2019-2020 Annual Program Assessment Report Guide

Please submit your report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean and 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, 2020. 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. Please do not change the date on the form, and be sure to check that your report is ADA accessible.

College: College of Social and Behavioral Science

Department: Political Science

Program: Undergraduate

Assessment liaison: Jennifer De Maio

1. Please check off whichever is applicable:

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

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

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

D. \_\_\_\_X\_\_\_\_\_ Participated in the 2019-20 assessment of General Education Section D: Social Sciences and U.S. History and Government 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 GE 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: e.g. SLO revision (especially to ensure continuing alignment between program course offerings and both program and university student learning outcomes) and the creation or modification of new assessment instruments

1. Preview of planned assessment activities for 2020-21. Include a brief description as reflective of a continuous program of ongoing assessment.

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

The Political Science department participated in the 2019-20 assessment of General Education Section D: Social Sciences and U.S. History and Government student learning outcomes. We focused on our Political Science 155 course: American Political Institutions. This Title V GE class had a DFU rate of 18% in Fall 2019 and 23% for the 2018-19 academic year and has been the focus of departmental discussions in accordance with the CSU’s Graduation Initiative 2025. Our department typically offers seven sections of POLS 155 and one section of POLS 155 Honors every semester, with class sizes ranging from 45 to 233 students.

For 2019-20, the assessment committee consisted of three full-time faculty members including the assessment coordinator. The committee determined that an effective means of implementing the GE Section D assessment directive would be to develop and administer a pre- and post-test in as many sections of POLS 155 as possible in Spring 2020 and spent Fall 2019 preparing the test which centered on concepts embodied in GE SLO 7: Social Science Goal:

**Students will understand the complexities of social relations and human experiences and the ways in which they have changed over time, as well as the nature, scope, and the systematic study of human behaviors and societies. Students will:**

**1. Explain how social scientists conduct the systematic study of social relations, human experiences and patterns of change over time;**

**2. Analyze and explain the multiple perspectives found in the social sciences that underlie debates on important historical and contemporary issues;**

**3. Apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain, and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior;**

**4. Demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, communities and societies.**

In addition, because it is a Title V class, POLS 155 meets the United States History and Local Government goal: Students will understand and reflect upon United States history, institutions, and ideals; the Constitution of the United States; and the principles of state and local government as established in California. Students will be able to describe and analyze the histories of the United States and California over significant time periods; students will be able to explain the principles and major provisions of the Constitutions of the United States and California; students will be able to compare United States and California political institutions and practices; students will be able to describe and examine the histories and development of political institutions as related to diverse peoples in the United States and California.

The 30 question pre- and post-test drafted by the assessment committee was shared with the department for feedback and the revised assessment tool (see Appendix A) was posted to the department’s Canvas site and made available to all faculty teaching POLS 155. In Spring 2020, the department offered eight sections of POLS 155. Two sections of POLS 155 implemented the pre- and post- test and submitted the results to the assessment committee for analysis. The tests were not required and students were asked to take the pre-test during the first two weeks of the semester when their knowledge of the topics presented in the course would be rudimentary. They were asked to take the post-test at the end of the semester when their knowledge would be more developed. In this way, we were able to capture one dimension of how well they met the GE SLOs.

The first class (referred to in the report as Class 1) had 116 students enrolled. The average grade in the class at the end of the semester was a C+. 105 students or 91% of the class took the pre-test; 57% took the post-test. The results of the tests for Class 1 are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Results of Pre- and Post- Test for POLS 155 Class 1**

This chart illustrates the average and median scores of students on the pre- and post- tests. The average score for the pre-test was 66% and the median was 68%. The average score for the post-test was 75% and the median score was 76%.

The second class (referred to in the report as Class 2) had 86 students enrolled in Spring 2020. The average grade in the class for Spring 2020 was a B. 79 students or 92% of the class took the pre-test; 84% took the post-test. The results for Class 2 are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Results of Pre- and Post – Test for POLS 155 Class 2**

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This chart illustrates the average and median scores of students on the pre- and post- tests. The average score for the pre-test was 58% and the median was 56%. The average score for the post-test was 79% and the median score was 83%.

