

Assessment Part I - Measure Report 2025-2026

POLS0013: Measurement in Data Science

This document outlines the instructions for the first component of the assessment for POLS0013 in 2025-2026, which involves writing a research report about a measure. The report that you write for the course will constitute 50% of your overall grade and will be due on December 12th 2025.

The other 50% of your grade for this module will come from answering a set of quantitative questions which will be released at the end of term. That part of the assessment will be due on TBD.

Measure Report ('Essay')

Your task is to write a short (1500 word) report about a measure that is currently being used in either the academic literature, by government, by a public organisation, or in some other public or socially relevant capacity.

You are writing a report for someone who understands measurement well in general, but does not know about this particular measure. Your task is to do an assessment of the the measure and also to identify possible ways to improve it.

Your report should include four sections:

1. An introduction describing what the **concept of interest for the measure** is and how/why the measure is being is being used.
2. A description of **the way that the measure is constructed**.
 - This should capture the overall measurement strategy, not necessarily all of the details. For example, you should outline the major types of indicators, but if there are a large number of indicators you do not need to go into detail about how each one was coded.
3. A discussion of what you think are the ***most important potential problems*** with this measurement strategy.
 - This should focus on explaining one or two problems in detail, although you are welcome to briefly list others.
4. A proposal for how we could use some idea(s) from this course to **improve the existing measurement strategy or measure the same concept in a different way**.
 - It is ok if your alternative measurement strategy slightly changes the concept being interested, so long as you explain how it does and why it would be a better measurement strategy for the use that you described in section 1 of your report.

This is a written task only. No statistical analysis is required. Please write an essay in continuous prose. Make sure that you summarise the concept of interest and the measure concisely enough that you have sufficient word count to explain potential problems with the measure and how you might address them.

You can examine a measure of any concept of your choice from economics, human geography, political science, public health, public policy or other social science fields.

You are free to propose any alternative measurement strategy to answer it, on three conditions:

1. You must use at least one method covered in this course.
2. You **MUST NOT** use your undergraduate dissertation topic for this question, in order to ensure that the workload for this assignment is not disproportionately small for those students whose dissertations involve developing a measurement strategy.
3. You **MUST NOT** plagiarise an existing study, published or not. You are going to be critically responding to an existing measure developed by someone else, but that critical response must be your own. Your response can cite existing criticism, but you cannot present someone else's proposed improvement of an existing measure as your own! Remember that we can very easily find out about plagiarism - don't try it.

Your proposed improvement . . .

- Should be achievable and realistic. The data required should exist or be collectible in principle.
- Should clearly state how the analysis of that data would proceed.
- Should also state accurately the extent to which your proposal actually improves on the existing measure, and if there are any tradeoffs involved. It is ok if your proposal improves some aspects of the measurement strategy at the expense of others, but you should explain why that trade-off makes sense for some applications.

Finally

It is possible to achieve high marks with a report about either a good existing measure or a bad existing measure. What we want to see is that you have carefully thought about the strengths and drawbacks of the existing measure and about ways that you might improve it.