

University Core Competency

Competency 5 - Social/Behavioral Sciences. To display knowledge of human behavior and the relationship between individuals and their societies.

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

Northwestern Core Curriculum. Northwestern has a broadly-based core curriculum that is central to the University's mission and consistent with the Louisiana Board of Regents' requirements for general education survey courses applicable to all students regardless of their major. The Core encompasses the knowledge and abilities that Northwestern believes are essential to college graduates. Its requirements are designed to improve students' writing and speaking, to expand students' aptitude in mathematics and its applications, to strengthen students' understanding of biological, physical, social, and behavioral sciences, and to develop an appreciation and knowledge of the arts and humanities.

The goal of the core curriculum is for undergraduate students, depending on their respective degree program, to obtain appropriate learning outcomes for this general education competency.

General Education Requirements: Under the University requirements for the Bachelor's degree, the student must complete six credit hours (two courses) in the Social/Behavioral Sciences area of General Education, one course in Social Science and one course in Behavioral Science. The approved courses to fill this requirement include:

- Social Science: Anthropology 1510, Anthropology 2020, Economics 2000, Geography 1010, Geography 1020, OR Political Science 2010
- Behavioral Science: Educational Psychology 2020, Psychology 1010, Psychology 2050, OR Sociology 1010.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (direct & indirect and quantitative & qualitative) are collected and returned to the executive director at the end of each term indicated (see Student Learning Outcomes section below for details);
- (2) The executive director will analyze the data to determine whether the applicable outcomes are met;
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the appropriate staff members;
- (4) The executive director, in consultation with the staff and senior leadership, will determine proposed changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, service changes.

University Core Competency

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO): The below SLOs apply to both Behavioral Sciences and Social Science courses.

Student Learning Outcome 1. Students will develop the skills to think critically, analyze, and discuss geographical, political, economic and cultural variances in today’s global environment.

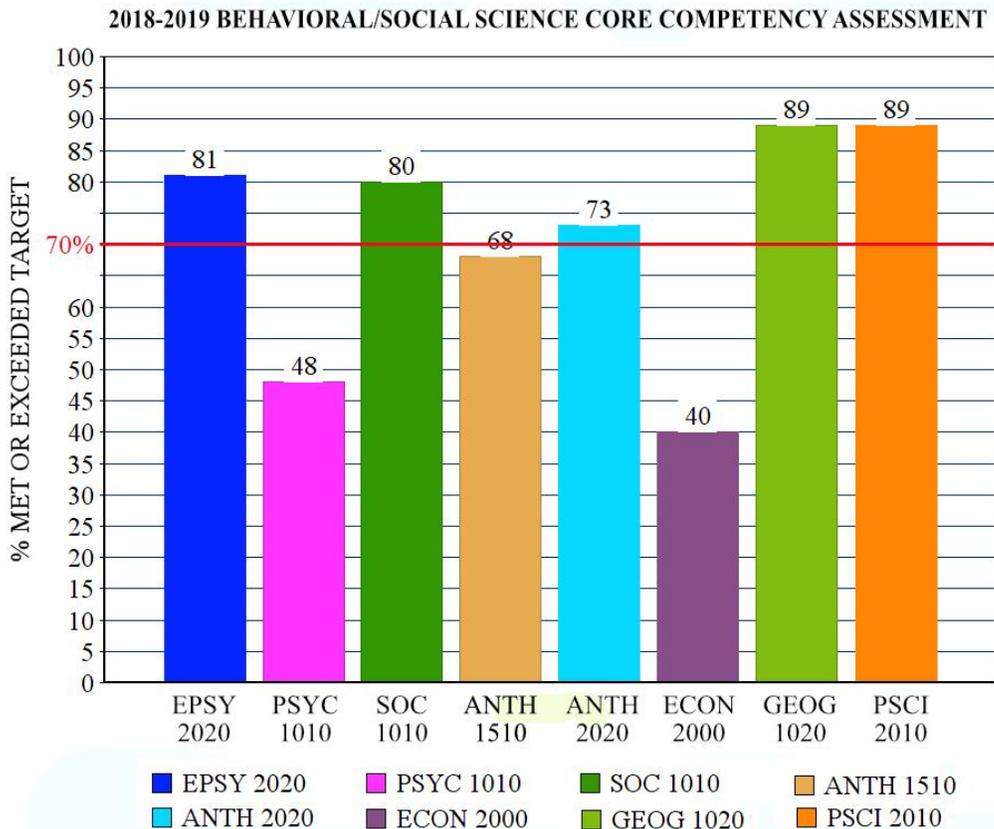
Student Learning Outcome 2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of various sources of human behavior and socialization thereby developing the skills necessary to navigate professional and personal landscapes.

