**FAU Department of Political Science**

**Assessment Plan 2012/2013: Continuous Quality Improvement**

**Mission**

Create an effective, continuous quality improvement plan (CQI) that efficiently provides relevant high-quality data for the FAU Department of Political Science that is consistent with College and University evaluation of student learning outcomes.

**Goals and Overview**

The Department’s assessment embodies various methodologies that are reliably measured across time and delivery venues. The indicators are used to improve the student and faculty educational experience within a multidimensional and integrated environment. To that end, continuously-updated specified student outcomes become a focal key to graduating students with particular knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that demonstrate to faculty, potential employers, and the stakeholder community appropriate education and experiential training. Accordingly, Department KSAs can be used to distinguish qualified graduation candidates from unqualified students who have yet to master these minimal skill sets, and as such, the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan outlined herein provides suitable transparent measures of the university’s success at achieving its goals and maintaining its multifaceted mission – especially through departmental commitment to both student and faculty overall satisfaction and success.

Use of the chosen indicators accomplishes several objectives including (but not limited to) the provision of:

* systematic and comparable evidence of programmatic effectiveness;
* methods to assess student needs and then matching them with demonstrable learning outcomes; and
* process mapping which encourages continual service delivery improvement.

**Process**

Pursuant to these goals, annual collection of data will be integrated into a report that is shared with the Department faculty – individual members who then consider its implications for their courses and students. In turn, faculty then informally discuss how to improve instruction and delivery methodologies and share findings in a Department meeting.

While the Department defines specific student learning outcomes and indicators, the Department’s Assessment Committee collects and analyzes the data. Using the template provided in the assessment database, the Department Chair then compiles the Program Outcomes CQI Report that is subsequently submitted to the College Assessment Committee. Consequently, the Department meets to discuss the results and where appropriate to identify opportunities for improvement. It then considers options to implement actionable improvements that are measured annually.

***Four Indicators of Political Science KSAs***

**Knowledge**

The Department has identified that the overall curriculum of the Political Science Department consistently delivers an organized body of knowledge and information that is widely regarded as factual and procedurally discipline-specific. Interchangeably referred to as content or declarative knowledge, students in Political Science will demonstrate an understanding of concepts, theories, and facts about political structures and processes in political institutions, political behavior, and public policy.

Indicator 1: Measured by ratio of final course grades in the two required curriculum courses (Comparative Politics- CPO 3003; and Research Methods in Political Science-POS 3703): Pass Fail 

**Skills**

The Department curriculum provides courses that require the demonstration of proficiency in manual, verbal, mental and/or automated manipulation of data and information. For example, demonstrating skills in operating personal computers and appropriate programming software exhibits this competency. The Department has identified explicit technical and employable skills that are characteristic of professions hiring students majoring in Political Science. All Political Science majors (hereafter Students) must demonstrate aptitude in the use of a statistical computer package to conduct data analyses. Students must complete POS 3703 (Research Methods) in which they must complete required assignments using statistical computer packages to conduct data analyses.

Indicator 2: Measured by ratio of successful completion of SPSS (or computer) assignments: Pass  Fail 

**Abilities**

The Department curriculum provides courses that require evidence of not only the capacity but the capability to perform activities and/or tasks suitable to the discipline. Competent written communication that exhibits and explicates political science concepts and theories in a grammatically correct and logically consistent manner is one indicator of ability.

Indicator 3: Measured by ratio of successful submission of paper/essays: Pass  Fail 

**All Three KSAs**

The Department curriculum provides courses that encourage and assess all three KSAs for students or the discipline. Falling under the umbrella of critical thinking, students must demonstrate adequate standard analytical skills. Accordingly, students in Political Science must analyze information and data related to quantitative and qualitative research by applying the basic principles of scientific methodology including; (1) understanding the nature of scientific explanations, (2) utilizing valid and reliable observations, (3) operationally defining and when appropriate manipulating constructs, (4) formulating and testing hypotheses, and (5) data analysis and interpretation. In POS 3703 (Research Methods), students will submit a research paper that demonstrates their proficiency in employing the scientific method.

Indicator 4: Measured by ratios of overall assessment and submission of paper: Pass Fail 

In order to capture student satisfaction, all ratios will be calculated on the basis of the number of original enrollees. Comparison rates across time will encourage process mapping to obtain continual service delivery improvement.