

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

Portfolio of Written Work

Indicator Description:

We measure graduate students' knowledge and skills through the completion of a portfolio of written work, which is submitted in their final term of study. Each portfolio is evaluated by at least three faculty members.

Criterion Description:

We expect that at least 80% of students will submit a passing portfolio in their final term and that 100% of students who must submit a revised portfolio will pass by the end of the next term.

Findings Description:

In 2023-2024 we had 15 MA in Political Science students attempt a portfolio. In Fall 2023, 4 students attempted and 3 (75%) passed on the first try. In Spring 2024, 13 students submitted a portfolio and 12 (92%) passed on the first try. In addition, the 1 student from Fall 2023 re-submitted and passed the portfolio on the second attempt.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Revise learning objective goal of the MA program

Action Description:

The current goal reflects sub-field specialized knowledge that we previously aimed for as a learning objective. In the last 5-10 years the modal student in the MA program has changed. As we spent the last year employing our new assessment tool — the portfolio — we realized there is still a mismatch between goals/learning objectives and the components of the portfolio. Part of this will be “solved” by continuing to tweak the portfolio assignment. However, we also need to better state our goals and learning objectives. The plan is to do this starting in the 2024-2025 cycle.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Roll out revised portfolio exercise

Action Description:

Our initial roll-out of the portfolio for the MA program in 2023-2024 was frustrating. At the core, there was a mismatch between the learning objectives and what we were asking them to do. We have revised the assignment/exercise and will roll it out in 2024-2025.

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 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.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

During the 2023-2024 academic year, we were able to make good progress on #2. We rolled out the new portfolio exercise, formed two subcommittees (of 3 faculty each) to assess the portfolios, and had 10 students complete the portfolio over the Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters. In the process, we recognized several deficiencies, and we were able to come up with strategies to change the exercise going forward. This will create a better match between the learning objectives (which need to be more specifically defined) and the end-of-program assessment.

The longer-term marketing strategy for the program was largely put on hold due to delays caused by IMC internally. We entered the year ready to move forward with digital campaigns we had run previously. Those were put on hold. Ultimately we were forced to wait until very late in the Spring 2024 term to put forward a new digital campaign run through Carnegie Corp. which was acting as an outside vendor with IMC. This campaign ran from April 2024-July 2024.

New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item

Closing Summary:

Moving forward, we have two goals for the MA program:

1. Continue to work through IMC -- and now more closely with the Marketing Director in CHSS -- to develop a long-term marketing plan for the program. The goal here is to have a marketing plan/strategy for the MA program by the end of the 2024-2025 AY.
2. Revise the learning objectives and the portfolio instrument to create a stronger match between what we want students to get out of the MA program and the instruments/indicators we use to assess those objectives. We will pursue this through the two actions stated in this plan:
 - Action 1 Revise learning objective goal of the MA program: The current goal reflects sub-field specialized knowledge that we previously aimed for as a learning objective. In the last 5-10 years the modal student in the MA program has changed. As we spent the last year employing our new assessment tool — the portfolio — we realized there is still a mismatch between goals/learning objectives and the components of the portfolio. Part of this will be “solved” by continuing to tweak the portfolio assignment. However, we also need to better state our goals and learning objectives. The plan is to do this starting in the 2024-2025 cycle.

- Action 2 Roll out revised portfolio exercise: Our initial roll-out of the portfolio for the MA program in 2023-2024 was frustrating. At the core, there was a mismatch between the learning objectives and what we were asking them to do. We have revised the assignment/exercise and will roll it out in 2024-2025.

The department chair will work closely with the MA program director and the MA faculty to move forward with this plan in AY2024-2025.