Measures. Combines the assessment Methodology and a Target.

NOTE: All disciplines employed 70% as the Target score.

Course Name	Methodology	SLO Measure	Target %	Term	# Assessed
Behavioral Science:					
Ed. Psych 2020	Pretest/Post-test	1-2/ 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2	81%	Fall/Spring	385
Psych 1010	Pretest/Post-test	1-2/ 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2	48%	Spring	325
Psych 2050	Pretest/Post-test	1-2/ 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2	N/A	Fall	N/A
Soc 1010	Pretest/Post-test	1-2/ 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2	80%	Fall/Spring	81
Social Science:					
Anthropology 1510	Pretest/Post-test	1/ 1.1, 1.2	68%	Fall	184
Anthropology 2020	Pretest/Post-test	1/ 1.1, 1.2	73%	Spring	15
Economics 2000	Pretest/Post-test	1/ 1.1, 1.2	40%	Fall/Spring	184
Geography 1010	Pretest/Post-test	1/ 1.1, 1.2	89%	Spring	74
Geography 1020	Pretest/Post-test	1/ 1.1, 1.2	N/A	Fall	N/A
Political Science 2010	Exams 3 and 4	1/ 1.1, 1.2	89%	Fall/Spring	266

Graph: Behavioral/Social Science Assessment Results, 2018-19



University Core Competency

Behavioral Science: 3 hours selected from Educational Psychology 2020, Psychology 1010, 2050; and Sociology 1010. Assessment schedule is reflected in the chart below.

Measure 1.1. Students will demonstrate their critical thinking skills through the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of sociology, psychology, and educational psychology, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Measure 1.2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the concept of culture and its importance through the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of sociology, psychology, and educational psychology, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Measure 2.1. Student will demonstrate their understanding of various sources of human behavior and its impact on group and individual interactions by the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of sociology, psychology, and educational psychology, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Measure 2.2. Student will demonstrate their understanding of the socialization process and traditional and contemporary theoretical schools of thought by the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of sociology, psychology, and educational psychology, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Course Name	Methodology	Target %	Term
Behavioral Science:			
Ed. Psych 2020	Pretest/Post-test	81%	Fall/Spring
Psych 1010	Pretest/Post-test	48%	Spring
Psych 2050	Pretest/Post-test	N/A	Fall
Soc 1010	Pretest/Post-test	80%	Fall/Spring

Social Science: 3 hours selected from Anthropology 1510, Anthropology 2020, Economics 2000, Geography 1010, Geography 1020 and Political Science 2010. Assessment schedule is reflected in the chart below.

Measure 1.1. Students will demonstrate their critical thinking skills through the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of anthropology, economics, geography, and political science, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Measure 1.2. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the concept of culture and its importance through the development of a research paper, project, presentation or examination in the areas of anthropology, economics, geography, and political science, scoring a minimum 70% on the assessment rubric.

