Program: **POLITICAL SCIENCE (Updated June 2016)**

1) **Have formal learning outcomes been developed? What are they?** (What specific sets of skills and knowledge does the department expect its majors to have acquired before they graduate?)

(a) to understand the major forms of government in the world;

(b) to understand the political and economic relations among nations, including the causes and consequences of war;

(c) to know the most important works of political inquiry, and their connection to the political arrangements by which men and women have governed themselves, in the past and in the present;

(d) to understand American government in a way that will allow students to become thoughtful and effective citizens.

(e) to know the varying methods by which modern social science seeks to understand the political world;

(f) to think analytically, write cogently, and speak clearly about political matters;

2) **Where are these learning outcomes published? Be specific.** (Where are the department’s learning expectations accessible to potential majors: on the web or in the catalog or in your department’s major handouts?)

Learning outcomes are published on the Political Science Department’s Undergraduate Programs webpage. See: [http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/undergrad/learningoutcomes.html](http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/undergrad/learningoutcomes.html)

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

The department made a strategic decision to focus our assessment/continuous improvement efforts on learning outcomes (e) and (f) above. We believe these are learning areas of great significance, in which students often underperform, and which can be tangibly improved via the assessment-response cycle.

They will be able to articulate their positions and analyses clearly in writing. They will be able to frame research questions, and handle citations and attributions during the course of writing a long paper.

A faculty member—the DUS—rate a random sample of senior major course papers on level of achievement demonstrated for each of four characteristics listed below. The rating scale runs 1-5 for each, with 1 being the highest and 5 the lowest scores):
(a) Use of citations
(b) Overall quality of writing
(c) Overall quality of argument (logic, clarity of explanation, etc.)
(d) Framing of the research question/puzzle

The scores are averaged for each dimension, and then compared to previous years’ scores, to reveal change (or lack thereof) over time. We have conducted several rounds now, summarized below.

The first round was first implemented in sequenced tranches of the POLI subfields: for Comparative Politics and International Relations in Spring 2011; for Political Theory in Fall 2011; and for American Politics in Fall 2012.

At the end of 2013-14 we ran a second round of surveys (20 in all), again sampling from advanced courses in all four subfields (five from each subfield), to gauge the robustness of the first set of findings. Here we found results largely in line with the first surveys. The results from the two rounds of surveys are reported below:

First Round (2011-12) (a) 1.9   (b) 2.5   (c) 2.5   (d) 2.5
Second Round (2013-14) (a) 2.25 (b) 2.15 (c) 2.4   (d) 2.65
Third Round (2014-15) (a) 1.9   (b) 2.45 (c) 2.4   (d) 2.7

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?)

Results and recommendations are presented and discussed at a department meeting at the start of each academic year.