

**Assessment of CJBA 110/111, CJBA 220, and CJBA 340  
Spring 2015**

**Department of Criminal Justice  
John Jay College of Criminal Justice**

## SUMMARY

Pursuant to the department assessment plan, this report assesses the introductory course sequence, CJBA 110 and CJBA 111 (Major Problems in Criminal Justice I and II), which were offered for the third time during the 2014-5 academic year, and CJBA 220 (Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Crime & Justice), which was offered for the second time, and CJBA 340 (Research Methods), which was offered for the first time. This was the third year of operation for the revised criminal justice BA.

### CJBA 110/11

To assess these courses directly, the course faculty distributed an assessment instrument at the beginning of CJBA 110 and then distributed the same one at the end of CJBA 111. The instrument was designed to assess the specific skills targeted by the two courses. Scores on the post-test were significantly higher than scores on the pretest. This finding was consistent and statistically significant across three different types of tests (i.e. a one-sample t-test, a two-sample t-test, and a paired-samples t-test): whether comparing the two sets of scores as a whole (some students took the pre-test but not the post-test, and vice-versa) or comparing individual students' scores on the pre-test to those same students' scores on the post-test (a within-student comparison), the effect is positive and significant. We also linked questions with course outcomes and found significant gains. We investigated multiple explanations for these findings and concluded that the positive results are most likely due to the effect of class instruction. As of the time of this writing, the student evaluations were not yet available for these courses. We will supplement this report with an indirect assessment of the courses using the standardized student evaluations when they become available.

### CJBA 220

CJBA 220 is an essential course for exposing students to the racial and related ethical dimensions of criminal justice problems. We assessed the course through the final exam, which was developed by instructors in accordance with principles set forth in our assessment plan. The instructors evaluated the exam in relation to the specific learning outcomes of the major. We found substantial gains.

### CJBA 340

The conclusion of CJBA 340 is a critical point for assessing a student's capacity to design and carry out the capstone research experience. We assessed the course through the final exam.

## **CJBA 110/111**

### **Introduction**

As proposed under the Criminal Justice BA Assessment Plan (the “Assessment Plan”), the department of criminal justice performed a direct assessment of student progress through the introductory sequence of CJBA 110 and 111 (Introduction to Major Problems in Criminal Justice I and II), as it has for the past two years.

### **Direct Assessment**

The direct assessment of these courses consisted of two parts: a standardized assessment instrument distributed at the beginning of CJBA 110 (interchangeably, “pre-assessment” or “pre-test”) and the same instrument distributed near the end of CJBA 111 (hereafter “post-assessment” or “post-test”). This procedure was followed in order to provide some rough measure of inputs and a point of comparison.

As outlined in the Assessment Plan, the instrument was divided into two parts: a multiple choice and a short essay section. Students could earn a maximum of ten points on the multiple-choice section and fifteen points on the short essay. The multiple choice and essay items were developed using non-esoteric type questions that tap the student’s abilities to think through and formulate their answers using analytic, moral or ethical reasoning. The multiple-choice questions were graded at one point per correct answer. The essay questions were graded using a rubric that assigns between one and three points for each of the following:

1. The answer states an ethical dimension of the problem.
2. The statement offers a framework for thinking about the problem (utilitarianism, retribution, etc.)
3. The answer displays familiarity with prior research.
4. The answer indicates how future research would shed light on the relevant issue.
5. The answer presents a cogent, clearly written, and grammatical argument.

In keeping with the mission of CJBA 110/11, the instrument was designed to assess students’ acquaintance with policy questions, their familiarity with the use of data, and their ability to critically assess institutions and their functions. In general, it also assessed their familiarity with the major institutions of criminal justice. In the aggregate, a maximum of 25 points could be earned. The test was reviewed and revised by our curriculum and assessment committee, and will be each subsequent year.

The same instrument was used in both cases to establish a consistent baseline for tracking student progress throughout the two courses and to ensure that the post-assessment was no more difficult or easier than the pre-assessment, as such differences could call into question the validity of the comparison. The assessment instruments were distributed during regularly-scheduled instructional time, at the beginning of class. While the students were not informed beforehand that they would be asked to fill out the instrument (or even that they would eventually have to fill one out at all), they were informed at the time of test-taking that the test was purely for assessment purposes and would not impact their grades. Students performed significantly better on the post-test than the pre-test.

The tests were blindly scored by a pair of graduate students. Student information was redacted—students were identified solely by student ID#. Only students who were present in class on the day the test was administered took the test. No make-up was given.

