



INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE (BA)

Program Learning Assessment

2011-2015 Assessment Planning Cycle Key Findings and Proposed Actions

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International Criminal Justice (BA)

Mission

The mission of the International Criminal Justice (ICJ) Major is to advance students' knowledge of crime and crime control from a global and comparative perspective. The Major seeks to: (a) prepare undergraduate students with the knowledge, skills and perspectives to compete for careers in the fields of international criminal justice; (b) prepare students for advanced work in graduate and professional schools and; (c) enable students to become both producers and critical consumers of social science research on topics pertaining to the globalization and transnationalization of crime and crime control over time. The Major is interdisciplinary but provides a series of unique, required courses to ensure that students gain the descriptive, analytical and methodological knowledge to fulfill this mission

Assessment Philosophy

The purpose of outcomes assessment is to enhance the learning experiences of current and future students. The ICJ faculty¹ has developed four learning objectives, described in the following section, that reflect the standard of knowledge and skills among professionals and scholars in the fields of international criminal justice. Our assessment program is designed to generate qualitative and quantitative information that will be used to identify the Major's strengths and weaknesses. That, in turn, allows us to identify areas where improvements to our program might be necessary or desirable. Once implemented, the changes can be examined for effectiveness through future outcomes assessment. In this respect, assessment builds upon the current practice of program examination and curricular revision in the ICJ Major.

The four learning objectives listed in the following section are assessed across the four courses that comprise the central requirements of the Major. Three of these courses are ICJ-prefix courses, i.e. ICJ101: Introduction to International Criminal Justice, ICJ310: Foundations of Scholarship in International Criminal Justice and ICJ401: Capstone Seminar in International Criminal Justice. The fourth course, which is taught by the Sociology Department (SOC341: International Criminology), is critical in developing students' understanding of the range of theories used by scholars in the fields of international criminal justice. These four courses are taken by all ICJ majors (note that transfer students may get credit for other requirements within the Major, but are unlikely to get credit for these courses) and are indispensable to the fulfillment of the Major's mission. Given that they are also distributed across the Major (i.e. one 100-level course, two 300-level courses and a 400-level course) they provide an appropriate range of points to assess learning within the Major. Moreover, as set out in the below table, these courses provide an opportunity to assess the all of the Major's learning objectives, although different courses are more apt to assess some objectives than others.

¹ As an interdisciplinary major, ICJ is administered by a coordinator who chairs a governance committee. That committee comprises the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, as well as representatives from the African American Studies, Criminal Justice, Latino/a Studies, Law, Police Science and Criminal Justice Administration, Political Science and Sociology departments.

<i>Learning objectives</i>	<i>Courses appropriate for direct assessment</i>
1. Descriptive knowledge	ICJ101, SOC341, ICJ401
2. Analytical skills	ICJ310, SOC341, ICJ401
3. Research skills	ICJ310, ICJ401
4. Communication skills	ICJ310, SOC341, ICJ401

Learning Objectives

The ICJ Major has four learning objectives:

1. Students will gain *descriptive knowledge* and will be able to:
 - a. define international and transnational crimes;
 - b. summarize national, bilateral and multilateral responses to such crimes, and;
 - c. describe theories for understanding crime and crime control from a global and comparative perspective.
2. Students will develop *analytical skills* to:
 - a. use theory to interpret and explain empirical developments in the fields of international criminal justice, and;
 - b. critically evaluate the use of theory and analytical claims advanced by others.
3. Students will develop *research skills* to:
 - a. use different social science methods to gather and organize data in the fields of international criminal justice, and;
 - b. critically evaluate the use of such methods by others.
4. Students will develop written and oral *communication skills* to elaborate informed opinions about issues and ideas in the fields of international criminal justice.

Assessment Cycle Review

The outcome assessment during the time period 2011-2015 in the ICJ Major focused on two main questions:

1. Do students acquire a consistent body of knowledge on the main aspects of international criminal justice over the course of the program?
2. Do students acquire the skillset expected of graduates of a BA program?

The outcome assessment has produced mixed results.

