

## Program Assessment Report (PAR) on Completed Assessment

**Year 1 [2014/2015] ~ Program: \_\_\_\_\_Political Science \_\_\_\_\_**

1. Which set of PLOs was assessed this academic year (identify each PLO)?

1. To demonstrate proficiency in one or more of the core bodies of knowledge contained in the basic subfields of the discipline.
- 2.
- 3.

2. Describe the assessment activities below. Please provide enough detail to convey the nature of the activities.

Fifteen students completed our senior exit survey (indirect measure) and seven students completed the ETS exam for Political Science (direct measure).

3. What were the results of the assessment activities?

We were pleased with the response rate for the senior exit survey (15 out of ~20). However, we need to figure out a better system for having our majors complete the ETS. Gentle prodding (emails and personal pleas) and bribery (pizza) have been insufficient to ensure participation.

In terms of the ETS exam, six out of seven students scored in the top half of all students nationwide who completed the exam between September 2011 and June 2014. The overall score ranges from 120 to 200. The average score for the seven exams was 162, the 69<sup>th</sup> percentile. We offered the exam to our class of 2014 as well. While only four students completed the exam that year, they also averaged 162.

| Student No. | Score | Overall Percentile Rank | US Government | Comparative | International Relations |
|-------------|-------|-------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1           | 170   | 88%                     | 72            | 73          | 63                      |
| 2           | 168   | 86%                     | 73            | 63          | 60                      |
| 3           | 163   | 74%                     | 68            | 53          | 69                      |
| 4           | 163   | 74%                     | 57            | 70          | 63                      |
| 5           | 157   | 58%                     | 60            | 63          | 52                      |
| 6           | 157   | 58%                     | 60            | 60          | 57                      |
| 7           | 153   | 47%                     | 50            | 63          | 49                      |

In our program, students are required to take American Government I and II, International Relations, Comparative Government, Research Methods, and Modern or Classical Political Theory. These introductory courses provide our students will a broad based introduction to the field of political science. We do not, however, require our students to concentrate in a single subfield or to take upper-division courses across multiple sub-fields. We will discuss the results of the ETS as a department in the fall, but as of today, we are satisfied with our students' performance. The students still perform rather well even

though we do not structure their upper division courses. However, we would like to continue to offer the exam in the future to get a better sense of how well we, and our students, believe the ETS captures what we want our students to learn upon completion of our program.

Our PLO #1 asked that students demonstrate proficiency in one or more of the core bodies of knowledge; their performance on the ETS indicates that they have done so. All seven students scored in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile in at least one of the three areas for which we have individual scores.

The ETS report for the seven students also provided a Departmental Summary of Assessment Indicators which provides the mean percent correct for clusters of questions that pertain to a subfield within a major field of study.

| Assessment Indicator Number | Assessment Indicator Title     | Mean Percent Correct | Overall Percentile Rank |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1                           | Analytical & Critical Thinking | 68                   | 89 <sup>th</sup>        |
| 2                           | Methodology                    | 39                   | 24 <sup>th</sup>        |
| 3                           | Political Thought              | 57                   | 66 <sup>th</sup>        |

Our students did well on Analytical & Critical Thinking questions with 68 percent correct (89<sup>th</sup> percentile) and above average on Political Thought with 57 percent (66<sup>th</sup> percentile). They performed below average on Methodology-oriented questions with 39 percent (24<sup>th</sup> percentile). These scores are about what we would expect following students' completion of coursework in political science at the University of Scranton.

We do a very good job promoting Analytical and Critical Thinking-oriented questions in all our courses. We believe our offerings on political theory and the University's required philosophy courses help to explain above average performance on Political Thought. Finally, our department offers a single course on Research Methods. Research Methods is a Writing Intensive- and Quantitative Reasoning-designated course that introduces students to research design, basic statistical analysis, and some qualitative research methods.

When asked to evaluate the extent of their knowledge on a 1 to 5 on the Senior Exit Survey, students gave themselves strong scores in American Government (4.33), Comparative Politics (4.13), International Relations (4.13), and Public Policy (4.07). Political Philosophy (3.53) and Research Methods (3.53) scored significantly lower. Research Methods has scored near the bottom in 2012 (3.71) and 2014 (3.7). Political Philosophy scored poorly in 2012 (3.43), but not in 2014 (4.1).

4. Where applicable, outline the steps you will take to make improvements to the program based on the results of assessment activities identified in #3.

In addition to the seven graduates who completed the ETS in 2015, we had four 2014 students complete the ETS last year. While we do not want to jump to conclusions based upon eleven exams, a pattern has begun to emerge where students, on average, perform better in American Government and Comparative Government than International Relations. In many ways, that is not surprising. We offer more electives in American and Comparative than we do in International Relations. In the fall, we will discuss whether it makes sense as a department to add any course(s) in traditional International Relations areas of

International Organizations, International Conflict, International Cooperation, International Political Economy, International law, or Theories of International Relations to the rotation.

We will continue to debate how better to incorporate research methods skills into our curriculum. The department has begun to discuss the creation of a senior capstone course that would help students to develop their research methods skills. However, that is one of many proposed formats for a capstone course that might, at some point, be adopted. Another option would be to move to a two –sequence research methods course. If we did so, it would most likely have to be as part of the hiring process. None of us are trained methodologists.

5. Are there any new resources needed to make program improvements? If so, please include the resources and provide justification for each in the Budget section of the Annual Report.

In the short-term, we simply need the Dean's Office to continue to fund our students' ETS exams. In the medium term, we hope that the University would support our need to replace our political philosopher who is retiring in two years. Political philosophy is a key sub-field of political science and the authors that students encounter in these courses – Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, etc. – are the people that one never forgets. They help you to become better citizens and to foster lifelong learning.

\*Submit to Ms. Rebecca Haggerty ([Rebecca.haggerty@scranton.edu](mailto:Rebecca.haggerty@scranton.edu)) with a notation in your Annual Report that "Program Assessment Report(s) (PAR) has been submitted under separate cover."