



LAW AND SOCIETY (BA)

Program Learning Assessment

2012-2016 Assessment Planning Cycle Key Findings and Proposed Actions

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**John Jay College of Criminal Justice
The City University of New York**

Law and Society (BA)

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Law and Society (BA)

Mission

Organized around the central theme of understanding law as an instrument of political and social change, the Law and Society major advances students' knowledge of law and legal phenomena in social terms from a perspective outside the discipline of law. The major addresses questions concerning how law matters in people's lives; how law and law-like systems of rules empower and constrain individuals, groups, organizations and communities; and how the structures and values in social institutions shape and are shaped by law. It enables students to become both producers and critical consumers of social science research on topics pertaining to law and society and prepares students for advanced work in graduate and professional schools. The major is interdisciplinary, offering a broad range of courses that will allow students to gain the descriptive, analytical and methodological knowledge to fulfill this mission.

Introduction and Assessment Philosophy

On October 31, 2011, the New York State Department of Education gave final approval to the College's new major, Law and Society, to replace the existing Legal Studies major. With the significant overlap in courses offered in the two majors, students now in the Legal Studies major will be advised to move into Law and Society. While we expect many to do so, existing Legal Studies majors nonetheless have the option to remain in that major until graduation. However, new students will not have the option of becoming Legal Studies majors.

The Law and Society major's learning outcomes are set out below. We anticipate assessing the Law and Society learning outcomes in the future on a cycle using three courses offered regularly in the major. These will include the two LAS prefix courses that all majors must take and, given the focus of the major on law and an instrument of social and political change, one of the upper-level courses offered in Part Five of the major ("Societal and Political Change"). Regarding direct assessment tools, the three learning outcomes will be evaluated through papers written by students in these classes. For POL 430, where there is an emphasis on the development of research skills, we will utilize a rubric to evaluate students' research projects (a 9-12 page end-of-semester research paper). We will focus only on papers written by Legal Studies majors enrolled in the class. For LAS 200 we will utilize a rubric to evaluate a random sample of students' short papers. The assessment criteria to be included in the rubrics are set out below in Appendix A. Eventually, we will use the Law and Society capstone course for assessment of the major.

Learning Outcomes

The following are the learning outcomes for the Law and Society major:

- A. Students will demonstrate knowledge of law, legal phenomena and legal institutions from a variety of perspectives outside the discipline of law, with a focus on the relationship between law and political and social change.
- B. Students will initiate, develop, and present independent research addressing and analyzing the relationship between law and society.
- C. Students will develop written and oral communication skills to express informed opinions about issues in law and society.

Assessment Cycle Review

A general overview of assessment findings and proposed actions will be available once the 2012-2016 assessment cycle is fully implemented.

Law and Society (BA)

Program Learning Assessment. Key findings and proposed actions
(2012-2016)

Program Learning Goals

1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of law, legal phenomena and legal institutions from a variety of perspectives outside the discipline of law.
2. Students will initiate, develop, and present independent research addressing and analyzing the relationship between law and society.
3. Students will develop written and oral communication skills to express informed opinions about issues in law and society.

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
2012				
Assessment Context² : POL 430 (n=9), Tool³ : Research Paper				
1	83.3	Despite the limitations of using POL430 for measuring program goals, this assessment provides information on outcomes in the Legal Studies major, the program replaced by Law & Society that includes many of the same courses. Scoring shows success in 7 of 9 criteria. However, expectations were not met in two areas: 1) writing clear thesis statements and 2) using proper grammar.	Discuss results at the first fall meeting with the Law and Society Governance Committee and the Political Science Department. Identify action items to be implemented in the Spring 2013 semester emphasizing the need to address the deficiencies identified here.	
2	77.8			
3	80.6			
Assessment Context² : LWS 200 (n=4), Tool³ : Short Paper				
1	58.3	Results were not as strong as in the capstone course. A benefit of including the introductory course in program assessment is to raise awareness of assessment tools that could be used to measure students' progression toward program goals.		
2	62.5			
3	87.5			
2013				
Assessment Context : POL 308 (n=20), Tool : Paper				
3	70.0	Majority of students failed to meet expectations in two areas - development of clear and appropriate thesis statements and mastery of syntax and mechanics.	Emphasis on the development of thesis statements in LWS200 and capstone. Emphasis on revision, editing and preparation of multiple drafts of written work before submission of final product. Consider development of 200- or 300-level research/writing skills course (Sp14).	

(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 : LWS 425 (n=17), Tool : Final Paper				
2	47.1	Results suggest that students grasp and understand the reasons for research and are able to identify important and interesting questions within the field of Law and Society. When it comes to the actual implementation and execution of research, however, students fall short of expectations.	Develop a 200-level research/writing skills course providing a common experience between LWS 200 and capstone. Develop additional 300-level substantive classes with LWS designation to reinforce concepts and skills learned in LWS200. Develop optional 300-level supervised undergraduate research experience (Sp15).	
2015				
Assessment Context : LWS 425 (n=19), Tool : Final Paper				
3	72.6	Students are clearly capable of high-level writing and able to communicate their research effectively. However, as previous assessments emphasized, students require additional assistance in organization and the mechanics of writing.	Develop additional 300-level classes with LWS designation to reinforce skills learned in LWS200 and needed in LWS425 (Sp16). Maintain regular communication with other departments offering courses in the major to ensure these courses further the LWS learning goals. See assistance in reducing the number of students in LWS 425.	