Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet
Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term
Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

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<th>Program Assessed</th>
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<td>College</td>
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<td>Date Submitted</td>
<td>1-8-2018</td>
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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?
What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list

Upon completion of the Bachelor of Arts program in Political Science, students should be able to:

1. Use critical reasoning skills for problem solving.

2. Write persuasively in order to articulate, support, and defend an argument.

3. Apply the research process in the social sciences so as to differentiate between normative and empirical perspectives, comprehend the difference between deterministic and probabilistic outcomes, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the major analytical approaches used in applied research (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, formal).

4. Consume and understand sophisticated information communicated through scholarly writing and the media.

5. Understand the obligations and expectations of citizenship in a democratic society.

6. Explain how political outcomes are shaped by the interplay between preferences and institutions.

7. Describe and analyze the motivations and constraints that underlie and shape political behavior.

8. Explain how outcomes in the political and social world are affected by the multiple causal factors.

9. Describe how multiculturalism influences politics and political outcomes.

Which learning outcomes were assessed?

As in prior years, we focused on providing an in-depth analysis of two outcomes. In this report, we analyze data on outcomes 1 and 2.

How were they assessed?
Consistent with the Department’s Undergraduate Assessment Plan, we employ two measures for assessment of the B.A. degree in Political Science. First, we use one item (question) from the Internship Supervisor Evaluation Form Questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to internship supervisors of all students who enrolled in our internship courses throughout the year (note: junior or senior standing is one the prerequisites for enrollment in the internship; many students are seniors). The scale is 1-5 (with 1=unsatisfactory, to 5=excellent). The data are collected from the survey question entitled “Problem-Solving/Critical Thinking Skills.” We include data only for Political Science students enrolled in the internships (data for non-majors is adjusted before analysis).

The second assessment measure is an evaluation of research papers written by seniors enrolled in PSC 499, the Political Science capstone. The evaluation focuses only on critical reasoning skills and writing a persuasive argument, which are related to learning outcomes 1 and 2. Papers were scored according to the following criteria: 1 = unsatisfactory; 2 = needs improvement; 3 = satisfactory; 4 = good 5 = excellent. The cohorts required to complete the capstone remain fairly small (as a percent of all majors). Thus, appropriate caution should be exercised in interpreting these results.

Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.

We assessed the Inquiry and Critical Thinking UULO, as this is reasonably aligned with undergraduate learning outcome numbers 1-2 in Political Science. We used the same assessment instruments and methods as described in #3, above.

What was learned from the assessment results?

Analysis of Internship Supervisor Evaluation Scores—Problem Solving/Critical Thinking

The internship supervisors rated the problem-solving and critical reasoning skills of upper-division Political Science students quite favorably. In 2017, we obtained data on a total of 9 Political Science majors enrolled in the internship courses (this included students who interned with the Legislative Internship program in Carson City). The mean evaluation scores for “Problem-Solving/Critical Thinking Skills” for Political Science majors was 4.60 which was close to results for the prior year (note: scale for components in Carson City Legislative Intern survey readjusted for consistency). The narrative comments made by internship supervisors were, on balance, very positive. Particularly in the legislative and legal internships, students received praise for their ability to work through complex, technical issues and to apply their critical reasoning skills to a variety of legal and policy questions. This is consistent with our expectations, and suggests that we are providing students with important career-readiness skills.
Analysis of Capstone Papers for Seniors in Political Science

In addition, we examined the capstone research papers. In 2017, a total of sixteen students enrolled in the capstone course. Of these, one received a grade of incomplete, and one withdrew. The topics for the papers encompassed five of the six subfields in the majors, including American Politics, Public Policy, Public Law, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. A total of fourteen papers were evaluated for the quality of critical reasoning skills and a student’s ability to write a persuasive argument. The mean score for this sample was 4.38. Consistent with our prior results, this finding suggests that students completing the major tend to exhibit skills in the range of good to excellent.

Response of the Program

The assessment data went through the end of the calendar year, and as a result, we have just completed the report. As such, the faculty have not yet had an opportunity to review the findings. As noted in our Assessment Plan, however, a copy of the report will be circulated among members and the Course and Curriculum Committee. The committee will review the findings and recommend changes, if any, in curriculum, course content, pedagogy, or other strategies in order to improve. These recommendations will be discussed by all faculty in our monthly faculty meetings.