



The Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) program learning outcomes are under review but no changes have been approved at this time. Please refer to the section on the LAS degrees for more information on the review process.

a. Program Learning Outcomes

There are seven Liberal Arts and Science program learning outcomes. The Political Science 101-102 sequence supports five of these:

- Communicate the significance of facts, concepts, and ideas in spoken and written English which is clear, precise and logical.
- Demonstrate a problem-solving capability through analysis/synthesis.
- Recognize and describe the interactions and institutions that characterize the individual and society.
- Appraise the values and character of both Western and non-Western cultures.
- Demonstrate an academic proficiency comparable to students completing the second year of a baccalaureate degree program.

b. End-of-sequence Learning Outcomes

The end-of-sequence learning outcomes for PLS 101-102 are:

- Know the structure and functions of the Congress (House & Senate).
- Know the structure and functions of the executive branch/presidency.
- Know the structure and functions of the judicial branch/courts.
- To communicate the significance of the Bill of Rights and other constitutional rights, concepts and ideas in spoken and written English.
- To recognize the ways in which a scientific approach (including empirical comparative observations of multiple political systems) can be used to create a better understanding of political systems and theories.
- To recognize and describe the interactions of the three branches of government, including the need to compromise.
- To appraise the values and character of both US and foreign (non-US) political cultures, by comparative study of multiple political/governmental systems.
- Being able to write an essay on human/political rights, demonstrating an appreciation of both the need for individual rights and a need for some level of order within a society.

**III. Assessment Method(s):** A measurable indicator of success in attaining the stated learning outcome(s). The methodology should be both reliable and valid. Please describe in detail.

a. Formative Assessment Method(s) and Description: a measurable indicator of student in-progress in attaining the stated learning outcome(s).

The major formative assessment methods in the PLS 101 & 102 sequence consists of multiple examinations administered throughout each course, and a required research report.

Students enrolled in PLS 102 are required to answer essay questions as part of the final examination. The essay questions require students to both demonstrate substantive/content knowledge of elements within the Bill of Rights, as well as

critical thinking about the application, protection, limits and adjudication of these rights in a democratic society. The faculty critique the logic used in answering the questions as well as the depth of the answer. Incorporating these essay questions as part of the final began during the winter quarter of 1995. The results of the essay questions has varied from one-sixth of the final examination to as much as one-third, thus about 5% to 10% of total course grade.

Currently, only one faculty member is using the essay questions as a summative, end-of-sequence method; however, this technique was incorporated into PLS 102 courses taught by selected part-time instructors in Fall 2001. Part-time faculty in the department attend an annual Spring Conference where assessment techniques are shared. Part-time faculty use essay questions on course tests but not for assessment purposes.

- b. **Summative Assessment Method(s) and Description:** a measurable indicator of end-of-program success in attaining the stated program learning outcome(s).

This section is not applicable to end-of-sequence assessment in LAS. Refer to the section on summative assessment of the program learning outcomes for Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**IV. Results:** A description of the actual results of overall student performance gathered from the assessment(s). (see III.a.)

A cumulative numerical analysis has been completed through Winter 2001 on the outcome of the essay questions and students performance levels. The results of faculty observations from reading the essay question responses appears to demonstrate that students are doing very well. Some students who have difficulty with writing and grammar skills seem to struggle more with essay-type questions, but overall their essays reflected both substantive knowledge and critical analysis. Although the results shown below are quantifiable measures, there are multiple variables which the faculty believes precludes comparing classes and/or trends.