Course Name	Methodology	Target %	Term
Social Science:			
Anthropology 1510	Pretest/Post-test	68%	Fall
Anthropology 2020	Pretest/Post-test	73%	Spring
Economics 2000	Pretest/Post-test	40%	Fall/Spring
Geography 1010	Pretest/Post-test	89%	Spring
Geography 1020	Pretest/Post-test	N/A	Fall
Political Science 2010	Exams 3 and 4	89%	Fall/Spring

University Core Competency

Competency 5 Comprehensive Finding:

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Number assessed: 791

Met or Exceeded Target: 534 (67.5%)

Conclusion: Overall Target **NOT MET**

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Number assessed: 723

Met or Exceeded Target: 513 (71.0%)

Conclusion: Overall Target **MET**

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES.SOCIAL SCIENCES OVERALL

Number assessed: 1,514

Met or Exceeded Target: 1047 (69.2%)

Conclusion: Overall Target **NOT MET**

Analysis:

For the 2018-2019 University Core Competency assessment cycle in the Behavioral/Social Science area, 69.2% of the total number of students assessed met or exceeded the 70% Target. Thus, overall the BS/SS assessments did not meet the 70% target for all of the courses combined, but only by a fraction of 1%. The target was met or exceeded in five of the eight courses for which data was available.

While the 2018-2019 Assessment does contain some useful information concerning student University Core Competency in the Behavioral/Social Science area, several issues adversely impacting the collection and reporting of the data have been identified:

- 1) Incomplete Data Reporting I – For most of the instructors and coordinators of these courses, this is the first year to participate in the assessment process. For that reason, there was some uncertainty about which courses would be assessed in which semester. As a result, some of the courses that should have been assessed in the Fall 2018 semester were not assessed.
- 2) Incomplete Data Reporting II – There was some confusion on the part of the instructors regarding the amount and type of information that was to be reported, resulting in incomplete or missing data for some courses. With more detailed instructions in January, this was less of an issue for the Spring 2019 semester courses, but the problem still persisted.
- 3) Incomplete Data Reporting III – The numerical data requested from each instructor consisted of the total number of students assessed and the percentage who met or exceeded the 70% Target. Consequently, analysis of the data by SLO/Measure is not possible.
- 4) Incomplete Data Reporting IV – The mandatory nature of reporting the assessment results did not seem to be understood by all of the instructors, which caused some data to be submitted after the deadlines.
- 5) Consistency of Data Reporting – The amount and quality of data reported by the instructors varied widely, making direct comparisons difficult to any great degree. A questionnaire was sent out to the coordinators for each course in January 2019 to help guide data collection and submission in the Spring semester, but even so, the disparity in the type and quality of data submitted was substantial.

University Core Competency

- 6) Competency Vs. Course Content – There was some confusion on the part of some of the instructors regarding what was being assessed. Based on the answers on the questionnaires, some of the professors appear to have been focusing on specific course-related content rather than the general University Core Competency SLOs.
- 7) Response Rates I – Response rates were not submitted by every instructor due to the problems mentioned previously, but, with the exception of ECON 2000, the response rates that were reported indicated an overall lower than desired participation rate:
 - a. ECON 2000 – Face-to-Face = 100%; Online = 100%
 - b. PSYC 1010 – Face-to-Face = 61%; Online = 49%
 - c. SOC 1010 – Face-to-Face = 38% (Moodle problems – see [8] below)
 - d. ANTH 1510 – Face-to-Face = 89%; Online = 72%
- 8) Response Rates II – In some courses, technical difficulties with Moodle prevented the administration of the assessments (SOC 1010). These technical problems have now been resolved.
- 9) Response Rates III – In many courses, the assessment was offered as extra credit. It would appear that, as a result, some students viewed the assessment as optional, despite the fact that they were told the assessment was required.
- 10) Poor Performance – Some instructors indicated that poor student performance on the assessments may have been related to the way the assessment was administered. Related to [9] above, with the assessment being offered as extra credit, it is possible that students chose not to put forth their best effort on the assessment.
- 11) Modality Reporting I – For several of the courses, the modality – face-to-face or online – was either 1) only face-to-face, 2) not reported, or 3) if both were indicated for a particular course, the data was combined. With the available data, there is no clear pattern indicating that one modality was more effective than the other in having students meet or exceed the 70% Target. In ECON 2000 and ANTH 1510, fewer online students met or exceeded the target, while in PSYC 1010, fewer face-to-face students met or exceeded the target:
 - a. ECON 2000: Face-to-Face = 47%; Online = 34%
 - b. PSYC 1010: Face-to-Face = 29%; Online = 75%
 - c. SOC 1010: Face-to-Face = 80%
 - d. ANTH 1510: Face-to-Face = 79%; Online = 65%
 - e. ANTH 2020: Face-to-Face = 73%
 - f. GEOG 1010: Face-to-Face = 90%; Online = 89%
- 12) Modality Reporting II – Some instructors were apparently confused by what was meant by modality on the questionnaire. The questionnaire said simply “Modality: Face to Face Online”, with the expectation that the individual filling out the form would choose one or the other. Some instructors interpreted this as meaning the modality of the course, while others thought it referred to how the assessment was administered.

