



**California State University, Sacramento
Division of Criminal Justice**

**2014-2015
Division of Criminal Justice
Assessment Report**

INTRODUCTION

In the Academic Year (AY) 2014-2015, the Division of Criminal Justice carried out a variety of activities related to assessment. These activities included carrying out the pre-agreed activities for the AY from the long-term assessment plan developed in AY 2011-2012. As such, the current committee refined, delivered, scored and analyzed student essays on ethical reasoning. Part of the Division's assessment activities has historically been sharing the previous year's assessment committee activities and reports, as well as the plans for the current AY with the faculty as a whole in both the annual Division retreat as well as monthly faculty meetings. That practice was carried out over the AY as well. The Division assessment committees continue to find sharing information with faculty, and the ensuing discussion and feedback, to be an important method of closing the loop so all faculty are fully informed of activities and results. In addition, the committee requested faculty engage in the annual (AY) review of individual course learning objectives.

Multi-year assessment plan

In AY 2011-2012, the Assessment Committee developed a comprehensive, long-term assessment plan for future AYs that provides a road map for the Division assessment activities and future Assessment Committee members. The new plan included items to be assessed in coming years such as, critical thinking, ethical reasoning, student writing and problem solving. Additionally, the plan assesses AY specific issues/topics and includes a full review of program priorities, goals and values that drive what the Division does and hopes to achieve. Development of the long-term assessment plan involved the full faculty in its development, implementation, review and assessment. The long-term assessment plan is our road map for continuous improvement and assessment of activities.

ACADEMIC YEAR 2014-2015 ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

The Division of Criminal Justice Assessment Information Loop for Continuous Improvement

The Division continues to have a productive Assessment Committee that routinely engages with the faculty as a whole on issues such as, defining program and student learning goals and outcome measures, program and curriculum design, and evaluation strategies and methods for initial assessment as well as in response to assessment findings. The primary and continuous goal of the Assessment Committee is quality assurance for the Division. The Division of Criminal Justice has a large faculty body and information is routinely shared and considered toward the benefit of the Division's program. Information on the inclusion of all faculty in this year's assessment activities is described in various sections that follow.

The full faculty is involved in the assessment process at the Division's annual retreat and during monthly Division faculty meetings. The Division Assessment Committee communicates its activities and results to the entire faculty with the aim of initiating discussion and provoking ideas for improving the program and student outcomes. The information sharing and discussions of the assessment of student and program outcomes is part of the Division's information loop. Included in the loop are information collection, analysis and interpretation, reporting results, and discussion of future goals and processes. Essentially, the assessment information loop informs the Division faculty of what was learned over the past year about

student and program outcomes and allows the Division faculty to understand how it will or how it did change as a result of the information. The next Criminal Justice faculty retreat, prior to the next AY (2015-2016), will include not only an overview of the 2014-2015 AY, it will also include discussion on the proposed new strategic plan for the Division.

Faculty discussion and feedback received during and following discussion is invaluable to the effort of program and student outcome improvement. In addition to presentation of assessment activities and discussion at regular faculty meetings and the annual faculty retreat, information is shared through Assessment Committee reports, Assessment Committee meetings and activities, Curriculum Committee meetings and reports, Course Cohort meetings, SacCT, and faculty advising. Through all of these various activities, each has its own information loop in which information and ideas are presented, discussed and decisions made with the intent to improve courses, teaching, student learning, program areas, and the program overall.

The actions and recommendations of the Assessment Committee are formed based on information from the entire information loop; conducting assessment activities, faculty input, course cohort meetings, and working with the Division Curriculum Committee, to both develop and improve our students' content knowledge, skills and values. What we learn directly influences how we change. The process of the Assessment Committee in its annual activities is to plan and design assessment activities, collect data, analyze it, and present it to the full faculty for discussion and program recommendations. Decisions from the faculty body that come about through the Assessment process are actionable and help improve the program.