**Table 1. Pre-test and Post-Test Scores.**

Student Number	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Student Number	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score
Student #1	150	205	Student #35	135	180
Student #2	140	210	Student #36	165	200
Student #3	130		Student #37	140	
Student #4	150	220	Student #38	140	195
Student #5	140		Student #39	140	180
Student #6	240	200	Student #40	210	180
Student #7	135	190	Student #41	190	190
Student #8	165	270	Student #42	120	155
Student #9	170	235			
Student #10	155	245			
Student #11	260	190			
Student #12	300				
Student #13	170				
Student #14	180	230			
Student #15	250	270			
Student #16	105	180			
Student #17	80				
Student #18	130	110			
Student #19	145	225			
Student #20	145				
Student #21	170	220			
Student #22	165	225			
Student #23	140	170			
Student #24	115	135			
Student #25	145	80			
Student #26	140	155			
Student #27	155	190			
Student #28	175	185			
Student #29	145	185			
Student #30	155	125			
Student #31	180	220			
Student #32	150	150			
Student #33	135	190			
Student #34	170	150			

The students averaged 160 on the pre-test and 178.9 on the post-test, representing a mean gain of 18.9 points, which was significant at the 99% confidence level. Among the 35 students who took both the pre-test and the post-test, all but four posted gains.

### **Link to Learning Outcomes**

CJBA 110 and 111 have the following learning objectives:

1. Students will become familiar with the major institutions of the criminal justice system including the courts, corrections and policing systems.
2. Students will become facile with using empirical evidence.
3. Students will be comfortable debating policy issues, both on ethical and level and by evaluating empirical evidence.
4. Students will learn how to critique research design by examining empirical evidence and discussing published studies.
5. Students will learn about categories of crimes and punishments.
6. Students will understand the differences between crime prevention and control, and will explore how best to reduce offending behavior through multiple approaches.
7. Students will acquire a basic vocabulary and be exposed to the contemporary criminal justice system; the history theory and practice of the corrections system; and the major precepts of criminological theory.

Pre and post test questions linked to learning outcomes according to the map below in Table 2. We recoded the post-test according to learning outcomes, defining satisfactory performance was answering 70% of the applicable multiple choice questions correctly, and receiving 70 out of 100 points on the applicable essay question.

**Table 2. Percentage of Students Satisfying Learning Outcomes.**

Learning Outcome	Exam Question ('x' denotes essay question)	Percentage of Students Satisfying Learning Outcome
1	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, x1, x2, x3	97.2
2	1, 3, 6, 10, x1, x2, x3	91.2
3	2, 5, 7, x1, x2, x3	97.2
4	3, 5, 6, x3	91.2
5	7, x1, x2, x3	83.7
6	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, x1, x2, x3	91.2
7	1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, x1, x2, x3	93.3

### **Indirect Assessment**

Student evaluations for the 201-4-5 course were unavailable at the time of this writing. We will supplement the report when they become available.

### **Analysis and Recommendations**

We found substantial gains for all but one student participating in the pre-test and post-test. We were most heartened by the gains on essay scores, which correlate closely with the major's goals of cultivating critical thinking and clarity of expression. After communal reflection on last year's assessment report, we held a daylong retreat dedicated to teaching writing. As a result of that discussion, all of our faculty members have pursued writing intensive certification and we are greatly expanding the number of writing intensive sections that we offer.

## **CJBA 220**

CJBA 220 is an essential course for exposing students to the racial and related ethical dimensions of criminal justice problems. We assessed the course through the final exam, which was developed by instructors in accordance with the principles set forth in our assessment plan. It measures the specific learning outcomes of the major, as indicated below, and will be evaluated according to the following rubric:

Learning outcome 1: Up to 10 points awarded if the answer states an ethical dimension of the problem. Up to 10 additional points awarded if the statement offers a cogent framework for thinking about the problem (utilitarianism, retribution, etc.)

Learning outcome 2: Up to 10 points awarded if the answer articulates a racial or ethnic component to the problem. Up to 10 additional points awarded if the answer offers a cogent framework for thinking how that problem might be resolved.

Learning outcome 3: Up to 10 points awarded if the answer shows a familiarity with prior research. Up to 10 additional points if the answer indicates the deficiency of the prior research.

Learning outcome 4: Up to 10 points awarded if the answer indicates how the question could be further studied. Up to 10 additional points if the answer indicates how that design might be implemented.

