

Social Science Assessment Spring 2015

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The Social Science Assessment committee collected data during the spring 2015 semester. Sections were chosen randomly to achieve the required 20% sample. The chairs of the department were notified in December 2014. Instructors of the selected sections were contacted prior to the beginning of the spring semester and given a brief description of the assessment process. Further, the selected instructors were given an opportunity to meet face-to-face with the committee during the spring semester. During the meeting with the instructors, topics discussed included timing of the assessment and formatting of the assessment.

The committee along with the instructors agreed to use multiple-choice exams at multiple points during the semester. The Buffalo State College guidelines for social science assessment have the following student learning outcomes (SLOs):

Students will demonstrate:

1. Describe social environments, behaviors, and social issues in the context of course subject matter.
2. Apply basic concepts and terminology of social science.
3. Evaluate the basic knowledge of methods of gathering evidence in the social science field (critical thinking)

These three SLOs were assessed with separate portions of a multiple-choice exam. Because each discipline has different concepts, models and issues each portion consisted of 10 items that were a combination of multiple choice and true/false questions constructed by the individual instructors. Instructors administered the assessments on different days because the content items were imbedded into a regularly-scheduled exam.

The results are presented in the Appendix that contains the results disaggregated by section. With regard to attainment of the SLOs in each category, students who scored 90% or higher were "exceeding", those who scored 70-60% were "meeting," and those who scored 59% or less were "not meeting."

The most striking finding was that the results were quite similar across the selected sections, for all three SLO's with just a few exceptions. It is expected that the majority of students would "meet" expectations rather than exceed or fail to meet expectations. PSY 101 is one of the two exceptions in which 0% of students exceeded expectations (SLO #1 and SLO #3). Zero percent of the

students in GEG 102 did not exceed expectations for SLO #2. In five areas either an equal or slightly greater percentage of students failed to meet expectations than meeting expectations (PSC 101 – SLO#3 14.4% met and failed to meet expectations; ECO 202 – SLO#2 35% failed to meet expectations v. 24% met expectations and SLO#3 – 23% failed to meet expectations v. 18% met expectations; and CRJ 101 – SLO#1 37% failed to meet expectations v. 35% met expectations and SLO#3 – 18% failed to meet expectations v. 16% met expectations).

If we were to compare the results from 2007 with results from 2015 for SLO #3 (Methods/Critical thinking) there is a significant improvement among our students. For example, in 2007 approximately 58% of SOC 240 students failed to meet expectations whereas in 2015, 86% either met or exceeded expectations. One possible explanation for this significant improvement is that the instructors composed the methods questions whereas in 2007, a committee formulated a standard set of questions that were administered to all courses that participated in the assessment process. Hence, it is important to acknowledge that although there may be some overlap of concepts among the disciplines, the differences are large enough to demand separate assessment questions.

Similarly, the results suggest that students learning improved for the content SLOs as well. The results suggest that students appear to be grasping the material covered in their courses. For example for SLO #1, at least 60% or more met and/or exceeded expectations. For SLO #2, in all courses 65% or more of the students assessed met and/or exceed expectations. This is a significant improvement compared to the results reported in 2007.

Members of the assessment committee contributed ideas for follow-up, or “closing the loop.” Due to the distinct differences between courses noted in the results from 2007 the committee permitted instructors to administer the assessment at different times throughout the semester. For instance, instructors who administered the methods questions directly following the completion of the relevant material in class were more likely to see a higher success among their students on that particular learning outcome.

Important questions arose in the committee discussions. For example, should the expectations differ according to course level (101 v. 200 levels)? Or do we need to revise expectations and make sure faculty understand what the expectations are so that they themselves can make sure students are receiving the relevant information? Does this mean that we meet with the faculty who participated in this assessment? Or simply meet with the faculty whose students performed poorly?

After discussion, the following action steps were proposed:

1. Incorporate method and methodologies throughout the course—not just during the “methods section”. One way to do this is to utilize the library databases so that related articles and materials can be used to emphasize methods. Library liaisons can provide workshops on databases and efficient searches for faculty.
2. Low stake quizzes can reinforce content knowledge.
3. Revisit the association between teaching pedagogies and success of lower level students. Workshops about the characteristics of students and learning styles can be given to faculty (Faculty Development).
4. Peer tutoring and peer-led time management and study skills workshops can be given to students (Academic Skills Center).

Class	SLO# 1 - Content			SLO #2 – Content (Concepts)			SLO #3 – Methods/Critical Thinking		
	Exceeding	Meeting	Not Meeting	Exceeding	Meeting	Not Meeting	Exceeding	Meeting	Not Meeting
PSC 101 N=48	20% (9.6)	50% (24)	30% (14.4)	20% (9.6)	70% (33.6)	10% (4.8)	40% (19.2)	30% (14.4)	30% (14.4)
GEG 102 N=44	10% (4.4)	60% (26.4)	30% (13.2)	0% (0)	70% (30.8)	30% (13.2)	30% (13.2)	40% (17.6)	30% (13.2)
SOC 240 N=31	28% (8.68)	69% (21.39)	3% (.93)	41% (12.71)	55% (17.05)	3% (.93)	10% (3.1)	76% (23.56)	14% (4.34)
SOC 100 N=31	28% (8.68)	59% (18.29)	13% (4.03)	36% (11.16)	55% (17.05)	9% (2.79)	14% (4.34)	57% (17.67)	29% (8.99)
ECO 202 N=56	38% (21.28)	23% (12.88)	38% (21.28)	41% (22.96)	24% (13.44)	35% (19.6)	59% (33.04)	18% (10.08)	23% (12.88)
PSY 101 N=167	0% (0)	91% (151.97)	9% (15.03)	20% (33.4)	60% (100.2)	20% (33.4)	0% (0)	70% (116.9)	30% (50.1)
CRJ 101 N=114	28% (31.92)	35% (39.9)	37% (42.18)	21% (23.94)	56% (63.84)	23% (26.22)	66% (75.24)	16% (18.24)	18% (20.52)

Standards – based on general grading system at Buffalo State

Exceeding Expectations – 90%+

Meeting Expectations - 60-89%

Failed to Meet Expectations - Below 60%

Total Number of Students who participated in the assessment – N = 491