



A Report of the Course-Embedded Texas Government Assessment

POLS 2306

Spring 2025

Description of the Course-Embedded Texas Government Assessment

Beginning in fall 2022, a new locally developed pretest to posttest was administered within sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government. The instrument consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions and was administered at the beginning and at the end of the fall and spring semesters. The instrument was developed by the faculty of the Department of Political Science for use as part of their ongoing programmatic assessment as well as for Core Learning assessment. Because the instrument was locally developed by Political Science faculty, it is assumed to have content-related validity (Banta & Palomba, 2015). Additionally, as this test was embedded within the POLS 2306: Texas Government courses, the student scores represent authentic student work (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Kuh et al., 2015). However, because the instrument is not for a grade within the course, it represents a low-stakes assessment of student learning.

The student data presented within this report reflect student performance regarding the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's Core Learning Objective of Social Responsibility (THECB, 2025). The THECB (2025) defines Social Responsibility as "intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities." Data from this assessment align with the "knowledge of civic responsibility" element of the broader concept of Social Responsibility.

Methodology

A total of 180 students took the pretest, and 102 students took the posttest for all sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2025 semester; however, not all student test scores were used for analysis. To determine whether student performance increased from pretest to posttest, a dependent samples *t*-test was used for analysis. Student identification numbers were collected along with student scores to identify each student's score on both the pretest and posttest. A total of 102 students could be identified as taking both the pre- and posttests. All statistical analysis was therefore conducted on only those students for whom both pre- and posttest scores could be identified.

Prior to conducting inferential statistics to determine whether differences were present between the students' pre- to posttest scores, checks were conducted to determine the extent to which these data were normally distributed. All four of the standardized skewness and kurtosis coefficients (i.e., the skewness and kurtosis values divided by their standard error) were within the range of normality of ± 3 (Onwuegbuzie & Daniel, 2002) for the face-to-face, online, and combined student populations. Therefore, a parametric dependent samples *t*-test was used to analyze the student performance data for the combined populations. A complete breakdown of the standardized skewness and kurtosis coefficients is in Table 1.

Table 1

Standardized Skewness and Kurtosis Values for Pre- and Posttest Scores for Spring 2025

Student Population	Standardized Skewness Coefficient	Standardized Kurtosis Coefficient
Face-to-Face Students		
Pretest	0.48	-0.46
Posttest	-0.85	-0.67
Online Students		
Pretest	1.04	-0.43

Posttest	-0.86	-0.20
All Students		
Pretest	1.31	-0.17
Posttest	-1.06	-0.82

Results

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .001$ level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in face-to-face sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2025 semester, $t(84) = -9.26$, $p < .001$. This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 1.00 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 33.76% to 57.29%, for an increase of 23.53%. This equated to an average increase of 2.35 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest. Readers are directed to Table 2 for the descriptive statistics for student pre- and posttest scores.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Student Pre- and Posttest Scores on Course-Embedded Test in POLS 2306: Texas Government for Spring 2025 (Face-to-Face)

Test Version	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> %	<i>SD</i> %
Pretest Scores	85	3.38	1.65	33.76	16.47
Posttest Scores	85	5.73	2.18	57.29	21.79

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .001$ level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in online sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2025 semester, $t(16) = -4.97$, $p < .001$. This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 1.21 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 35.29% to 68.24%, for an increase of 32.95%. This equated to an average increase of 3.29 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest. Readers are directed to Table 3 for the descriptive statistics for student pre- and posttest scores.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Student Pre- and Posttest Scores on Course-Embedded Test in POLS 2306: Texas Government for Spring 2025 (Online)

Test Version	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> %	<i>SD</i> %
Pretest Scores	17	3.53	2.40	35.29	24.01
Posttest Scores	17	6.82	2.10	68.24	20.99

A parametric dependent samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the $p < .001$ level between students' pre- to posttest scores for all students enrolled in sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2025 semester, $t(101) = 10.46$, $p < .001$. This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) of 1.04 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 34.02% to 59.12%, for an increase of 25.10%. This equated to an average increase of 2.51 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest. Readers are directed to Table 4 for the descriptive statistics for student pre- and posttest scores.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Student Pre- and Posttest Scores on Course-Embedded Test in POLS 2306: Texas Government for Spring 2025 (All students)