In Class 1, the median score was 8% higher on the post-test; in Class 2, the median score was 28% higher on the post-test. The median scores in both classes correlated with the average final grades in the class (C+ for Class 1 and B for Class 2). The results of the pre- and post-test suggest improvement as students progressed through the course, with scores of the tests shifting from Ds and Fs on the pre-test to Bs and Cs on the post-test. The improved scores may be explained in part by the fact that the pre-test may have primed students for the post-test and they knew what questions to expect on the post-test and which concepts to focus on during the course. The scores also must be interpreted in the context of the University’s move to distance learning in mid March 2020 as the result of COVID-19. Both instructors and students had to adapt their styles of teaching and learning to the new online environment and so the results may not be reflective of an average semester. What the scores do provide, however, is an opportunity for discussion at the department level about POLS 155 and how well students are meeting the GE specific SLOs. This assessment activity represented the first time our department had considered the GE SLOs rather than our department’s own student learning outcomes. Perhaps the greatest benefit of this exercise came in the many discussions we had in our department meetings and via email about the pre- and post-test and what our expectations were for our students in the multiple sections of POLS 155 that we teach. The 2019-2020 assessment results provide another data point to help us understand the students’ experience in POLS 155 and what we as a department can be doing to reduce the DFU rates. Pre-tests like the one we developed for this exercise could be used to identify students who may need extra help and allow faculty to intervene early in the semester to offer additional support.

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## Preview of planned assessment activities for 2020-21

Assessment activities for 2020-21 will likely focus on online learning during a pandemic and on the revision of departmental SLOs which were written in 2008. We had started the discussion about revising the SLOs in 2019-20 but were unable to finalize those revisions as the result of the campus shutdown in March 2020. The assessment committee’s primary goal for 2020-21 is to complete the revisions of the department SLOs and make them available for 2021-22.

**Appendix A. Pre- and Post- Test Assessment Tool for POLS 155**

1. The first U.S. government was based on

a. The U.S. Constitution.

b. The Articles of Confederation.\*

c. The Second Continental Congress.

d. The Bill of Rights.

2. The Framers of the Constitution worked to find a balance between

a. The authority of religion and the authority of government.

b. The authority of the states and the authority of the central government.\*

c. The authority of the rich and the authority of the poor.

d. The authority of monarch and the authority of the legislature.

3. The colonists believed they were being treated unfairly by Britain because of

a. Taxation without representation.

b. Removal of power from the colonial governments.

c. Lack of colonial governing power.

d. All of the above.\*

4. The balance of power between the national government and the state and local governments is known as

a. Federalism.\*

b. Sovereignty.

c. Institutionalism.

d. Constitutionalism.

5. The state judiciary is the:

a. First branch of state government.

b. Second branch of state government.

c. Third branch of state government.\*

d. Fourth branch of state government.

6. Is political dissent protected under the nation’s current understanding of freedom of expression?

a. No, it is dangerous to American values.

b. No, it always presents a clear and present danger to the government.

c. Yes, as long as it does not directly encourage lawless actions.\*

d. Yes, it is protected in all cases.

7. Which of the following is protected by the First Amendment?

a. Flag desecration.

b. Non-obscene sexually explicit material.

c. Hate speech.

d. All of the above.\*

8. Civil rights are

a. Constitutional freedoms on which the government may not encroach.

b. Protections against unequal treatment that the government guarantees all groups.\*

c. Constitutional freedoms guaranteed for a limited segment of the population.

d. Protections against unequal treatment that the government guarantees to few groups.

9. An amendment to the Constitution that prohibits slavery throughout the United States is the

a. Twelfth Amendment.

b. Thirteenth Amendment.\*

c. Fourteenth Amendment.

d. Fifteenth Amendment.

10. The leader of the majority party who possesses the most powerful position in the House of Representatives is known as the

a. House majority leader.

b. Speaker of the House.\*

c. House minority leader.

d. Majority whip.