Review and Evaluation of 2014-2015 Ethical Reasoning Student Essays

In AY 2013-2014, the assessment committee administered an essay intended to measure students' ethical reasoning skills. In keeping with our long-term assessment plan, and to be consistent with the Division's assessment committee measuring critical thinking as our performance learning objective (PLO) for two consecutive years, we again focused on ethical reasoning. In AY 2014-2015, the Division administered an improved form of the prior AY's assessment instrument, an essay aimed at measuring ethical reasoning. Members of the assessment committee reviewed and edited the AY 2013-2014 essay prompts, instructions, and rubric used in the prior AY to make improvements based on results from the prior year essays. While the essay scenarios and instructions were improved by simply making them consistent and less ambiguous, the rubric itself was improved by eliminating one of the three domains due to the fact that it provided poor measurement of its respective area (theoretical perspective) in the prior year. The essay was standardized so that every senior was given the same essay prompts, which included the option to answer one of three scenarios, and instructions.

Essays were provided to CRJ majors in four sections of Contemporary Issues in Criminal Justice (CRJ 190), the Division's senior capstone course. The essay prompts were distributed in all four sections of the course during the same week of the semester and student essays were collected the following week. Approximately 120 students were provided with the optional essay and 96 were returned. By contrast, in the prior AY (2013-2014), the total number of essays returned for scoring was 57.

In AY 2013-2014, the results of the essay scoring indicated that criminal justice students who completed the essay were in the mid to upper-mid range of the measurement. Average scores for these students were 7.8 out of a possible 12 points across the three domains that were measured. In many prior years, the Division's assessment committee activities and measures of student success found criminal justice students to receive average to above-average scores. Last year's findings were again consistent with previous findings thus, in the current year, the assessment committee members agreed that results of the essay measurement should yield average to above-average scores. Using the revised rubric which measures two domains, it was expected that students scoring in the average/mid to above-average/upper-mid range would receive average overall scores of 4 or slightly higher and average scores of 2 to slightly higher than 2 for each of the two domains. These ranges were the Division's standards for performance of students' ethical reasoning.

Results

Results of the essays were positive overall. Using the improved rubric, a student could earn a total of 8 points; 4 from each of the two domains. The first domain was recognition of the ethical issue, and the second domain was evaluation of different ethical perspectives. Scoring on each of the two domains could range from 1 point for comprehension, 2 points if the essay included analysis, 3 points for synthesis, and 4 points for evaluation.

Scores on the essays ranged from totals of 2 points to 8 points while the average score was 4.6 points. As such, 4.6 points on average, places the CRJ students between analysis and synthesis and at the mid to upper-mid range of this measure; identical to our findings from the previous AY. Some students (11%) did earn the full 8 points due to their ability to include evaluation in both domains evaluated in their short essays. Given our performance standard of 4 or slightly higher points, on average our students exceeded the standard. Table 1 reveals that 68% of students met or exceeded the standard.

Table 1. Overall ethical reasoning essay score distribution

Score	# Students	Percent of Students	Cum Percent
8	9	11%	11%
7	6	8%	19%
6	7	9%	28%
5	16	20%	48%
4	16	20%	68%
3	16	20%	88%
2	10	13%	100%*

*Does not equal 100 due to rounding.

For the Ethical Issue Recognition domain, scores ranged from 1 to 4 out of a possible 4 points. The average score for this area was 2.4 placing students again in the mid to upper-mid range of the measured domain. As shown in Table 2, 21% of students scored 4 out of 4 points by demonstrating a level of reasoning consistent with evaluation.

Table 2. Ethical Issue Reasoning domain essay score distribution

Score	# Students	Percent of Students	Cum Percent
4	17	21%	21%
3	16	20%	41%
2	29	36%	77%
1	18	23%	100%

In the Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives domain, scores also ranged from 1 to 4 out of a possible 4 points. The average score for this area was 2.2 placing students yet again in the mid to upper-mid range of the measured domain. Table 3 indicates that 72% of the students met or exceeded the performance standard. As this domain required students to demonstrate a higher level of thinking and ethical reasoning, it was expected that fewer would score full points. In this domain, 13% of students scored 4 out of 4 points by demonstrating a level of reasoning consistent with evaluation.

Table 3. Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives domain essay score distribution

Score	# Students	Percent of Students	Cum Percent
4	10	11%	11%
3	19	24%	35%
2	31	39%	74%
1	21	26%	100%

Based on the scores, criminal justice majors consistently fall in the mid to upper-mid range for the total and for both domains. These findings replicate and are nearly identical to the findings from the assessment committee efforts (measuring ethical reasoning through student essays) from the prior AY. The results of the essay overall suggest that CRJ seniors who wrote the essays are able to identify and evaluate important ethical issues and communicate through writing.

