

Political Science

College of Liberal Arts

Table 4.1 Outcomes Assessment Implementation Summary

	Academic Year		
	2010-2011	2011-2012	
Assessment information collected	<p>1) <i>survey of graduates</i></p> <p>2) <i>senior theses were reviewed by two faculty per thesis and the rubric adopted by the department was used to examine performance across thesis components</i></p>	<p>1) <i>survey of graduates</i></p> <p>2) <i>senior theses</i></p>	
Conclusions drawn from the information collected above and how are faculty collectively involved in drawing conclusions	<p>1) <i>2 exit surveys were completed and students reported satisfaction with courses and faculty. One suggested more help in post-graduate placement.</i></p> <p>2) <i>9 senior theses were reviewed and the key challenges involved writing skills and effectively employing</i></p>		

Submitted by: Jonathan Rosenberg

	<p><i>theory from two subfields of political science</i></p> <p><i>Faculty reviewed an analysis of outcomes and commented on conclusions and recommendations through email. A year-end meeting will be held to discuss results.</i></p>		
<p>Curricular changes resulting from conclusions drawn above</p>	<p><i>Faculty will insure that thesis-writing students have taken all pre-requisites.</i></p>		

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Department of Political Science, BA program 2012 Outcomes Assessment

Data included: Senior theses (PS 499) and exit surveys

1. Senior theses

Using the rubric adopted by the department to review senior theses, each thesis (N=9) was reviewed by two faculty members who were not involved with the original production of the thesis. Theses were reviewed for components related to writing proficiency (see table 1). We calculated descriptive statistics for each component of the thesis assignment in order to understand areas for improvement.

Students consistently performed well in the title page, introduction, mechanics and usage; there was more variability in scores for the following: thesis statement, the body of the text, the development of the idea, conclusion, citations and the bibliography. Average scores are reported in table 1.

Table 1. Average scores across thesis components

Thesis components	Average score
Title page	5/5
Thesis statement	4/5
Introduction	21/25
Body	21/25
Development of the idea	8/10
Conclusion	8/10
Mechanics	4/5
Usage	4/5
Citation	4/5
Bibliography	10/10
Total score	84/100* (mode=90)

*The average score was low due to a few outlying scores, so we include the mode score to reflect that 8 thesis reviews scored ≥ 90 .

Each reviewer also wrote comments as to the merit of the work, problematic elements and recommendations for the thesis course in general. Several reviewers noted weak argumentation skills and a majority of students did not effectively employ theory. The following recommendations were noted:

- The department should consider eliminating the requirement that students draw from two subfields of Political Science, as few students are able to combine fields effectively and at least one outstanding thesis from this batch effectively argued his case using only one subfield.

- Students that are weaker writers will require more intense supervision, and so the workload of supervising theses should be better distributed across faculty
- The skill of argumentation and development of the idea should be reinforced through some sort of writing refresher during or before the thesis course is taken. (The department could require students to have an initial writing sample evaluated by the writing center or could require a one-credit seminar course taken before the thesis semester to introduce students to independent research. It would be important to have the course before 499 begins, because students often overload their last semester with too many courses.)
- It would be helpful to know what the original grade was. If all faculty evaluated their 499 theses using the review rubric, we would have three reviews of each thesis to evaluate. For low-scoring theses in particular, it would also be helpful to have faculty note if revisions were required but not completed
- A few faculty members on campus require writing intensive papers to be of publishable quality in a journal of undergraduate research. We could use a similar journal as a model for research design and as a writing goal for students.

Conclusion from review of senior theses: student writers often have difficulty with effective argumentation and theory and this translates into lower scores relating to the thesis statement and the development of the idea. The department could adopt strategies to help students develop research design skills and reinforce effective writing skills. Additionally, faculty should consider eliminating the requirement for two subfields.

2. Exit surveys

Two exit surveys were received. Both students were satisfied with the faculty and courses available. One asked for more assistance from faculty in post-graduation placement and one suggested more simulations and active learning activities in class. Both of them suggested that the department use 100X to recruit students to the major.

Recommendation from exit surveys: Digitize the survey to distribute by email or on the department's Facebook page once per year.