

Political Science MA

Knowledge and Skills

Goal Description:

The program serves students preparing for doctoral studies or law school, high school teachers seeking to improve their professional credentials, individuals wanting to teach in the community colleges, and individuals preparing for careers or advancement in nonprofit organizations (international and domestic) and the public sector.

Providing Department: Political Science MA

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

MA-level Understanding of at Least One of the Major Subfields

Learning Objective Description:

Upon completion of the MA in Political Science program, students will be able to evaluate political theories and discuss the significant research in one of the program's three major subfields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, or International Relations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Written Comprehensive Exam Outcomes

Indicator Description:

We utilize written comprehensive exams as a tool for measuring graduate students' knowledge and skills. Prior to graduation, students complete two written comprehensive exams in areas relevant to their coursework. Exam questions are written by faculty with expertise in the students' areas of study and the questions are based on the content of the overview courses (i.e., POLS 5330, POLS 5371, POLS 5373). Students' exams are graded by at least three faculty members who have expertise in the areas of study pursued by students. Exams are assigned one of the following scores: high pass, pass, and fail.

Criterion Description:

We expect that at least 80% of our students will pass their exams on the first attempt and that 100% of the students who have to take the exam a second time will pass.

Findings Description:

Across the Fall 2022, Spring 2023, and Summer 2023 terms, eight students took the comprehensive exams -- and all eight passed on the first attempt.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Written Comprehensive Amount Outcomes

Action Description:

In 2022-2023, MA program faculty voted to move from comprehensive exams toward a capstone portfolio as a means of assessing student learning objectives in the MA program. During the period of transition, we will continue to use the same assessment indicators for students taking the comprehensive exam (i.e., those who were admitted under a previous academic year catalog).

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Develop a more specific plan for portfolio as new means of assessing learning outcomes

Performance Objective Description:

During 2021-2022, graduate level faculty in the department voted to move away from comprehensive exams and toward a capstone/portfolio project as a better means of assessing student learning outcomes. During the 2022-2023 academic year, graduate faculty led by the MA program director will develop the specifics of the goals, objectives and procedures associated with this assignment.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Goals, objectives and procedures associated with new capstone/portfolio requirement

KPI Description:

During the 2022-2023 academic year, graduate faculty led by the MA program director will develop the specifics of the goals, objectives and procedures associated with this assignment.

Target Description:

The performance objective will be achieved if the program can develop the all of the specific details and procedures associated with the new capstone/portfolio project.

Results Description:

During 2022-2023, MA faculty met and agreed on two main types of portfolio projects -- one geared toward those students interested in pursuing a teaching career and one geared toward those students interested in a research track. For a teaching portfolio, each of the following components will be included in the portfolio:

- Resume/CV (that includes a skills-based statement at the top and identifies references at the bottom)
- Statement of teaching philosophy (tailored to the student's professional goals)
- Sample course syllabus (tailored to the student's specific needs)
- Sample course material (again, tailored to the student's specific needs, but possibly a sample lecture – slides and a written narrative, maybe even a short video – and a sample assignment)
- Annotated bibliography for the above materials (citing materials that informed the statement of teaching and that were consulted when developing the syllabus and course materials).

MA faculty are still finalizing components that would be included in the research portfolio.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Develop details of portfolio project

Action Description:

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the department will continue working toward finalizing the portfolio project. Much of this will be done in early Fall 2023, as several current students have already opted to complete a portfolio rather than the comprehensive exam.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):

Closing Summary

For the coming 2022-23 academic year, we have the following plans for the MA program:

1. Review the data from the latest digital marketing campaign and come up with a longer-term strategy (in consultation with EMC) for recruitment.
2. Design the dossier project as the new assessment mechanism for the program.
3. Continue to develop the new MA in History & Political Studies program in conjunction with the History Department.

The MA program director and department chair will take the lead on these working with the dean and associate deans as appropriate.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

In 2022-2023, we made good progress on all of the goals above. The MA program in History and Politics has been established and we have begun to finalize the details of the new assessment mechanism for the MA program which will replace comprehensive exams. The digital marketing campaign continues to be successful and should be continued in 2023-2024.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

For the coming 2023-24 academic year, we have the following plans for the MA program:

1. Review the data from the latest digital marketing campaign and come up with a longer-term strategy (in consultation with EMC) for recruitment that folds into the new MA program in History and Politics (in conjunction with the History Department).
2. Finalize the requirements and processes of the portfolio project as the new assessment mechanism for the program.

The MA program director and department chair will take the lead on these working with the dean and associate deans as appropriate.