Department of Political Science  
Assessment Guide 2016-17  
Pre-Major Courses

As part of the annual program assessment exercise mandated by the University, the Department of Political Science conducts assessment in all pre-major courses (1000 and 2000 level courses). You will be teaching a course designated as “pre-major.”

This guide is aimed at facilitating the process of assessment. If you need additional help, please contact the assessment coordinator, Christina Murphy (.1518), or Teresa Johnson (.674) at UCAT to schedule an individual consultation.

There are three steps: Syllabus Construction (Specifying Goals and Objectives); In-Class Measurement; Post-Semester Reporting.

I. **Syllabus Construction.** Include on your syllabus all relevant Goals and Objectives:

a. **Goals.** These address the question: how will students think differently after the course?

i. **Program Goals.** Pre-major courses fulfill one Program Goal:
   1. Gain basic knowledge across the major subfields and thematic specializations of Political Science.

ii. **Course Specific Goals.** We recommend identifying no more than two course specific goals.

iii. **General Education (GE) Goals.** Your course may fulfill a GE requirement and if so then these goals must be included on your syllabus. If you are not sure, contact the assessment coordinator, Christina Murphy (.1518) or the Coordinating Advisor, Charles Smith (.3280).

b. **Objectives.** These are outward demonstrations of the acquisition of skills and knowledge, designed to align with specific goals.

i. For each Goal, identify 3-5 objectives. The language of “Students will be able to…” is a helpful starting point. For example, students will be able to describe basic concepts used to understand X; differentiate among theories of Y; apply concepts to contemporary policy debates.

ii. Objectives should be clearly aligned with Goals.

**For example (adapted from PSC 1300):**

**Program Goal:** Students gain basic knowledge in an area of specialization.

**Objective:** By the end of this course, students will be able to…

- Describe the basic concepts associated with the three major approaches to the study of world politics.
- Apply concepts from each of the three major approaches to contemporary policy debates.
II. Measurement

To determine the extent to which Objectives have been attained, we recommend embedded testing and/or, if you assign essays, rubric grading. For Program Assessment, the Department needs aggregate data, i.e., the percentage of your students that mastered the Objective. 75% or higher is the Department benchmark.

a. Embedded Testing:
   i. **identify particular questions** in your quizzes, midterms, and final exams that can be readily linked to the Learning Objectives you have identified.
   ii. **Specify a point scale for determining individual mastery.** For example, on a five-point scale, three or higher.
   iii. **Specify a percentage that represents aggregate mastery.** For example, 75% of students score 3/5 or higher.

Example of embedded testing (adapted from PSC 1300):

   GOAL: basic knowledge
   OBJECTIVE: describe concepts associated with each of the three major approaches, Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism.
   MEASURE: on a short answer exam question, students will correctly define the security dilemma and situate it among the approaches. On a five-point scale, three or higher demonstrates mastery.

b. Rubric Grading of Essays:
   i. **Compose particular** dimensions on the rubric that align with the objective(s) you have identified.
   ii. **Specify a point scale for determining individual mastery**

   iii. **Specify a percentage of students in the course that, if reached, represents aggregate mastery.**

   iv. **IMPT: Rubric assessment does not entail reporting overall scores, only the points aligned with the particular objective being measured.**

Example of rubric category (adapted from PSC 1300):

   GOAL: basic knowledge
   OBJECTIVE: distinguish concepts associated with each of the three major approaches, Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism.
   MEASURE: the essay should accurately compare two approaches along at least two dimensions. On a four-point scale, students should score 3 or higher to demonstrate mastery.
III. Reporting of Results. When you report your results, include the percentage for each individual objective and relate it to the department standard of 75%, as shown below.

Example:

Assessment Report  
Course #, semester/year  
Instructor Name

Instructor designation: TT faculty, adjunct, graduate student  
Campus: Columbus or Regional  
Mode of instruction: on-line or classroom  
Enrollment: # students

For each Goal (Program, Course, and GE), list the objectives, measures, and results:

GOAL: basic knowledge

- OBJECTIVE #1: describe concepts associated with each of the three major approaches, Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism.
- MEASURE: on a short answer exam question, students will correctly define the security dilemma and situate it among the approaches. On a five-point scale, three or higher represents mastery.
- REPORT:
  - 100 students were graded.
  - 82 students met the standard set for mastery,
  - 82% exceeds the department’s goal of 75% of students per course achieving mastery.
Resources

The following resources may provide useful guidance on syllabus construction and developing assessment tools. In addition, if you would like assistance with developing course outcomes and measures, we recommend reaching out to Teresa Johnson (.674) at the University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT). She is available to consult with instructors and can provide useful guidance on developing an assessment plan that will meet your needs.

University Center for the Advancement of Teaching: http://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics-plus/assessing-your-course/

Resources from the College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum and Assessment Services: https://asccas.osu.edu/assessment/resources

Archived materials from the OSU Student Affairs Assessment & Research Conference: http://cssl.osu.edu/student-affairs-assessment-research-conference/saarc-archive/

Assessment in Political Science, American Political Science Association, 2009. Available to order at: http://www.apsanet.org/stateoftheprofession/BKctl/ViewDetails/SKU/APSPASS1