Decision or action to drive future improvement.

If viewed as a developmental exercise, the 2018-2019 University Core Competency assessment was a success in that numerous areas for future improvement were identified. These can most easily be addressed by reference to the numbers in the Analysis list above.

- 1) Incomplete Data Reporting I – The question of which courses should be addressed in semester has been resolved and should not continue to be a problem.

University Core Competency

- 2) Incomplete Data Reporting II – The data requirements will be made more explicit so that all instructors will report the same categories of data.
- 3) Incomplete Data Reporting III – The necessity of providing the numerical data needed for analysis by SLO/Measure will be clarified with the University Core Assessment Coordinator and, if required, will be requested of the instructors for each course.
- 4) Incomplete Data Reporting IV – In order to ensure full and timely participation on the part of all of the instructors, the mandatory nature of the assessment will be reinforced.
- 5) Consistency of Data Reporting – Consistency of data reporting will be ensured by the creation and dissemination of new and more explicit guidelines for the collection and reporting of data.
- 6) Core Competency Vs. Course Content – Meetings will be held with course coordinators which will emphasize that the requirement for the assessments is to be focused on Core Competencies rather than the content of any individual course.
- 7) Response Rates I – A number of alternatives to increase response rates will be implemented in the Fall 2019 semester. Some courses will incorporate the assessment in multiple exams or as a part of the final exam, while others will require that the post-test be taken before access to the final exam is granted.
- 8) Response Rates II – The Moodle technical problems experienced in SOC 1010 have been rectified and should not impair administration of assessments in the future.
- 9) Response Rates III – In order to increase response rates, the mandatory nature of participation in the assessment will be made explicit to students. As stated in [7] above, inclusion of the assessments in existing exams, or preventing access to the final exam until after the assessment has been completed will increase student participation.
- 10) Poor Performance – Including the assessment questions in a required exam would probably work best to prevent poor performance due to apathy. For the alternative, future assessments should indicate whether or not it is an effective strategy to set up the assessment in such a way that taking the final exam is contingent on completing the assessment first, thus removing the perception of “optional extra credit”.
- 11) Modality Reporting I – The modality of the courses will be explicitly requested so that in the future, direct comparisons can be made between face-to-face and online class assessment results.
- 12) Modality Reporting II – The meaning of modality on the questionnaire will be clarified to all instructors and indicated more clearly on the questionnaires. .

It will be necessary to implement the suggestions outlined above before truly meaningful interpretations of the University Core Competency assessments in the Behavioral/Social Science area can be made. This first year has been a learning process, and it has been invaluable in helping to identify problems and shortcomings. The insights gained in the 2019-2020 assessment cycle will enable us to move forward with greater confidence, and with greater certainty that we are achieving the goal of the Core Curriculum to obtain appropriate learning outcomes in General Education competency for all Northwestern students.