

**CJBS MAJOR ASSESSMENT PLAN:
THE SECOND FIVE YEARS**

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Introduction

Nationally, criminal justice programs have seen a surge in popularity from students excited by stories covered in the popular media and thus interested in exploring careers in the field of criminal justice. By far the most popular major at John Jay College of Criminal Justice is the Criminal Justice Bachelor of Science (Institutional Theory and Practice).

This major offers students a complete and comprehensive understanding of all institutions of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections) from both academic and practitioner perspectives. Overall, the many contemporary challenges of criminal justice in practice require that students are able to understand their knowledge within the framework of race, gender, and ethnicity. Students are also required to develop a solid base of critical thinking skills (particularly in research methods and statistics) in order to be able to be effective consumers or producers of evidence-based policy and practice in the field. As such, the major prepares students to be able to attend graduate or professional schools while also being able to embark on a practical career in criminal justice.

In sum, the learning objectives for the major are:

- Describe from a historical and systemic perspective criminal justice institutions and how they relate to each other;
- Understand the mechanisms, dynamics, and situational context of crime and criminal behavior, and methods of prevention and treatment;
- Apply the theories related to the policy and practice of the criminal justice systems;
- Analyze the operations and administration of criminal justice institutions in the context of public discourse.

The first five year assessment of the major demonstrated very clearly mixed outcomes: while on the one hand, students were demonstrating knowledge of key concepts and the systemic perspective of criminal justice institutions, they struggled to apply what they were learning or think critically about it. For example, legal reasoning did not adequately grow into a sufficient ability to think critically about fact patterns and apply established rules to them. On the research methods side, students continue to struggle with the demands of operationalizing

variables or critically evaluating evidence-based practices right into their senior years.

Modifications to the second five year assessment plan have been made to try to establish further insights into how CJBS curriculum delivery can be adapted developmentally to improve these important skills for our future students and criminal justice professionals.

Overview of the CJBS Assessment Process and Philosophy (From first five year plan to second)

The Department of Law, Police Science, and Criminal Justice Administration takes assessment very seriously. Two factors make assessment in this department very challenging: 1) the large number of adjunct faculty and core course section; and, 2) the extremely large number of CJBS majors (over 5000). However, the CJBS major has developed a very rigorous methodology that ensures the most reliable and valid measurement of student outcomes possible. Courses with many sections would be randomly sampled each year for inclusion within the study

Rather than taking convenience samples of student work in the studied courses, LPS continues to ask professors to select a “random” sample of students large enough to be considered representative based upon a review of the overall class sizes. By requesting random samples from the participating professors, the assessment attempts to minimize the bias or measurement error common to these types of assessment activities.

Each professor is provided with a detailed rubric for grading final assignments or exams according to the specific course objectives (see Appendix A). Upon completion of the rubric for the selected study sample, professors hand them in, along with the original student work to be assigned to an independent reviewer for reliability checking. Where two scores differ, the mean of the two is taken as the final score. It should be stressed that by necessity, the assessment rubric measured only student attainment of the specific course level objectives. These outcomes were later linked to the overall program goals that they matched.

The second five year assessment plan will of course represent the sequence and content of the newly revised major.

The assessment plan for the coming five year cycle will address these issues by including a wider variety of assessment methods in each cycle, including qualitative methods such as focus groups. All participating instructors will also be met with at the beginning of the semester to agree upon a universal final assessment method for the course (such as a common essay question or exam that addresses all of the course goals sufficiently to match clearly to the larger program, Additionally, the true “randomness” of the methods used by each professor cannot be really known. In the second cycle, professors in selected sections will be offered a list of students randomly selected from the rosters to be included in the semester’s study.

As the department has begun to include more “closing the loop” activities and implementation of proposed actions following assessments in the last two years, there is reason to expect improvement in outcomes to result over time. The new five year plan offers room to “re-measure” and document changes following the implementation of proposed actions longitudinally over time.

There is a need to better capture the variation in content delivery across core classes picked up indirectly in the last two years of assessment. To do this, the new assessment plan will implement new indirect methods such as student surveys, focus groups, and faculty surveys to identify concepts and content delivered in a semester. More qualitative analysis of course syllabi will also be conducted in the new plan goals as well).

Five Year CJBS Major Assessment Cycle By Academic Year

The next five year assessment plan for the CJBS major is scaffolded to allow for the direct assessment of overall program goals (as opposed to just focusing on the class level) developmentally across the major. This will help faculty to better understand how the major can be improved to address the issues with critical thinking and application cited above. The specific course objectives will continue to be assessed each year and loosely matched to the overall program goals. The difference in this new plan will be combining additional direct and indirect measurement of particular goals as well.

Year One (2015-2016 Academic Year)

PROGRAM GOAL: Describe from a historical and systemic perspective criminal justice institutions and how they relate to each other.

Courses for Study

CJBS 101

COR 101

Assessment Data Collection Strategies:

- Rubrics to measure in-class outcome attainment related to individual course objective (with either a common exam or graded final papers)
- End of semester focus groups with CJBS freshman students selected across sections to measure the program goal's requisite basic understanding of the major components of the criminal justice system and how they relate to one another
- Freshman class satisfaction survey (administered through Blackboard)

Year Two (2016-2017 Academic Year)

PROGRAM GOALS: Understand the mechanisms, dynamics, and situational context of crime and criminal behavior, and methods of prevention and treatment;

Courses for Study

CJBS 250

LAW 203

COR 320

COR 201

Assessment Data Collection Strategies:

- Rubrics to measure in-class outcome attainment related to individual course objective (with either a common exam or graded final papers)

- End of year focus groups with sophomore students involving the application of theories to specific criminal justice policies

Year Three (2017-2018 Academic Year)

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Apply the theories related to the policy and practice of the criminal justice systems;
- Analyze the operations and administration of criminal justice institutions in the context of public discourse.

Courses for study

CJBS 300

CJBS 415

Assessment Data Collection Strategies:

- Rubrics to measure in-class outcome attainment related to individual course objective (with either a common exam or graded final papers)
- One page policy analysis briefs from randomly selected senior students
- One page evaluation design from randomly selected seniors
- Policy analysis focus group session with CJBS seniors

Years Four and Five (2018-2019 Academic Year)

The final two years of the CJBS assessment will examine the following key outcome variables:

- Overall profile of student retention and graduation;
- Quality and type of student participation in the CJBS internship option;
- Quality and type of student mentoring throughout their experience in the major;
- Quality and type of CJBS major job attainment following graduation;

- Assessment of individual course outcomes will be conducted in at least two CJBS electives selected based upon a review of key findings from the first four years

A final report will be prepared at the end of year five which summarizes all key findings from across the five year plan. A Research Brief with an executive summary will also be disseminated to all department faculty and the UCASC.