Test Version	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M %</i>	<i>SD %</i>
Pretest Scores	102	3.40	1.781	34.02	17.81
Posttest Scores	102	5.91	2.194	59.12	21.94

Additional information regarding student performance can also be gained through a disaggregated or item analysis of student performance on individual test questions. This item analysis revealed that students in face-to-face sections scored statistically significantly higher on the posttest on 8 of the 10 questions. Questions 2, 3, 5, and 8 were significant at $p < .001$, with moderate to large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). Questions 1, 4, and 7 were significant at $p < .01$, and Question 9 at $p < .05$, all with small effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). The results for a complete breakdown of item analysis data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Percentage of Face-to-Face Students Correctly Answering Pre- and Posttest Questions for Spring 2025

	Pretest %	Posttest %	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Question 1	47	67	20	.003**	0.33
Question 2	12	47	35	< .001***	0.60
Question 3	44	85	41	< .001***	0.73
Question 4	49	68	19	.007**	0.30
Question 5	12	55	43	< .001***	0.80
Question 6	73	80	7	.181	
Question 7	9	25	16	.002**	0.34
Question 8	7	41	34	< .001***	0.65
Question 9	14	26	12	.040*	0.23
Question 10	71	79	8	.145	

Note. $n = 85$. * significant at $p < .05$; ** significant at $p < .01$; *** significant at $p < .001$. Cohen's *d* from 0.2–0.49 indicates a small effect size, 0.50–0.79 indicates a moderate effect size, and 0.80 and higher indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

An item analysis for students in online sections revealed that they scored statistically significantly higher on the posttest on 5 of the 10 test questions. Questions 3, 5, and 7 were significant at $p < .001$, all with large effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). Questions 8 and 9 were significant at $p < .01$, with moderate effect sizes (Cohen, 1988). Statistical significance was not present for the remaining questions. The results for a complete breakdown of item analysis data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6*Percentage of Online Students Correctly Answering Pre- and Posttest Questions for Spring 2025*

	Pretest %	Posttest %	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Question 1	59	71	12	.496	
Question 2	18	29	11	.431	
Question 3	29	94	65	< .001***	1.31
Question 4	41	59	18	.261	
Question 5	24	82	58	< .001***	1.16
Question 6	65	76	11	.431	
Question 7	24	76	52	< .001***	1.03
Question 8	6	53	47	.007**	0.75
Question 9	12	59	47	.007**	0.75
Question 10	76	82	6	.668	

Note. $n = 17$. * significant at $p < .05$; ** significant at $p < .01$; *** significant at $p < .001$.

Cohen's *d* from 0.2–0.49 indicates a small effect size, 0.50–0.79 indicates a moderate effect size, and 0.80 and higher indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

An item analysis for students in all sections combined revealed that face-to-face and online students scored statistically significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) on Questions 1, 2, 7, and 8, as well as Question 5 ($p < 0.001$) from pre- to posttest. The effect size was moderate for all five questions (Cohen, 1988). Statistical significance was not present for the remaining questions. The results for a complete breakdown of item analysis data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7*Percentage of All Students Correctly Answering Pre- and Posttest Questions for Spring 2025*

	Pretest %	Posttest %	Mean Difference	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Question 1	49	68	19	.002**	0.30
Question 2	13	44	31	< .001***	0.53
Question 3	41	86	45	< .001***	0.81
Question 4	48	67	19	.003**	0.30
Question 5	14	60	46	< .001***	0.86
Question 6	72	79	7	.117	
Question 7	12	33	21	< .001***	0.45
Question 8	7	43	36	< .001***	0.67
Question 9	14	31	17	.002**	0.32
Question 10	72	79	7	.131	

Note. $n = 102$. * significant at $p < .05$; ** significant at $p < .01$; *** significant at $p < .001$.

Cohen's *d* from 0.2–0.49 indicates a small effect size, 0.50–0.79 indicates a moderate effect size, and 0.80 and higher indicates a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

References

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