11. How often are members of the U.S. House of Representatives elected?

a. Every year.

b. Every two years.\*

c. Every four years.

d. Every six years.

12. The entity that selects the president and vice president, consisting of 538 electors chosen from the states and the District of Columbia based on the election outcome within each state and proportioned according to state population, is known as the

a. Caucus.

b. Primary.

c. Electoral College.\*

d. None of the above.

13. Why did the Framers only provide for limited presidential powers as expressed in the U.S. Constitution?

a. They were wary of significant executive power.\*

b. They were unsure of what they wanted in the government and made a mistake.

c. They were wary of significant legislative power.

d. All of the above.

14. A large, complex organization in which employees work within specific levels of rank and authority to carry out the policies of that organization is called

a. Bureaucracy.\*

b. Autocracy.

c. Democracy.

d. Theocracy.

15. The federal government bureaucracy is not in charge of

a. Providing services to the American public.

b. Carrying out federal policies.

c. Determining the constitutionality of the policies it carries out.\*

d. Any of the above.

16. What are the two simultaneously operating tracks of the American judiciary?

a. State courts and federal courts.\*

b. State courts and local courts.

c. Local courts and federal courts.

d. Federal criminal courts and federal civil courts.

17. Which of the following is the primary purpose of the U.S. Supreme Court?

a. To review legal questions that arise from district court trials.

b. To serve as federal trial courts that are fact-finding institutions.

c. To hear appeals from federal appellate courts and state supreme courts.\*

d. None of the above.

18. Collective opinions of large segments of the population on an issue, candidate, or public policy on which the public might be much divided and lack consensus are known as

a. Political opinion.

b. Public opinion.\*

c. Personal opinion.

d. Faction opinion.

19. The process through which a person gains political understanding and forms a set of political beliefs is known as

a. Political culture.

b. Political socialization.\*

c. Political ideas.

d. Political development.

20. Why is social networking media increasingly important to politics?

a. It provides a means for communication and mobilization, particularly among younger populations.\*

b. Its importance has been overestimated.

c. It works as a means of directly increasing voter participation by allowing people to cast their ballots online.

d. It works hard to censor unpopular political ideas.

21. The media’s ability to influence how the public perceives politicians and candidates is known as

a. Storytelling.

b. Picturing.

c. Preparing.

d. Priming.\*

22. A main goal of the civil rights movement was to

a. Break down legal barriers to racial equality.

b. Dismantle the separate system of laws under which Blacks lived.

c. Ensure equality under the law in terms of social, political, and economic issues.

d. All of the above.\*

23. Which Supreme Court ruling was of particular importance in starting the civil rights movement?

a. *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* (1842).

b. *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857).

c. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).\*

d. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

24. Which Supreme Court case established the “separate but equal” doctrine, thus ruling that racial segregation was constitutional?

a. *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857).

b. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).\*

c. *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

d. *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015).

25. Private organizations whose members act together to influence public policy to promote their common interests are known as

a. Political groups.

b. Interest groups.\*

c. Partisan groups.

d. Push groups.

26. The view that the costs of large groups collectively organizing are high and the benefits to individual members are relatively low is known as

a. The free-rider problem.

b. The logic of collective action.\*

c. The collective good.

d. The iron triangle.

27. Mass organizations that seek to elect candidates to public office and influence policy making are known as

a. Interest groups.

b. Political parties.\*

c. Social movements.

d. None of the above.

28. Since the civil rights movement, conservative views on racial and social issues have attracted many of the southern states to the

a. Democratic Party.

b. American Independent Party.

c. Republican Party.\*

d. States’ Rights Party.

29. Voters who do not designate a political party affiliation when registering to vote are known as

a. Political independents.\*

b. Political pundits.

c. Political scientists.

d. Political actors.

30. Winning of an election by the candidate who receives at least 51 percent of the vote is referred to as a

a. Majority.\*

b. Plurality.

c. Minority.

d. Lion’s share.