

STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM

Program Name: Master of Arts

Dept: Political Science

College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Submitted by: Dr. Ryan Burge, Assistant Professor and Graduate Coordinator

Part 1:

<p>CGS Learning Goal #1 A depth of content knowledge</p>	<p>Program Learning Goal(s): The student will demonstrate content knowledge in their primary area of study</p>
<p>How are learners assessed?</p>	<p>Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate content knowledge when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Three questions on the assessment tap this area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of social science methods • Knowledge of scholarly literature/appropriate sources • Knowledge of their area of research or policy problem <p>The maximum score on this scale would be 12, the minimum would be 3.</p>
<p>What are the expectations for the students?</p>	<p>Since students are completing their graduate degrees we expect that the average rating for all students during the academic year would be at least 9 on the combined measures assessing content knowledge, which is above average.</p>
<p>What are the expectations for the program?</p>	<p>50% of the students completing capstones will receive an assessment on content of at least ten on a scale of twelve on content knowledge. 80% will receive a score of at least 9 out of 12 on content knowledge. No student will receive a combined score lower than 6 out of 12.</p>
<p>What were the results?</p>	<p>The overall content score was 9.98 for students completing the capstone in the 2021-2022 academic year.</p>

	<p>Of the 11 students completing capstones, 9 of them scored a ten or above. That's 82%. 9 students out of 11 scored at least a nine out of 12. That translates to 82%, a few points higher than our goal of 82%.</p> <p>One student received a combined mean score of 6.33 on content knowledge out of 11 completed capstones, while another scored an 8.00.</p>
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chair and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA. The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. Results will be used to guide future curriculum and program development.
CGS Learning Goal #2: Critical thinking and problem-solving skills	Program Learning Goal(s): The student will demonstrate the ability to think and write critically
How are learners assessed?	<p><u>Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric</u></p> <p>Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate critical thinking skills when students defend theses or present capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year, upon completion of a thesis defense, or capstone presentation.</p>
What are the expectations for the students?	Since students are completing their graduate degrees, we expect that the average rating for all students would be at least 3, or above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	At least 80% of students will score a 3 or above on critical thinking skills.
What were the results?	<p>The overall average score for critical thinking was 3.4 among students who completed a capstone in the prior academic year.</p> <p>Of the 11 students who completed a capstone in the prior academic year, 9 of them had an average score of 3 or higher – 82%.</p>

How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chair and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA. The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. Results will be used to guide future curriculum and program development.
CGS Learning Goal #3: Effective oral and written communication skills	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will develop the ability to communicate orally and through written work the concepts appropriate for graduate studies in political science.
How are learners assessed?	Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate oral communication skills and writing skills when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory. The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year as thesis defenses and exams are scheduled.
What are the expectations for the students?	Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students during the academic year would be at least 3 on oral communication and writing skills, which is above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	At least 80% of our students will score a 3 or above on oral communication. At least 80% of our students will score a 3 or above on written communication. At least 50% will receive a combined score of six or seven on both dimensions of communication included in the assessment.
What were the results?	8 of 11 students received an average score of three or higher on oral communication – that's 73% of the sample. 10 of 11 students received an average score of three or higher on written communication – 91% of the sample. 9 of 11 students received a combined score of six or higher on oral and written communication – 82% of the sample.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chair and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission

	to CASA. The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. Results will be used to guide future curriculum and program development.
CGS Learning Goal #4: Evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity.	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will use the research skills they have learned in the program to disseminate their research through appropriate avenues for social science scholars.
How are learners assessed?	To assess our students' ability to present research at professional conferences and publish their writing in professional academic outlets, including publications in academic journals, book chapters, book reviews, or encyclopedia entries. Throughout the year, the graduate coordinator collects data on all graduate student research presentations and publications. External editors, reviewers, conference organizers, and discussants evaluate graduate student research.
What are the expectations for the students?	Students are to collaborate with faculty to produce work suitable for publication or presentation. Students will seek out opportunities to present their work at local/regional conferences with the mentorship of the faculty. Students will apply for Williams Travel Grants to make conference participation possible. Students will win awards at EIU or other organizations for scholarly activity.
What are the expectations for the program?	We expect 10% of our students to present at a conference, win a research award or research grant, or have a publication. With an average enrollment over the two years at 53 students, this percentage would result in 5 students participating in these research activities.
What were the results?	In the prior academic year, we had two students present at a conference, and one student earned a publication. We fell short of our goal this year regarding research activity.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. The faculty will be actively encouraged to partner with graduate students to generate scholarship together or to suggest seminar papers be submitted for consideration for local/regional conferences.

