



## **POLICE STUDIES (BS)**

### **Program Learning Assessment**

#### **2011-2015 Assessment Planning Cycle Key Findings and Proposed Actions**

**October 1, 2015**

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

**Police Studies (BS)**

Program Learning Assessment

2011-2015 Assessment Planning Cycle  
Key Findings and Proposed Actions

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## **Police Studies (BS)**

### **Mission**

The Police Studies Major is designed for students who intend to pursue careers in law enforcement or who currently serve as law enforcement professionals in operations, management, teaching, or research. The major is also appropriate for students who plan to attend graduate or professional school.

### **Learning Goals**

1. Explain the role of the police in the administration of justice in the United States of America.
2. Analyze the theories related to the policy and practice of police.
3. Analyze the operations and administration of police.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by analyzing and synthesizing evidence to evaluate arguments and draw inferences.
5. Demonstrate the ability to access, conduct, interpret and apply police research within the context of public discourse.
6. Demonstrate proper writing skills.

### **Assessment Philosophy**

The purpose of outcomes assessment is to enhance the learning experiences of current and future students. The Department of Law, Police Science and Criminal Justice Administration (LPS) has developed learning goals that represent knowledge that is necessary for criminal justice majors and that represent the necessary skills and knowledge that transform students into marketable employees for the criminal justice practice field, or into mature social thinkers who are prepared for graduate school. The LPS assessment model is designed to generate qualitative and quantitative information that will be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the police studies major, which will allow LPS faculty to identify segments of the program that need improvements. Once implemented, the baseline can be compared to future outcomes measures to assess effectiveness.

The six learning goals listed above rely on a combination of objective examinations, research papers and essays. Throughout the program, students are expected to develop research and writing skills and attain enough knowledge to develop informed opinions on criminal justice issues that affect the police studies program. Results from the assessment of these six objectives will have implications both for the future of the capstone course and the lower level courses in the program, where students are expected to have developed their research, writing and critical thinking skills.

## Assessment Cycle Review

### Introduction

This report represents the culmination of the Department's first five year assessment cycle. An executive summary will summarize the overall assessment findings in the Police Studies (PSC) major, and the specific actions taken towards addressing them to date. This report will also offer suggested methodological suggestions for a new five-year plan for the Department's second assessment cycle, including a revised methodology<sup>1</sup>.

### Executive Summary

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 Criminal Justice in Eastern Europe) 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.

### The assessment plan and philosophy

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

<sup>1</sup> The five year assessment plan for the second cycle is beyond the scope of the current document, but can be accessed at the LPS Department in the Fall 2015 semester. This new plan will focus particularly on assessing the new PSC major from its launch in the fall.

“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.

## Police Studies (BS)

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

### Program Learning Goals

1. Explain the role of the police in the administration of justice in the United States of America.
2. Analyze the theories related to the policy and practice of police.
3. Analyze the operations and administration of police.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by analyzing and synthesizing evidence to evaluate arguments and draw inferences.
5. Demonstrate the ability to access, conduct, interpret and apply police research within the context of public discourse.
6. Demonstrate proper writing skills.

### Outcomes Assessment

Program Learning Goal #	% Meet / Exceed <sup>1</sup>	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective? <sup>4</sup> Follow-up assessment Sem. Year % Meet / Exceed
<b>Spring 2011</b>				
<b>Assessment Context<sup>2</sup>: PSC 401 (n=30), Tool<sup>3</sup>: Final Paper</b>				
1	56.7	May not articulate thoughts or use critical thinking properly	More frequent and shorter papers with editing and multiple revisions, including synthesizing various source materials. More emphasis on using actual quantitative and qualitative research studies that relate to specific police issues. Consider adopting mandatory or optional reading to guide the research and writing process.	
5	86.7	Well organized papers. Able to deliver information about a specific topic through research papers.		
4	36.7	Not integrating sources as expected.		
6	60.0	Apply principles / techniques of democratic policing using appropriate references. Some problems with mechanics.		
<b>Spring 2012</b>				
<b>Assessment Context: PSC 204 (n=10), Tool: Paper</b>				
1	50.0	Using appropriate terms and concepts.	More frequent and shorter papers with multiple revisions, including synthesizing various source materials. More exposure to research tools, particularly electronic sources. Make expectations clear of what kind of writing expected and how to produce writing reflective of college-level work. To be discussed how to integrate the use of appropriate citations and sources in writing across classes.	
5	30.0	Papers appear to suffer from lack of organization.		
4	20.0	Not integrating different sources as well as expected.		
6	10.0	Not using appropriate references and citations.		

(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 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 Goal #	% Meet / Exceed	Key Findings	Proposed Actions (Semester Implemented)	Was action effective?		
				Follow-up assessment Sem. Year	% Meet / Exceed	
<b>Fall 2012</b>						
<b>Assessment Context : PSC 301 (n=10) Tool : Paper</b>						
4	59.6	Average or better mastery of the basic contours of material.	Encourage professors to vary the type of writing assignments, such as memos or short management reports which can be revised, much like the back-and-forth in a team project in the workplace. Encourage instructors to become certified learning writing intensive instructors. Further consider how to best assess students in large and complex department.	Sp 13	64.3	↑
3	59.6	Describe specific behavioral skills of a manager in context.		Sp 13	85.7	↑
4	49.5	Think in applied and critical fashion. Room for improvement		Sp 13	64.3	↑
6	39.6	Only dimension essays fell below average (10%) and also excelled (10%). Landscape seems more varied than on dimensions related to knowledge or application of concepts.		Sp 13	64.3	↑
<b>Spring 2013</b>						
<b>Assessment Context : PSC 301 (n=10) Tool : Paper</b>						
4	64.3	Strong outcome on basic knowledge (43% excelled).	Reinforce a culture of writing development. Workshop to involve a brainstorming session of best practices around helping students develop the ability to apply theoretical constructs to a set of facts when writing an essay. Made report available on departmental web page for all interested department members.			
3	85.7	Strength across the sample. Specific behavioral or social skills which benefit a police manager are understood.				
4	64.3	Greatest variability in performance, suggesting that it represents the challenge of the course.				
6	64.3	This cohort showed a healthy level of writing capacity.				
<i>Fall 2012 vs Spring 2013</i>						
		Taken together, F12 and Sp13 assessment indicates that students are most likely to struggle with critical, analytical thinking and writing organization and clarity than the knowledge oriented dimensions of the course.				
<b>Spring 2015</b>						
<b>Assessment Context : PSC 250 (n=27) Tool : Paper</b>						
1	96.3	Students scored very high in outcome attainment for this course.	Revise major to address 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 opportunities to develop them further in later courses.			
2	96.3	A majority (55.6%) exceeded expectations for LG1; over 40%				
5	92.5	exceeded expectations for the other two goals. Still, there is need for more practice with critical thinking and writing ability.				