys and the Citizenship Survey administered in PLS 4600, one category requests PLS seniors to indicate whether they have been involved in various types of experiential learning activities, with the results showing that our majors are engaged in a variety of applied learning activities. For example, of 6 students completing the survey in AY17-18, 3 students participated in Volunteer Work or Alternative Spring Break; 4 in Campus Leadership positions; 4 in Internships; and 3 in government simulations (Moot Court or Model Illinois Government); and the students participated in multiple activities of this genre, with the mean as 3.7 activities per student completing the survey.  (2)From the Exit Survey (N= 6, Spring 2018) 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) In addition, the university level Senior Citizenship Survey administered through the campus assessment office provides further supporting data on PLS majors relative to the Responsible Citizenship goal. For example, while the AY18 Report shows 24 % of the seniors responding with “I do not vote”, PLS seniors not voting was 14 % (2 out of 14). | 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.  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: 4.0  \*Language: 4.4  \*Material: 4.1  \*Analysis: 4.3  \*Nonverbal Delivery: 4.2  \*Verbal Delivery: 4.4  Overall Holistic Score: 4.1  In addition, a question on the PLS Capstone Exit Survey (N=6) 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 4.4 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.*

The Department will continue with efforts to identify and implement a replacement of the 1 credit-hour PLS 2001 course (deleted effective AY16-17) for formative assessment, with the goal of assessment processes comparable to the previous PLS 2001/PLS 4600 sequence. The department is working toward establishing PLS 2033 (the 3 credit hour introductory research methods course) as a critical first stage of assessment of PLS majors. Related to this, we are considering strategies toward online-based assessment processes for both faculty and students—to help with assessment efficiency and effectiveness and also to increase the number of students assessed. Also, with three degree tracks for Political Science majors, the general PLS B.A. along with the Civic and Nonprofit Leadership Option and the International Studies Option, the department may be able to assemble comparative-based assessment data related to degree track of its majors. For example, are there any differences when considering the responsible citizenship dimension?

Results and evidence reported in this summary show 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 ongoing candidate for faculty consideration is speaking skills. In view of university level speaking assessment data which show Political Science majors (as assessed in CMN 1310G and senior seminars) in the middle range of ratings for EIU students as a whole, we will 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. While our majors perform well in speaking skills in the political science classroom, it is important that they perform at this same high level across a variety of communication assessment settings. In addition, the department will further examine PLS major writing skills relative to our curriculum, in view of EWP data (Spring 2018 EWP Submission Report) that show that while Political Science majors have improved from Spring 2017 to Spring 2018, they remain just under the university-level mean EWP score rating (3.4 for EIU; 3.35 for PLS—with 3.37 for COS).

**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?*

* The Department continues to work on strategies toward mentoring and encouraging student participation in research and writing, from presentations at regional/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 in AY2017-18 improved the website presence of the EIU Political Science Review through the assistance of Booth Library staff, and this should help to communicate the value of quality student research and writing.
* We continue to emphasize 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. Of particular note here is the establishment of a Model United Nations Student Association led by Political Science majors--and with active support from the department, including a PLS professor serving as the group’s faculty advisor. The department is exploring more formal support approaches for this quality government simulation, including opportunities in the funding area.
* The Department continues to actively assess its undergraduate curriculum, not only to serve the needs of majors but also in relation to interdisciplinary opportunities for which the PLS Major is well suited. Examples of steps taken in the past year include retitling PLS 1003 from Introduction to Comparative Politics to Introduction to Politics (effective Fall 2018) for the purpose of broader preparation of our majors and minors; revising PLS 3763 (Environmental Politics and Policy) toward a 4000-level course, not only to reflect its strengthened public policy research focus but also to create opportunities for graduate student contributions to the undergraduate learning process; and partnering with Journalism on a new Public Affairs Reporting Option for Journalism Majors, with this option including a number of required Political Science classes—and the prospect of Political Science majors selecting it as a second major. Above all, with signs of stability in the university fiscal situation and promising signs in university enrollment, the Department will continue to focus on ensuring that degree programs and the curriculum are covered by adequate faculty staffing support—e.g., gaps that emerged in covering the curriculum in Comparative Politics and International Relations at the upper division level and implications of this type of gap for student learning and development. The senior capstone exit survey includes an item on global citizenship (“The PLS major helped me develop my sense of global citizenship”), and the results for this item were lower than they should have been for PLS seniors reflecting on their experience with the major (3.83 on the 1 to 5 Likert scale, with 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest).