

Departmental and Program Assessment Annual Assessment Plan Report

Academic Year: 2011-12

Academic Unit: Politics and International Relations

Chair: Jay Barth

Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list – If your answers are “yes” a question in this section, no further explanation is necessary.

1. Is there a current assessment plan for your department, program, or general education component? Current implies that this SAP is used by the department. It does not have to be rewritten unless your assessment plan has changed. It should be on the web at <http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=7264>.

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a plan by the end of the next academic year.*

2. Does the current SAP include student learning goals? Departmental/programmatic/general education component student learning goals should be able to stand alone as a list without pages of explanatory commentary.

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*

3. Does your SAP include a list of assessment data collected yearly? Assessment data lists should be able to stand alone without pages of explanatory commentary. Additionally, collected data should be of enough value to the department that it is read yearly. If not, it is probably not of sufficient use to collect.

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce an assessment data list by the end of the next academic year.*

4. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)?

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student access to the learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*

5. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program?

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*

6. Does your SAP include direct assessments? “Direct” refers to evaluated student work.

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a direct student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*

7. Describe which indirect assessments in your assessment plan have been collected for the year and which have not. “Indirect” refers to student surveys, interviews, or opinions.

yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce an indirect student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*

Student Assessment Plan Development - Departments and programs who have a complete and current SAP should consider the next step in SAP development. *This could easily be the annual action item for your department or program (next section #5).*

1. As a next step in SAP development, departments/programs are encouraged begin working on an assessment audit to determine how student learning goals fit across the courses in the major. This could be as complicated as a full grid of student learning goals, or a single learning goal, across the courses in the major. (This has not been required of departments, but it is a recommended next step when the SAP is up to date.)

yes no *If yes, please provide the results in either in prose or as a table.*

Yearly Assessment Report – each department or program is expected to have assessment discussions for at least two hours each academic year. If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

1. What was your planned action item identified in your last report?

Our key goals for 2011-12 were:

- **Reviewing our course offerings, starting with the IR major because of our recent staffing changes in that area.**
 - **Continuing the work on POLI 100, including a distinctive assessment for that course to evaluate its efficacy and a review of the common readings/assignments across sections of the course.**
 - **Examining all departmental course evaluation forms with an eye to their value in evaluating the quality of courses as well as the courses' achievement of key learning goals in the department.**
2. Briefly summarize the topics discussed in your annual assessment meeting. (If you have not met this year, why not and when do you plan to meet?)

Our department had four meetings across the year focused partly or entirely on assessment issues: a mini-retreat in August, two meetings where the topic of our course evaluations was front and center, and our traditional April meeting where we graded senior theses and evaluated the success of our capstone experience.

3. What was the conclusion of your assessment discussion and how did the collected assessment data inform your conclusion? Specifically describe any curricular or programmatic changes that have been made that were based, at least in part, on the data in your SAP.

In 2011-12, we made significant curricular alterations in our IR major, altering our foundational requirements to include the option of Theories in Comparative Politics for students with a

particular interest in that area. We also have altered our course offerings to reflect staff changes. Finally, we offered a new optional research methods course to our offerings to reflect some (hopefully growing) interest in students for more sophisticated quantitative methods work.

We also developed a course evaluation form for POLI 100 centered on the distinctive learning goals of that introductory course. In addition, we developed a separate “post-test” for that course to ascertain whether the course is fulfilling its aims. This “post-test” will not be included in faculty members’ evaluation materials since it is a departmental goal.

We continue work on altering our departmental course evaluation forms for courses outside of POLI 100. That will be one of the foci of this year’s departmental retreat.

4. What are the plans for improving student learning in your unit?

At this summer’s retreat (in June), we will examine results from our senior survey as well as the initial results from POLI 100 with an eye to alterations in how we address student learning goals that are not presently being consistently achieved. Finally, we will complete work on the more general course evaluation form.

Based on our discussion at the April meeting, we feel our capstone experience is operating well following a major revision the previous year although we will review the syllabus for that seminar course to be certain that we are using the early part of the fall semester as effectively as possible.

Finally, we will discuss several items related to the IR major at our departmental retreat with possible curricular reform ramifications:

--Should POLI 250 be a prerequisite to POLI 251/271?

--How do we handle our “study abroad” requirement for the major in an era of increasing international students and increasing availability of non-course Odyssey experiences?

5. Define at least one new action item for your unit that will be a goal of your assessment discussions next year?

(This action item could be to work on the SAP or on the assessment audit to correlate student learning goals with specific courses, described above.)

See #4.