FUTURE WORK

The assessment activities of the Division continue to work through the cycle of evaluating writing and critical thinking, surveying alumni, and examining course and curriculum content as methods for assessing student outcomes. Through AY 2014-2015, the Division continued its commitment to assessing student outcomes by continuing the focus on traditional year to year student outcomes and also engaging in activities outlined in our long-term assessment plan.

The Division's assessment activities are faculty driven to identify the outcomes, define assessment means and decide what to do with the results. In the Fall 2015 semester, the assessment cycle begins again however, each year is part of an overall assessment cycle that transitions in focus while following the

longer term approach to overall assessment. The Division is one of the largest criminal justice undergraduate programs in the nation and students from a great breadth of backgrounds are attracted to our program. We strive to continue our faculty commitment to providing students with the knowledge, skills and values they need to be competitive and successful in their careers within the criminal justice system and elsewhere. The CRJ Division Assessment Committee and faculty remain committed to improving and maintaining higher levels of consistency for teaching and learning within our courses.

Appendix A

Ethical Reasoning Essay Prompt

ETHICAL REASONING ASSIGNMENT

Instructions

The issue of ethics is critical to the education and practice of criminal justice. You have been provided a number of opportunities over the course of your education to develop your own sense of ethics both in practice and perspective. Read the following real world cases. Select one, and write a short (no more than 3 pages) essay on what you perceive to be the ethical issue/s in question and demonstrate your understanding of different perspectives and concepts. The position you take is not as important as is your explanation, how you made your decision, and what your decision is.

Answer one of the following:

- 1) A death row rape-murderer's request to donate his kidney to his mother and harvest his other organs for others in need was rejected by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) who ruled that the time necessary to prepare for a transplant surgery would interfere with the condemned's scheduled execution. The ODRC further denied a request to harvest other usable organs or body parts at any time until after the execution saying that it was not equipped or prepared to process such complex procedures. The decision was made that upon completion of the execution, the then deceased's body would be turned over to his family who could then secure any usable organs and dispose of them as they saw fit.
- 2) The New York City Police Department's Internal Affairs Division instituted an 'Integrity Detail', for the purpose of investigating and detecting charges of corruption or suspicion of corruption throughout the NYPD ranks. Officers assigned recognize that the specific purpose of their work is the catching/entrapping/monitoring of police officers in various acts of misfeasance and/or corruption. The untainted officer will likely not be tempted and will be beyond reproach. The troubled officer may make an unfortunate decision and could face a range of disciplinary actions including suspension, termination, or even criminal prosecution.
- 3) A 14-year old honor student wrote, "Vote for Michael Jackson" on a number of street stop signs; an 11-year old called 911 after his mother locked him out of their house; and a 13-year old threw a piece of steak at his mother's boyfriend, what these juveniles then had in common was they were then referred to and processed through the Allegheny County juvenile court, found in need of services, and sent to one of several private detention facilities in Pennsylvania by two juvenile court judges who, in return for their decisions, were paid some \$2.6 million over a 5-year span by the facilities' owners. Prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, teachers, and various court employees who witnessed myriad miscarriages of justice over this period maintained their silence. Investigative reporters from local newspapers were tipped by parents of some of these juveniles and broke the story that eventually led to the conviction and incarceration of these judges in federal prison. A number of those juveniles sent to these facilities committed suicide, and others who returned faced the disenfranchisement of friends and society upon bearing the label of an ex-offender.

Appendix B

Ethical Reasoning Essay Grading Rubric

Ethical Reasoning Grading Rubric

	Comprehension (1)	Analysis (2)	Synthesis (3)	Evaluation (4)
Ethical Issue Recognition	Recognizes basic ethical issues, but may fail to fully describe complexity...	Recognize basic ethical issues; describes basic understanding of the complexities ...	Recognizes ethical issues presented in complex context, <i>or</i> is able to describe cross-relationships among issues.	Recognizes and is able to articulate ethical issues presented in complex context; recognizes and can describe cross-relationships among issues.
Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives	States a position on different ethical perspectives but does not state objections to, limitations of different perspectives.	States a position on different ethical perspectives and states objections to different ethical perspectives, but does not adequately respond to them in terms of perspective.	States a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of, and responds to the objections to different ethical perspectives. Some aspects of their response may be incomplete or inadequate.	States a position and can effectively state the objections to, assumptions and and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives. Response is comprehensive and convincing.