CGS Learning Goal #5: Ethics and Professional Responsibility	Program Learning Goal(s): The graduate candidate demonstrates an understanding and respect for professional ethics in the discipline.
How are learners assessed?	Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate professional ethics when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.
What are the expectations for the students?	Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students during the academic year would be at least 3 on professional ethics, which is above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	At least 50% of the students who graduate from the Public Administration/Public Policy option will successfully complete the course on PA Ethics or Civic and Nonprofit Leadership, which contains a module on ethical leadership.
What were the results?	Of the 11 students who completed the capstone, 10 of them scored at least a 3 on the assessment for professional ethics – 91% of the sample. Of those 11 students who graduated in the prior academic year: 5/11 of them completed the public administration ethics course, 6/11 had taken civic/nonprofit leadership. 3/11 of graduates took both courses and just 3/11 had taken neither course upon graduation.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. Discussion about students being encouraged to enroll in PA Ethics and finding ways to integrate ethics throughout other courses.

Part 2

Describe what your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

The last two years have been a rollercoaster for our graduate program in terms of enrollment. At the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester, we had seventy-one graduate students enrolled in our program. By mid-October of 2022 (just fourteen months later) our major count was forty students. As I write this report, our enrollment has climbed back to 55 students for the upcoming fall semester. We are still trying to understand what a "normal" enrollment is for our program.

In some ways, we feel like we are still suffering the aftereffects of the global pandemic. One way that is being evidenced in our enrollment is that we have seen a dramatic uptick in the number of face-to-face students in our graduate program – almost of them are arriving from places outside the United States. This had led us to think carefully about how to deliver courses in such a way that meets the needs of students who are here on visas and those who would like to attend classes entirely online (either synchronous or asynchronous).

It is noteworthy that even though we are going through such a seesaw pattern in enrollment in our program that our overall scores have stayed relatively high. If anything, the quality of students seemed to improve over the last two years.

Regarding research conferences: conference travel funding is limited, and many of our graduate students cannot afford to pay for their own travel expenses. We may need to reconsider how we evaluate this professional preparation.

Part 3

Summarize changes and improvements in curriculum, instruction, and learning that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

One way that we have used this data is to think carefully about how we will continue to integrate professional ethics into the overall program for our graduate students. We had a course in public administration ethics approved through CGS two years ago and after hiring a new faculty member for this upcoming academic year, we are confident that the faculty support will be in place to have that course taught at least once per year. Our data indicates that the share of students taking that course who have earned their degree dipped a bit last year due to our staffing issues. We are in consultation with our new faculty member in terms of making that course required for all graduating students in our PA/Policy option. Or, possibly, making the Civic and Nonprofit leadership course mandatory. In this way, all our students will get some exposure to professional ethics for those who are charged with leading organizations.

We are strongly considering a new proposal to rethink how students complete their degree program. Currently they have two options: a capstone or a thesis project. We have noticed several students seem to get stuck at this stage and never complete their degree even though they have finished all the coursework. To remedy this, we are contemplating adding two more pathways for completion. One would be an internship that would result in a shorter paper summarizing the work completed and tying the experience back to class concepts. The other would be taking additional coursework – moving the number of credits needed to graduate from 33 to 36 for students who wish to take this route. We worry that if students have the option of just taking a single course to replace the capstone, then many will choose this route, believing it to be easier.

We have the following plans for the next assessment cycle:

- Crafting a proposal that would provide more avenues for student completion of the degree as described above.
- Focus on student research in the next academic year. Typically, we have several students who present at conferences, publish papers, and win awards. That dropped last year. This will be a point of emphasis for us going forward.
- Making either Public Administration Ethics or Civic/Nonprofit Leadership a required course for all students in our graduate program.
- Fully implement an exit interview and an alumni survey for those recent graduates from our program to understand what issues and topics they are facing in the workforce that are not being addressed in our current curriculum.
- Develop partnerships with other programs like Economics and Sustainability to create dual master's degrees. This is an area of interest that we have seen in just the last few months, and it is worth further exploration.