**2018-2019 Annual Program Assessment Report Guide**

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College, and to [james.solomon@csun.edu](mailto:james.solomon@csun.edu), Director of the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, by **September 30, 2019**. You may, but are not required to, submit a separate report for each program, including graduate degree programs, which conducted assessment activities, or you may combine programs in a single report. **Please include this form with your report in the same file and identify your department/program in the file name.**

**College: CSBS**

**Department: Political Science**

**Program: Undergraduate**

**Assessment liaison: Jennifer De Maio**

1. **Please check off whichever is applicable:**

**A. \_\_\_\_X\_\_\_ Measured student work within program major/options.**

**B. \_\_\_\_X\_\_\_ Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options.**

**C. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options.**

**D. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Arts and Humanities student learning outcomes**

1. **Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s).** On a separate sheet,provide a brief overview of this year’s assessment activities, including:

* an explanation for why your department chose the assessment activities (measurement, analysis, application, or GE assessment) that it enacted
* if your department implemented assessment **option A**, identify which program SLOs were assessed (please identify the SLOs in full), in which classes and/or contexts, what assessment instruments were used and the methodology employed, the resulting scores, and the relation between this year’s measure of student work and that of past years: (include as an appendix any and all relevant materials that you wish to include)
* if your department implemented assessment **option B**, identify what conclusions were drawn from the analysis of measured results, what changes to the program were planned in response, and the relation between this year’s analyses and past and future assessment activities
* if your department implemented **option C**, identify the program modifications that were adopted, and the relation between program modifications and past and future assessment activities
* if your program implemented **option D**, exclusively or simultaneously with **options** **A, B, and/or C**, identify the basic skill(s) assessed and the precise learning outcomes assessed, the assessment instruments and methodology employed, and the resulting scores
* in what way(s) your assessment activities may reflect the university’s commitment to diversity in all its dimensions but especially with respect to underrepresented groups
* any other assessment-related information you wish to include, including SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes), and/or the creation and modification of new assessment instruments

**3. Preview of planned assessment activities for 2019-20.** Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

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# Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s): Option A

The Political Science department uses a direct assessment model which we call Progressive Direct Assessment (PDA). The approach is designed to involve all faculty in the department, be an integrated component of the existing educational process, and provide information about student learning outcomes from students’ introduction to Political Science research methods to their final courses as majors in the department.

For the 2018-19 academic year, our department continued assessing our gateway and capstone courses. With these courses, we are able to assess our departmental SLOs and track our students as they progress through the Political Science major. We received copies of final exams or papers from six courses from the Fall 2018 and the Spring 2019 semesters. Instructors were asked to share the exam questions or essay prompts given to the student s in order to provide context for the scoring. We chose a random sample of ten works per course.

This year, the assessment committee consisted of four full-time faculty members including the assessment coordinator. Each committee member was asked to read the final assignments for one or two classes and score them according to the SLO rubrics.[[1]](#footnote-1) The committee members then reported the results to the assessment liason who compiled the data into charts that show the percentages of works meeting the ‘unsatisfactory,’ ‘elementary,’ ‘developing,’ ‘proficient,’ and ‘exemplary’ designations. These were then distributed to the department, discussed at our faculty meetings, and made available on the Political Science website.

For 2018-19, we measured SLO 1 and SLO 4.

## SLO 1: Professional Interaction and Effective Communication

Students should demonstrate persuasive and rhetorical communication skills for strong oral and written communication in small and large groups. SLO 1a assesses conventions and coherence and refers to the mechanics of writing such as spelling, grammar and sentence structure. It also includes stylistic considerations such as formatting and source documentation. SLO 1b focuses on rhetorical aspects and considers the purpose of the assignment, organization of thoughts, and the development of an argument.

## SLO 4: Critical Thinking

Students should demonstrate increasingly sophisticated skills in reading primary sources critically. Students should be able to identify, present, and support arguments. Students should be able to research and evaluate the models, methods, and analyses of others in the field of Political Science, and critically integrate and evaluate others’ work. SLO 4a assesses how the student presents and supports an argument while 4b focuses on how effectively the student identifies pros and cons and analyzes and evaluates alternative points of view.

We used our PDA model and collected ten samples of final exams or final papers from collected data from six courses, including two sections of Political Science 372, Political Science 471B, Political Science 471D, Political Science 471E, and Political Science 471F. Two members of the assessment committee were then asked to read the samples and score them following our assessment rubric.

The goal of our assessment model is to do a cross-sectional comparison in order to better understand how our students are learning as they progress through the major. We collect data from when they first learn the “mechanics” of political science in the gateway research methods course (POLS 372) and compare that to data from our capstone proseminars (471) which tend to be their final course as majors.

We chose ten papers at random from the courses assessed. The average size of the classes assessed was 45 students. The majority of the students assessed are political science majors. In the gateway (372) class, most students are in their 2nd or 3rd year while the students in the gateway courses (471) tend to be in their final year in the program.