The acquisition of descriptive knowledge about international criminal justice was assessed using a multiple-choice test administered to students in the introductory course (ICJ 101), the capstone seminar (ICJ 401) and a control group of criminal justice majors (CJBS 250, CJBS 415) at the end of the semester. The results are not consistent over the years but generally speaking, ICJ students have some privileged knowledge about matters of international criminal justice compared to students in other criminal justice related programs. However, from the basic understanding of some key aspects of international criminal justice by the end of the introductory course (ICJ 101) there is only a limited expansion of descriptive knowledge, if any, by the time students complete the capstone seminar.

The acquisition of skills was assessed with respect to the research methods course ICJ 310 and with respect to the mini thesis that students have to write in the capstone seminar. The assessment of students' understanding of basic concepts and approaches in social science research in the area of international criminal justice produced results similar to the assessment of descriptive knowledge. Students demonstrated some basic understanding in a multiple-choice test.

Two methods were used to assess student success with respect to the capstone mini thesis, a rubric-guided examination of a random sample of mini-theses, and a comprehensive analysis of the word count of mini theses. The rubric-guided examination showed that students perform best on descriptive knowledge and most poorly on communication skills where problems were most prevalent with respect to writing style and the use of social science methods to gather and organize data. The analysis of the word counts across a larger number of sections and semesters - against expectations - showed a much more positive picture, indicating that a large majority of students are able to produce a full-length research paper.

Actions Taken

In an effort to enhance students' ability to succeed in the capstone seminar and in particular in writing the mini thesis, the ICJ BA curriculum was revised effective Fall 2015. The main component of this revision was a sequencing of core courses leading up to the capstone seminar. Whereas previously students could take the capstone seminar with only the introductory course ICJ 101 as a preparation, students now have to follow a sequence of LAW/POL 259 (Comparative Criminal Justice), ICJ 310 (Research Methods) and SOC 341 (International Criminology) before being able to register for the capstone seminar. Given that both ICJ 310 and SOC 341 entail medium-length writing assignments it is expected that students following the new mandatory sequence of courses will be much better prepared for the capstone seminar.

Other action taken that may have had a positive effect on student success has been the hiring of new full-time and adjunct faculty. The outcome assessment in the 2011-2015 cycle has shown that student performance can vary substantially across sections, and that students in sections taught by more recently hired faculty tend to score higher than students in other sections. However, it should be noted that data are incomplete as for some sections data have not been made available for outcome assessment purposes and no firm conclusions can be drawn at this point. Finally, it is important to point out that capstone-seminar faculty is experimenting with different pedagogical approaches to improving student performance. The available data are insufficient to meaningfully assess how successful this has been.

International Criminal Justice (BA)

Program Learning Assessment. Key findings and proposed actions
(2011-2015)

Program Learning Goals

1. Descriptive Knowledge
2. Analytical Skills
3. Research Skills
4. Communication Skills

Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed ¹	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? ⁴ Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed
2011				
Assessment Context² : ICJ 401 (n=55), Tool³ : Mini-Thesis vs. Grades				
		Mini-Thesis		
1	3.06 of 5	Students performed best on descriptive knowledge and most poorly on communication skills. Writing style was the single lowest score (2.87 out of 5) across all of the learning objectives. The second lowest score (3.02 out of 5) was on the use of social science methods to gather and organize data.	Monitor enrollment closely and argue for a cap (at 15). Have course certified as writing intensive. Explore possibility of hiring a writing fellow to work across ICJ401 sections. Faculty teaching ICJ401 should become writing certified. Compare ICJ401 to capstone courses at the college. Reflect on other approaches to achieving our learning objectives (2012).	
2	3.30 of 5			
3	3.20 of 5			
4	3.10 of 5			
Grades		ICJ401 grade distribution is similar to the distribution of scores generated using the mini-thesis rubric. Most students (68%) were "satisfactory" or better (C range of above).		
2012				
Assessment Context : ICJ 101, Tool : Multiple Choice Test vs. Grades				
1	45	Overall, student achievement was modest; 55% of students scored "unsatisfactory." It is notable that more than 75% of students are able to define some key terms and concepts, but struggle in answering questions about legal traditions, international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.	Consider other direct assessment instruments. If a multiple choice test is to be used, it may be a better gauge of student learning if it were administered twice (beginning and end of semester). Consider identifying the core descriptive knowledge that ICJ101 should impart and shape syllabi accordingly.	
Grades		Students perform better over the course of a semester than they do in a one-off, unannounced multiple choice test. More than 16% of students received an A in the course, and the most prevalent grade was a B- (18.1%).		

