

# **PSC MAJOR FIVE YEAR ASSESSMENT PLAN**

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## **Introduction**

The last several years have brought considerable attention to the field of policing with increased scrutiny and public attention calling for large scale changes to the profession. Recent years have also led to significant modifications to the field of police science. Evidence-based policing, including a data-driven more academic orientation to the field, has become a movement receiving international priority and attention.

As a result of these important changes, as well as important findings resulting from the first five year assessment of the PSC major, a comprehensive revision to the PSC Major was approved in April 2015. As with the Department's CJBS major, the PSC major offers both students seeking careers in law enforcement at any level and future graduate work in criminal justice.

The current document offers a rigorous five year assessment plan for this new PSC major.

## **Summary of the First Five Year Assessment**

Overall, students in the PSC major are able to demonstrate outcomes related to basic knowledge of key concepts. However, higher level application of key concepts (such as community policing or democratic policing) were challenges for significant numbers of students, reflecting a need for more practice with critical thinking earlier on in the program model for continuous application in subsequent years. However, some of the targeted electives (such as PSC 250) demonstrated some higher level concept comprehension and application. Directly related to this more general concern is the very poor writing ability common to many students in PSC (and other majors throughout the college).

As a result, professors have been regularly encouraged to offer more frequent and shorter papers to help students develop these needed skills. The revised major (beginning Fall 2015) addresses this challenge by introducing a Research Methods in Police Science course early on in the course sequence that challenges students to begin to work with these critical skills with sufficient opportunities to develop them further in later courses. Continuous practical application of key concepts is a central focus of all tracks of the new PSC major.

## **Assessment Philosophy**

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 for the PSC major will of course represent the sequence and content of the newly revised major.

The assessment plan for the coming five year PSC 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 PSC Major Assessment Cycle By Academic Year

As with the CJBS major, the next five year assessment plan for the new PSC 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 key concept 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.

The new PSC Major has been divided into three concentrations that reflect the core needs of the police profession and its academic study:

- Administration, management, and operations;
- Crime analysis and intelligence; and,
- Investigative science

The revised goals for the new major are as follows.

Students will:

- Use and critically evaluate a variety of practical and theoretical approaches relevant to policing;
- Use and critically evaluate a variety of practical/hands-on/research approaches relevant to policing
- Analyze and assess the quality of operations and methods in policing
- Integrate policing theory, research and policy in written reports and presentations
- Explain and discuss the importance of diversity, ethical considerations, and statutory requirements that police and law enforcement professionals encounter as community care takers and providers of public safety that impacts the level of crime and quality of life within the communities they serve

### **Year One (2015-2016 Academic Year)**

PROGRAM GOAL: Use and critically evaluate a variety of practical and theoretical approaches relevant to policing;

#### Courses for Study

PSC 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 PSC 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: Use and critically evaluate a variety of practical/hands-on/research approaches relevant to policing

### Courses for Study

PSC 255 – Research Methods and Statistics for Police Studies

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)

### **Year Three (2017-2018 Academic Year)**

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Analyze and assess the quality of operations and methods in policing
- Integrate policing theory, research and policy in written reports and presentations
- Explain and discuss the importance of diversity, ethical considerations, and statutory requirements that police and law enforcement professionals encounter as community care takers and providers of public safety that impacts the level of crime and quality of life within the communities they serve

### Courses for study

PSC 202

PSC 3XX

PSC 260

PSC 277

PSC 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
- 10 minute policy presentations from randomly selected PSC 415 students.

### **Years Four and Five (2018-2019 Academic Year)**

The final two years of the PSC assessment focus on key courses in each of the three new concentrations:

#### Concentration A: Policing Administration, Management and Operations

PSC 227

PSC 340

PSC 350

#### Concentration B: Crime Analysis and Intelligence

PSC 1XX

PSC 2XX

PSC 3XX

#### Concentration C: Investigative Science

PSC 107

PSC 260

PSC 107

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.