Learning outcome 5: Up to 10 points awarded for a minimally competently written easy. Up to 20 points awarded for a well written answers.

A maximum of 100 points can be earned on each component part of the exam. We view a score of 90-100 as exceptional; 75-89 as satisfactory, and 75 or less as unsatisfactory. The test will be annually reviewed and revised by our department curriculum committee. Results are presented on the following page.

### **Table 3. Cohort Scores**

Student #	ED	EDF	REC	RECF	FPR	DEF	FS	DES	W1	W2	Total
1	10	10	10	10	8	8	6	6	10	8	86
2	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	5	10	8	83
3	8	8	7	8	6	9	8	9	9	7	79
4	7	7	8	6	7	6	9	7	5	6	68
5	10	10	10	10	10	8	9	9	10	10	96
6	9	10	10	10	9	9	8	9	9	9	92
7	6	8	8	8	8	5	5	8	4	8	67
8	8	8	8	8	9	7	7	8	8	9	80
9	9	9	9	7	6	10	5	7	5	8	76

**KEY:**

Student Number = SD  
 Ethical Dimension = ED  
 ED Framework = EDF  
 Race/Ethnic Component = REC  
 REC Framework = RECF  
 Familiar w. Prior Research = FPR  
 Deficiency = DEF  
 Further Study = FS  
 Design = DES  
 Writing 1 = W1

**Analysis and Recommendations.**

The course was overall successful, as 8 out of 9 students (88.9%) who took the exam received satisfactory scores. The students were extremely successful at stating ethical dimensions of problems and approaches to thinking through how to resolve them, as well as racial and ethical dimensions of the problem and a framework for resolution. Mean scores on each individual outcome approached 9 out of 10. These are substantial successes as these outcomes relate directly to goals of the major. Students were also generally successful showing familiarity with prior research. As with last year's assessment, the weakest results came in analyzing how questions might be studied empirically. In part based on last year's assessment we have increased our statistics requirement to a year-long sequence and we are also developing an advanced research methods course.

## CJBA 340

In our assessment plan, we identified the conclusion of CJBA 340 as a critical point for assessing a student's capacity to design and carry out the capstone research experience. We assessed the course through the final exam, which was developed by the instructor in accordance with the principles set forth in the assessment plan. The course instructor assessed the student based on the final two essay questions. This assessment is principally a measure of progress toward learning outcomes 3 and 4. The assessment criteria map to learning outcomes as follows.

Assessment Criteria	Learning Outcome
1. The answer shows an understanding of basic statistical operations such as mean, median, and mode.	4
2. The answer shows an understanding of correlation and regression.	4
3. The answer shows an ability to examine the strengths and weaknesses of a research design.	4
4. The answer shows an ability to improve upon a research design.	4
5. The answer shows an ability to interpret the data and marshal the data to assess the problem on which it bears.	3

Subscores were calculated to reflect student progress to individual learning goals. Scoring these outcomes at two points each, a maximum of 10 points can be earned. In the aggregate, we view a score of 10 as exceptional; 8-9 as satisfactory, and 7 or fewer as unsatisfactory.



## CJBA 340 RESULTS

	Answer Shows an understanding of basic statistics operations, such as mean, median, and mode	Answer shows an understanding of correlation and regression	Answer shows an ability to examine the strengths and weaknesses of a research design	Answer shows an ability to improve upon a research design	Answer shows an ability to interpret the data and marshal the data to assess the problem on which it bears	<b>AVERAGE</b>
Student 1	7	6	6	5	6	<b>6</b>
Student 2	8	7	7	6	7	<b>7</b>
Student 3	10	9	9	8	9	<b>9</b>
Student 4	8	7	6	6	7	<b>6.8</b>
Student 5	9	9	9	9	9	<b>9</b>
Student 6	9	8	8	8	7	<b>8</b>
Student 7	9	9	9	8	8	<b>8.6</b>
Student 8	8	6	7	6	8	<b>7</b>
Student 9	9	8	7	6	6	<b>7.2</b>
Student 10	7	7	6	6	6	<b>6.4</b>
Student 11	6	6	6	7	6	<b>6.2</b>

### **Analysis and Recommendations.**

While the majority of the students received satisfactory scores, we noted as in prior assessments of other courses that marshaling data and articulating research designs continue to be a problem area for our students. Again, as noted above, we have changed our statistics requirement from a semester to a year in part because of these results and we are in the process of adding an additional research methods course. We also at a day-long retreat, commitment all our instructors to requiring students to work with original data in all of their lesson