

**Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes:  
Report From the General Education Assessment Subcommittee**

for General Education Category # \_3\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Social Sciences \_\_\_\_\_

Semester when Assessment Administered: \_Fall 2010\_ Date of Report: \_Feb. 7, 2011\_

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**Subcommittee Members:**

<u>_ Ray Rushboldt _</u> (Chair) (name)	<u>_ Political Science _</u> (department)
<u>_ Guy Boysen _</u> (name)	<u>_ Psychology _</u> (department)
<u>_ Allyn Skinner _</u> (name)	<u>_ Sociology _</u> (department)
_____ (name)	_____ (department)

**Overview of Process**

During the Fall 2010 semester, students' learning from the Social Science CCC courses was assessed in the following content areas: Psychology, Sociology, and Political Science. The specific courses were PSY 129, SOC 116, and POLI 120. A selection of students in the classes provided the data yielding a total sample size of 474 out of the total students registered in that CCC category which was 1974 (24%). The committee members included Ray Rushboldt –Chair (POLI), Guy Boysen (PSY), and Allyn Skinner (SOC). The other departments whose courses were within the Social Science CCC area declined to participate.

**Assessment Task - Learning Outcomes To Meet**

1. Understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.
2. Knowledge of major concepts, models, and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.

**Methodology**

The methodologies varied across departments. In all the departments, questions were embedded in exam questions –some in multiple choice and essay questions. Separate scoring rubrics were devised and applied for each department. In some cases, within a department, separate scoring rubrics were applied by individual course instructors.

## Results

Some departments assessed the two learning outcomes separately, and other departments assessed them together. The rationales for combining them are that 1) information regarding methodology is part of a set of concepts taught in introductory social science courses, and 2) it is important to know how students apply knowledge of methodological issues to conceptual topics in the social sciences. The results of the assessments were as follows:

### **Total number of students 475**

	Outcome 1: Methods		Outcome 2: Concepts	
	# of total students	% of total students	# of total students	% of total students
Exceeds (90-100% score)	81	17%	80	17%
Meets (80-89%)	203	43%	211	44%
Approaches (70-79%)	129	27%	132	28%
Fails (0-69%)	62	13%	52	11%

## Conclusions

Students performed similarly across the two outcomes. Relatively few students fell into the fails to meet standards category. Yet a good amount fell into the approaches standards category, which may be an unacceptable level of information mastery.

The summary comments from individual departments varied, including concerns about students' ability to write analytical responses and evaluate methodological information and study findings.

There are two major limitations to the assessment data in this report. This category of the CCC has seven departments but only three participated. This results in obvious concerns about the quality of the assessment. The assessment strategies vary in many ways between departments. For example, standards for acceptable answers to essay questions vary to some degree based on the instructor. Allowing departments autonomy to develop their own assessments of CCC outcomes rather than using a common assessment is the source of this inconsistency. The other key issue is the lack of participation by all departments. This category of the CCC has seven departments but only three participated. This results in obvious concerns about the quality of the assessment. Assessment of student learning is not optional according to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; as such, methods should be considered for bringing college-wide participation.