Members of the assessment committee were asked to read 10 papers per course assessed and evaluate them using the scoring rubrics for SLO1 and SLO4. The members then submitted the completed rubrics to the liaison who aggregated the results and put the data into charts (See [Appendix A](#_Appendix_A._Academic)).

Based on the evidence collected, our students are generally improving with regards to both written and oral communication and critical thinking as they progress through the major. In the past, we had found that students were scoring higher in the gateway 372 class compared with the capstone 471 courses. As a result, we implemented changes to our scoring rubric and disaggregated our scale to try to better understand where students to allow the committee to capture greater variation in student performance. We also asked that professors provide more detailed instructions for assignments and exam prompts with the aim of providing more information about expectations and basis for evaluation.

In 2018-2019, the data suggests that more than half of the students in the 471 courses scored proficient or better for SLO1a (conventions & cohesion) and in 471B and 471D, 100% of students scored proficient or better for SLO1a. For SLO1b (rhetorical aspects), 80% of students in the 471B, 471D, and 471F, scored proficient or better. With regards to critical thinking (SLO4), the results were less consistent with the majority of students in 471B and 471F scoring proficient or better while students in 471D and 471E were strong in some areas, like analysis and evaluation (SLO4b1), and weaker in others, for example SLO4a2 (conclusions and related outcomes) and SLO4b2 (specific position is imaginative and limits of position are acknowledged). Results from 372 indicate that when it comes to critical thinking, our students are starting off strong in the major. Part of that success may be explained by the type of assignment (a research paper that requires them to present and analyze data). The results for SLO1 illustrate that writing skills are weaker as they begin the major. It is especially encouraging to see those scores improve as they move on to the upper division courses. We would still like to see more students in both the 372 and 472 courses in the proficient or better range across the board, and we know that we need to continue devoting resources to developing writing and critical thinking skills. At the departmental level, we have been talking about starting a writing lab. In the short term. We want to encourage faculty to take advantage of resources available such as WRAD. We are also still discussing the possibility of offering an Introduction to Political Science course which would serve as a gateway and introduce students to the five subfields of Political Science.

## Preview of planned assessment activities for 2019-20

Our department will be participating in the General Education assessment of the Social Sciences section of GE for 2019-20. There are five Political Science courses included on the list of classes to be assessed and we will focus our assessment activities for the year on those classes. The assessment committee for 2019-20 has been configured and we will begin meeting soon to discuss how we want to assess those classes, either using the PDA model or a pre-test, post-test instrument. In addition, we are revisiting our departmental SLOs which were written in 2008. We are discussing revisions to the SLOs and plan to have an updated version available for 2019-20.

## Appendix A. Academic year 2018-2019 ASSESSMENT DATA [share of proficient or better scores]

SLO 1a: Conventions and Coherence: Refers to the mechanics of writing such spelling, grammar and sentence structure. Includes stylistic considerations such as formatting and source documentation.

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Figure 1: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO1a: Conventions and Coherence. 40% of students in 372 (2018) and 372 (2019), 100% of students in 471B and 471D, 60% of students in 471E, and 70% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 1b: Rhetorical Aspects: Refers to the purpose of the assignment, organization of thoughts, and development of an argument.

Figure 2: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO1b: Rhetorical Aspects. 30% of students in 372 (2018), 60% of students in 372 (2019), 100% of students in 471B, 90% of students in 471D, 40% of students in 471E, and 80% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 4: Critical Thinking – Students should demonstrate increasingly sophisticated skills in reading primary sources critically. Students should be able to identify, present, and support arguments. Students should be able to research and evaluate the models, methods, and analyses of others in the field of Political Science, and critically integrate and evaluate others’ work.

SLO 4a1: Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.

Figure 3: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO4a1: Issues/Problems to be Considered. 50% of students in 372 (2018), 60% of students in 372 (2019), 100% of students in 471B, 70% of students in 471D, 40% of students in 471E, and 70% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 4a2: Conclusions and related outcomes (consequences and implications) are logical and reflect student’s informed evaluation and ability to place evidence and perspectives discussed in priority order.

Figure 4: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO4a2: Conclusions and Related Outcomes. 60% of students in 372 (2018) and 372 (2019), 90% of students in 471B, 30% of students in 471D, 50% of students in 471E, and 70% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 4a3: Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation, to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.

Figure 5: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO4a3: Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation and evaluation. 60% of students in 372 (2018), 70% of students in 372 (2019), 90% of students in 471B and in 471D, 50% of students in 471E, and 70% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 4b1: Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.

Figure 6: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO4b1: Thoroughly analyzes own and others’ assumptions. 60% of students in 372 (2018) and 372 (2019), 90% of students in 471B and 471D, 50% of students in 471E, and 80% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

SLO 4b2: Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).

Figure 7: This chart illustrates the percentage of students who scored proficient or better for SLO4b2: Specific position is imaginative and limits of position are acknowledged. 60% of students in 372 (2018) and 372 (2019), 90% of students in 471B, 70% of students in 471D, 30% of students in 471E, and 80% of students in 471F scored proficient or better.

1. One committee member was unable to read papers because of family emergency so the assessment liaison read the papers assigned to that member. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)