

**DEPARTMENT OF LAW, POLICE SCIENCE, AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
ADMINISTRATION**

**GETTING TO OUTCOMES**

**2014-2015**

**The PSC Program**

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## **Introduction**

This report reflects the Department's ongoing commitment towards continuous assessment. As such, the findings reported in this document will highlight those observed throughout the Fall 2014/Spring 2015 (PSC 250) semesters.

## **Summary of a Rigorous Assessment Methodology**

LPS has implemented a rigorous assessment system over the years to collect data from the maximum number of students and sections possible across both its very large CJBS and Police Science majors. This final year of the five year plan for PSC focused on the elective course PSC 250, as a brand new program major of core courses will begin in the Fall 2015, and be the central focus of the new five year assessment plan.

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. This year the requested sample size was a minimum of 7 students from each studied course. 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 noted that such an independent review was not conducted for every paper scored in the sample, but on a random basis and/or if peculiar patterns appeared to emerge in the data (such as a predominance of overly high or low scores in a particular sample).*

The greatest challenge to the first cycle PSC assessment methods was the lack of consistency between professors in the quality and type of final assignment to apply the final rubric for data collection.

## **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 “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 Science Courses Assessed (2014/2015)**

From this point forward, assessment findings will be presented according to the program they represent to facilitate an ease of understanding of the results, as well as to better match the larger institutional needs for reporting assessment findings. Each program has its own goals that supersede the specific learning objectives of each course that the assessment findings are based upon.

The PSC Major has been completely revised. The new five year assessment plan for the major will focus on this. This report’s assessment of the PSC 250 course, however, will be based on the previous program learning goals reported below, as the assessment took place before the formal launch of the new major.

### **Program Learning Goals**

- PG1 Explain the role of the police in the administration of justice in the United States of America.
- PG 2 Analyze the theories related to the policy and practice of police.
- PG 3. Analyze the operations and the administration of the police.
- PG4. Demonstrate critical thinking skills by analyzing and synthesizing evidence to evaluate arguments and draw inferences.
- PG5. Demonstrate the ability to assess, conduct, interpret, and apply police research within the context of public discourse.

PG6. Demonstrate proper writing skills.

### **PSC 250 – Policing in Eastern Europe**

Although on the surface, PSC 250 would appear to mainly be of interest to international criminal justice majors, it really plays a central and important function in helping students to understand and apply key theories and understandings about how police can and should function in the United States. This is an elective with a significant enough popularity to be offered virtually every semester, making it an important course to be included in our assessment. The learning objectives for PSC 250 are:

- **Objective 1** - Describe the history of the transition from communism to democracy as it relates to criminal justice institutions.
- **Objective 2** - Understand the mechanisms and situational context of crime and criminal behavior in the post-communist context.
- **Objective 3** - Understand the changing role of policing in the transition to democracy, including efforts to provide police services to minority populations.

**Table 1** provides a curriculum map for the relationship between each of the PSC 250 course objectives and the overall program goals.

**Table 1.** PSC 250 curriculum map to overall program goals.

	LO1	LO2	LO3
PG1	X		
PG2		X	
PG3			
PG 4			
PG 5			X
PG 6			

Since there was only one section of PSC 250 offered during the Fall 2014, our assessment was able to include the *total universe of all 27* students taking the course. **Table 2** summarizes the student learning outcomes by course objectives. Students scored very high in outcome attainment for this course with a majority (55.6%)” on objective 1, and over forty percent for the other two objectives scoring “excellent”. Importantly, each of these objectives contributes to a different overall program goal as described in the previous table.

**Table 2.** PSC 250 outcome attainment by course objectives (N=27).

<b>Ordinal Ranking</b>	<b>Objective #1:</b>	<b>Objective #2</b>	<b>Objective #3</b>
1 – Poor	0	0	0
2 – Fair	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.7%)	2 (7.4%)
3 – Good	2 (7.4%)	5 (18.5%)	2 (7.4%)
4 – Very Good	9 (33.3%)	10 (37.0%)	11 (40.7%)
5 - Excellent	15 (55.6%)	11 (40.7%)	12 (44.4%)

**Table 3.** PSC 250 students (N=27) by department expectations.

<b>Learning Goal(s) Assessed</b>	<b>Course Number</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Approaches Expectations</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b>
Objective 1	PSC 250	27	15 (55.6%)	11 (40.7%)	1 (3.7%)	0
Objective 2	PSC 250	27	11 (40.7%)	15 (55.6%)	1 (3.7%)	0
Objective 3	PSC 250	27	12 (44.4%)	13 (48.1%)	2 (7.4%)	0

Given these results, it is not surprising that a majority of students “exceed expectations” for objective 1.<sup>1</sup> Significantly, no students were found to “not meet expectations at all.” .

### **Actions**

Revise major to address the need for more practice with critical thinking and writing ability 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.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this report, the LPS Department uses the very high standard of “excellent” to report students that exceed expectations. To “meet expectations” students must score at least a “good” or very good”. Students scoring “fair” are said to be only ‘approaching expectations”.

Appendix A

PSC 250 Rubric

	<p><b>Learning Objective #1</b> Describe the history of the transition from communism to democracy as it relates to criminal justice institutions.</p> <p>(A)</p>	<p><b>Learning Objective #2</b> Understand the mechanisms and situational context of crime and criminal behavior in the post-communist context.</p> <p>(B)</p>	<p><b>Learning Objective #3</b> Understand the changing role of policing in the transition to democracy, including efforts to provide police services to minority populations.</p> <p>(C)</p>			
<b>Excellent (5)</b>	Clearly describes the relevant historical eras, and is able to relate them appropriately to the evolving structure of criminal justice institutions..	Very clearly understands the different situational and social contexts of the post communist world.	The changing policing structures are described fully, including the description of services to minority populations.			,
<b>Very Good (4)</b>	Very clearly describes the historical context, but is unable to fully make the connection between historical context and criminal justice.	Student articulates the situational contexts of crime, but does not develop fully its relationship to the post communist context.	All relevant police structures are identified but not fully explained			

<b>Good (3)</b>	The history and practices are presented and explained, but their relationship to democracy is limited.	Can clearly explain the post communist context but is unable to explain the mechanisms and situational factors involved in crime	Police structures are described, but some important areas are missing			
<b>Fair (2)</b>	All relevant historical eras are identified, but not fully developed. Presentation of its origins, meaning and/or development to criminal justice is absent.	There is a lack of clarity between post-communist and situational factors in crime.	Some of the description of police services are incorrectly described.			
<b>Poor(1)</b>	Not all relevant historical issues and practices are identified. What is there lacks the appropriate depth, development; or is incorrect in some way.	Either the discussion of post-communism or situational contexts are completely unclear or absent.	There is no clear understanding of evolving police structures			