

## **Form E-1-A for Boston College Core Curriculum Department: Political Science (2021)**

**1) Have formal learning outcomes for the department's Core courses been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect students completing its Core courses to have acquired?)

Our department's learning outcomes are derived from those specified by the A&S Undergraduate Core Development Committee (UCDC) as Core Social Science course learning goals, and they have been in force as guidelines for our assessments since 2012. Political Science Core courses should improve students' understanding in the following areas:

- a. awareness of and sensitivity to the political dimensions of their human existence
- b. awareness of the causes of human behavior
- c. awareness of the dynamics and dimensions of political change
- d. ability to identify and appreciate the social scientific dimension of problems facing society today

**2) Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department's expected learning outcomes for its Core courses accessible: on the web, in the catalog, or in your department handouts?)

The learning outcomes for Social Science Core can be found at BC's Core Requirements and Courses web page.

The learning outcomes for Political Science courses are published on the Department's undergraduate program page:

<https://www.bc.edu/content/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/political-science/undergraduate.html>

**3) Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine whether students have achieved the stated outcomes for the Core requirement?** (What evidence and analytical approaches do you use to assess which of the student learning outcomes have been achieved more or less well?)

In previous years, the department had used simple four-question, multiple-choice quiz given to most of the students enrolled in Core courses each semester. However, as noted in previous reports, this method has problems in terms of assessing whether students had achieved the stated outcomes for the Core. This year the department has instituted a new two-pronged assessment process: faculty assessment of a random selection of final papers or exams in both Core courses and upper-level courses, and a student survey incorporating both numerical ratings (26 questions under the headings "Knowledge of the Discipline," "Analytical and Communication Skills," "Civic Culture and Political Engagement," and "The Major and Beyond") and open-ended questions about the strengths, weaknesses, and best courses of the department.

**4) Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?** (Who in the department is responsible for interpreting the data and making recommendations for curriculum or assignment changes if appropriate? When does this occur?)

The responsibility in general lies with the Undergraduate Committee. More specifically, the Undergraduate Committee has established this year a seat dedicated to the assessment process. The UC assessment head is charged with collecting and organizing the data obtained from respondents to the senior survey and the random faculty evaluations, and with processing the data to show general results, trends, and comparisons. This general process of assessment is overseen by the Undergraduate Director and the Department Chair – who combine to write up a report for the administration as well as to share with the faculty – along with recommendations for areas of improvement.

**5) What were the assessment results and what changes have been made as a result of using this data/evidence?** (What were the major assessment findings? Have there been any recent

changes to your curriculum or program? How did the assessment data contribute to those changes?)

Spring 2021 is the first semester for which we have collected data under the new process.

Social Science Core courses are required to emphasize one or more of “major concepts and central questions of the discipline, key methods [of analysis], real-world and policy applications.” The data for our Core courses indicate a solid level of student achievement both with respect to knowledge of the concepts and questions of the discipline and skills in analysis and communication, although overall faculty rated students more highly in the former than in the latter.

**6) Date of the most recent program review.** (Your latest comprehensive departmental self-study and external review.)

May 2012.