

Departmental and Program Assessment 2014-2015
Annual Assessment Plan Basic Update

Academic Year: 2014-2015

Academic Unit: Politics & International Relations

Chair: Daniel Whelan

Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list

1. Have any changes been made to your program's student assessment plan or student learning goals?
Your recent version should be on the web at
<http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=7264>. If you have made changes, then attach a copy of the new plan or goals.
☐ yes ☒ no
2. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)? If not, then this needs to occur during the next academic year.
☒ yes ☐ no
3. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program? If not, then this will be considered as an action plan for the coming year.
☒ yes ☐ no

Student Assessment Plan Development - Departments and programs who have a complete and current SAP should consider the next step in SAP development.

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. Sometimes the term “scaffolding” is used to describe this process. 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.) Has your program already done this?

☐ yes ☒ no *If yes, please provide any **new** results in either in prose or as a table. If no, then this could be the next annual action plan for your program.*

- Although we have marked “no” here, this is on our agenda for the coming year.

Yearly Assessment Report – each department or program is expected to have assessment discussions for at least two hours each academic year. ***As we move toward the next NCA-HLC evaluation, we need to work on documenting these meetings.*** If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

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

Continue to discuss how to best scaffold our curriculum, especially with reference to the connections between the courses that are common to all of our majors: POLI 100 *Issues in Politics*; POLI 400 *Research Methods*; and POLI 497 *Senior Research Seminar*.

2. Briefly summarize the topics discussed in your annual assessment meeting.

With respect to the curriculum, the addition of Tim Cloyd to our Department last year has prompted us to reconsider the IR major a bit, as Tim has begun to offer courses in the area of international security studies. In addition, we now have a full, four-year data set from our Senior Exit surveys, which is giving us an opportunity to really assess the structure of both majors: the role/purpose of POLI 100; how coursework at the lower levels scaffolds to the upper levels, and have a deep dive examination of our research/capstone model/sequence.

We spent a long time discussing POLI 100 and plan to implement minor changes to strengthen the shared components of that course, across all sections moving forward.

Our Exit Surveys are pointing to a need to improve in two key areas, throughout the Department: support/guidance for career discernment/opportunities/professional development; and increased attention to enhancement of oral/verbal skills.

Our discussions about the capstone (POLI 497) were largely focused on what areas for improvement or wholesale revisions we may need to consider moving forward – not just in that particular course, but with respect to the research methods piece of the curriculum. We are of the opinion that while what we currently do works great for some students, we need to make it work well for all of our students, to the extent possible.

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.

Much of this is covered in #2 above – we are guided in great part by the data we’re collecting on POLI 100 (pre/post-tests; analysis of responses to selected, common questions on the POLI 100 student evaluation form; our grading of Senior Theses and process for determining who will receive Departmental honors/awards (which includes interviews with student candidates); and the Senior Exit Surveys.

4. Define one new action item for your assessment discussions next year.

There will be more than one – revamping certain elements of the IR major will be one; but a larger discussion about our overall curriculum, and especially the POLI 100 – Research Methods – Capstone sequence/scaffolding will be central.

5. Does your department or program have a summary assessment file in the chair’s office? During external visits, random departments or programs will be selected by NCA-HLC to show and discuss assessment activities.

Not yet.