**Essay Grading Summaries from Ten Classes**

<b>Class Summarized</b>	<b>Number of students completing essay</b>	<b>Max Score for Essay</b>	<b>Average Scores</b>	<b>Percentage Scores</b>
Winter 1995	15	10	8.83	88%
Fall 1995	9	5	4.72	94%
Winter 1997 (sec 50)	11	7	6.45	92%
Winter 1997 (sec 02)	29	7	6.1	87%
Winter 1997 (sec 06)	11	7	6.13	87%
Spring 1997 (sec 02)	11	8	6.68	83%
Spring 1997 (sec 50)	14	8	6.75	84%
Spring 1999 (sec 50)	23	7	5.7	81%
Winter 2000 (sec 02)	26	10	8.4	84%
Winter 2000 (sec 04)	13	10	7.8	78%
Fall 2001 (sec 51)	5	5	3.7	74%*
Fall 2001 (sec 03)	5	5	2.6	52%*
Fall 2001 (sec ??)	14	5	2.4	48%*

\*Fall 2001 assessment data is based on a new set of questions with different instructors from previous years. Comparison across years is not meaningful. This new baseline will help to serve for a point of comparison in future years.

- V. **Analysis/Actions:** From analysis of your summative assessment results, do you plan to or have you made any adjustments to your program learning outcomes, methodologies, curriculum, etc.? If yes, describe. If no, explain.

The faculty have developed other essay questions to be used as part of the end-of-sequence summative assessment. An additional Bill of Rights essay question emphasizing “other rights” has been developed and has been used to assess students in PLS 102 Spring of 2000.

These new questions were designed to meet and assess the same Program Learning Outcomes/General Education Outcomes and thus be equivalent to the current essay questions.

- VI. **General Education:** Are you using any tool(s) to assess any of the three primary general education outcomes\* (communication, thinking, values/citizenship)? If so, describe.

- a. Where within the major do you assess written communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Communication skills are emphasized in the Political Science sequence through requiring written assignments including a short essay. No writing checklist is currently used to offer feedback however, students are given an outline to use as a guideline for completing a term paper in PLS 101 and 102. This helps the students to include all aspects of the assignment thus increasing the completion success of the assignment. Students are also given a guide for the papers written in PLS 101 and 102 where each student researches and writes about a foreign country. All PLS 101 students are required to research a political issue, write a paper as well as send a letter to a representative and/or senator concerning the political issue.

- b. Where within the major do you assess oral communication? Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Students in PLS 101 lead a class discussion on the political issue they have chosen to research.

Students in PLS 102 must make an oral presentation to the class about a foreign political system. These presentations are kept low key and meant to encourage dialog but not assess oral skills. Currently no checklist is used to offer feedback to students regarding their oral skills. Oral skills are also encouraged through regular classroom discussions.

- c. Where within the major do you assess thinking? Thinking might include inventing new problems, seeing relationships and/or implications, respecting other approaches, demonstrating clarity and/or integrity, or recognizing assumptions. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Thinking and problem solving skills are stressed through discussions and interactions as well as through the use of the essay questions. Discussion of political ideas requires skill in seeing relationships and implications. These discussions also help students develop respect for other approaches and develop clarity in reasoning. Currently no specific guidelines are used to offer students feedback on the demonstration of their thinking skills.

- d. Where within the major do you assess values/citizenship/community? These activities might include behaviors, perspective, awareness, responsibility, teamwork, ethical/professional standards, service learning or community participation. Describe the assessment method(s) used. Describe assessment results if available.

Values/citizenship is stressed through the discussion of basic topics such as citizen rights, political rights, and responsibilities, etc. Students are encouraged to become familiar with the rights as citizens and are expected to participate as a citizen by writing a letter to a political representative. Students are expected to participate in class dialog and learn from the perspectives of others

- e. Computer and information literacy:

Students are expected to complete written assignments utilizing a word processor. Students are encouraged to use e-mail with the instructor and other students. Papers require library and internet research skills. Some assignments require students to use specific websites to learn about other cultures or countries.

- \* Note: The oral communication checklist and the written communication checklist developed by the General Education Committee were adopted for college-wide use during the 1997-98 academic year by Academic Council. Thinking Guidelines developed by the General Education Committee are being piloted by faculty during the 1998-99 academic year.