(1) Percent represents ratio of students who met or exceeded expectations. Where scores represent mean performance, the mean score and highest scale value are indicated (e.g., 3.3 out of 4). (2) Assessment context may relate to comprehensive program review, specific academic setting (e.g., course #, capstone, internship), class standing (e.g., seniors, transfers, alumni), post-graduation outcomes (e.g., placement, further education, employers ratings of employee skills), or indicators of learning progress. (3) Examples of tools include exams, portfolios, research projects, lab reports, papers, essays, surveys, licensure tests, performances, presentations. (4) Re-assessment of learning follows the implementation of actions to determine their effectiveness in improving learning outcomes.

Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed		
2014						
Assessment Context : ICJ 101 (n=83) vs. ICJ 401 (n=31), Tool : Multiple Choice Test						
<i>Goal 1: Descriptive Knowledge</i>						
ICJ 101	29.0	Overall, ICJ101 students acquire some specific knowledge that is expanded over the course of the program. However, few students were able to show comprehensive knowledge across all the thematic areas covered by the ICJ program.	Repeat data collection on descriptive knowledge in ICJ 101 and ICJ 401. Include control group of CJ majors (2014-15)	2015	62.1	↑
ICJ 401	48.4			2015	50.0	↑
Assessment Context : ICJ 310 (n=45) Tool : Multiple Choice Test						
3	26.6	Assessment data with regard to research skills are ambiguous because of rather profound variations across sections. This may be in part due to the use of different textbooks and the development of the assessment tool in close orientation to one particular textbook.	Revise assessment tool for ICJ 310 (2014-15).			
Assessment Context : ICJ 401 (n=118), Tool : Submission of Mini-Thesis (a 7,000-8,500 word research paper)						
4	77.1	In light of the long-standing debate on whether the mini-thesis requirement is feasible for students, it is a positive surprise to see that a large share of the ICJ 401 students was able to deliver a full length research paper: 84.8% submitted a paper of more than 5,000 words and 60.2% a paper that reached or surpassed the set minimum word limit of 7,000.	Repeat data collection on ICJ 401 mini-thesis. Use revised rubric for ICJ 401 mini-thesis assessment to supplement quantitative analysis. Discussion among ICJ faculty on how to make knowledge transfer more consistent across the program. Discussion among ICJ faculty on how to strengthen writing skills prior to and within capstone seminar (2014-15).	2015	76.2	↓
2015						
Assessment Context : ICJ 101 (n=161) vs. ICJ 401 (n=56), Tool : Multiple Choice Test						
<i>Goal 1: Descriptive Knowledge</i>						
ICJ 101	62.1	Compared to 2014, substantial improvement. The positive trend rests largely on specific sections which means there are not only differences in performance between beginning and advanced students but also between sections. There were also variations with respect to the questions students found difficult or easy to answer.	Repeat data collection on descriptive knowledge in ICJ101 and ICJ401. Include control group of Criminal Justice majors (2015-16). Discussion among ICJ faculty on how to make knowledge transfer more consistent and comprehensive within ICJ101 and across the program with a view to 'closing the loop' and making curricular changes in 2015-2016 according to assessment plan.			
ICJ 401	50.0					

Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed
2015 (cont.)				
Assessment Context : ICJ 401 (n=84), Tool : Submission of Mini-Thesis (a 7,000-8,500 word research paper)				
4	76.2	The outcome of the capstone seminar in terms of the production of a full-length research paper was roughly similar to the previous year, but only 38% submitted a paper that conformed the minimum word count of 7,000, largely due to considerable variation between sections in the level of achievement of students.	Repeat data collection of ICJ 401 mini-thesis (2015-2016). Discussion among ICJ 401 faculty on how to strengthen writing skills prior to and within capstone seminar with a view to 'closing the loop' and making curricular changes in 2015-2016 in accordance with ICJ Major assessment plan.	