06-07 Assessment Report: Criminal Justice

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The assessment process in the Division of Criminal Justice for AY 2006-2007 focused upon a detailed review of the assessment exam administered to Criminal Justice majors. This review was accomplished by an item analysis of the objective questions and an evaluation of the essays completed by students over several semesters. The results encouraged faculty discussion of both the reliability and validity of the exam.

1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AY 2006-2007?

The primary goal of the assessment process in AY 2006-2007 was to conduct a detailed review of the assessment exam administered to Criminal Justice majors. The topic areas addressed by the assessment exam are writing proficiency, structure & function, crime theory, crime law, research, investigations, administration & ethics. Following is a summary of the findings from two assessment reports completed during the 2006-2007 academic year. The complete assessment report regarding the essay question is available at [link to CJ Evaluation of the Essay Question on the Assessment Exam.pdf] The complete assessment report regarding the multiple choice questions is available at [link to CJ Yetter evaluation of pre post test.pdf].

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

   a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered. (Description, date administered, results)

The Division of Criminal Justice at California State University, Sacramento began to administer an assessment exam to Criminal Justice pre-majors and graduating seniors during Fall 2004. Most pre-majors completed the exam during their student orientation sessions and graduating seniors completed the exam during their capstone course (CrJ 194). The exam consisted of two sections—one essay question and an objective section with 50 multiple-choice questions.

1) Essay Question. Exam competencies were determined by pre-test and post-test scores taken from the rubrics. To review, a score of 12 or higher was considered competent and a score below 12 was determined not to be competent. Most of the essays reviewed were judged as competent at both the pre-test and the post-test administrations (see table below).
2) Multiple-Choice Questions. Thus far, the division has accumulated six in-class test batches. Three of these batches correspond to the pre-test and three to the post-test. Using these data provided a sample pool of 330 pre-test students and 238 post-test students for a total of 568 students. Although a comparison of these data can be made, most of the students providing post-test data did not complete the pre-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Pre-Test Data</th>
<th>Post-Test Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure &amp; Function</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Theory</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Law</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin &amp; Ethics</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

1) Essay Question. A comparison of pre- and post-test scores for individual students revealed that a majority of the students (16 or 55%) improved their performance on the post-test. The performance of twelve students (41%) declined from pre-test to post-test. The two performances that declined by 11 or more points consisted of very short answers (one paragraph or less) with one student indicating “time” at the end of the answer. One student’s scores did not change.

A greater proportion of essay exams completed in Web CT required a third independent review compared to those completed in paper format. The brevity of these essay answers may have contributed to the difficulty in their evaluation. In the end, less than 50% of the Web CT pre-test essay exams were judged to be
competent. Allowing students to complete the essay part of the assessment exam in electronic format does not result in well-written answers.

Most of the essays written by students who had completed both the pre- and the post-tests were evaluated as competent. The average score on pre-test exams compared to the post-tests were virtually the same—approximately 16 points. Further analysis indicates that although more students improved rather than declined in their performances, the improvement was small and did not impact the overall average post-test scores. The results reflect competence with no real improvement in student writing skills from pre-test to post-test exams.

2) Multiple-Choice Questions. In general, post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, but the differences are relatively small. Most of the students providing post-test data did not take the pre-test so one cannot assume evidence of positive improvement in levels of knowledge. Many seniors did not take the post-test seriously as they knew it did not count as part of their course or major grade and it occurred near the end of the semester along with their usual final assignments. As a result, post-tests were often incomplete, with many questions left unanswered after question 28.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?

1) Essay Question. In this report, most students completing exams in paper format have demonstrated at least minimal competence. The Division of Criminal Justice should discuss whether or not minimal competence is an acceptable standard for its students. Future analysis may indicate that minimal competence does not equate to a passing course grade.

If the goal of assessing criminal justice student essays is to determine whether or not students develop their writing skills from pre-test to post-test, then the Division of Criminal Justice must continue to administer an assessment exam to collect the data needed to make such a determination. Of the 831 exams taken to date, only 31 students have taken both pre- and post-tests (and only 29 were appropriate for analysis). This is an extremely small number of exams from which to draw meaningful results regarding student performance.

2) Multiple-Choice Questions. The first idea suggested was to make the [multiple-choice] test a requirement for graduation. This idea would most likely give the assessment exam the focus it deserves from the post-test students. The next, more feasible suggestion would be to move the timing of the exam, possibly to the beginning of the semester. Another suggestion that was brought up was to potentially use students’ results on the exam to set up a type of class ranking. This ranking could be announced prior to graduation and entitle the top student, or students, to some sort of acknowledgement or award. The final suggestion was
the idea of weighting the students’ score on the assessment exam as part of their overall course grade.

a. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

Continuing to monitor assessment exam results will demonstrate whether students are improving their performances from pre- to post-test administrations.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics or course alignment?

See Attachment 1

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

2) Multiple-Choice Questions. First and foremost, the Division’s assessment process must be continued. More data is needed in order to develop an accurate picture of the efforts of the department and ensure that future instruction is of the highest quality. At this time, there have not been nearly enough students who have completed both the pre- and post-test assessment exams to paint an accurate picture of what the program is and isn’t doing right. To ensure that the assessment is able to provide meaningful data, it will be necessary to further evaluate those questions mentioned earlier in this research. These evaluations will need to be performed by the Division’s Assessment committee in order to determine if trends highlighted in this research are the result of the questions or some other influences. If new questions are needed, or if the decision is made to design a new test instrument altogether, the nature of the test and the subject groups must be clearly defined and organized. Those responsible for creating the questions for each subject must recognize the importance of this work and provide the committee with the material necessary to ensure the validity of the test instrument. No matter what, more quantitative data will be highly beneficial to this process.

In addition to continuing the process and looking hard at the exam questions themselves, it will also be necessary to give serious thought to altering the implementation of the test itself. The current placement of the post-test at the tail end of the semester may need to be altered, and consideration should be given to moving the administration of the exam to a time nearer the beginning of the semester. At the same time, it must also be ensured that all faculty, whether responsible for administering the exam or not, are delivering the same information regarding its use, importance and design. The students need to know what it is they are taking and feel that their results, weighted or not, do matter to the department and their overall educations.
This rubric is designed to make clear the grading process for the essay portion of the Criminal Justice Assessment exam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Competent</th>
<th>Not Acceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organization is purposeful, effective, and appropriate.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sentence form and word choice are varied and appropriate.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Punctuation, grammar, and spelling are appropriate.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Ideas are clearly discussed and claims are supported.</td>
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<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Makes connections between and among ideas.</td>
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<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Independent and creative thinking is evident.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment Specific Criteria</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Responds to all aspects of the assignment.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Considers the appropriate audience/implied reader.</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overall Evaluation**

❑ Excellent  ❑ Competent  ❑ Not Acceptable

**Comments**