

Political Science MA

Graduate Student Writing Skills

Goal Description:

Graduate students will develop strong writing skills

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Improving Graduate Student Writing Skills

Learning Objective Description:

The writing skills of students will improve during their first year in the program.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Identifying Students With Weak Writing Skills

Indicator Description:

At the beginning of each semester the MA director will send graduate faculty the names of all students new to the program. Faculty will alert the director to any new student whose first written assignment indicates weak writing skills. Two faculty members will assess the sample and confirmthe weaknesses.

Criterion Description:

We believe the writing skills of students who are referred to the Writing Center will improve. Two or more faculty who cited the weak student evaluate a second writing after the student has received training at the SHSU Writing Center. All referred students must show demonstrated improvement to the satisfaction of the assessing faculty.

Findings Description:

No students' written assignments resulted in referrals to the SHSU Writing Center.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Graduate Student Writing Skills

Action Description:

New co-directors were appointed to the Masters in Political Science program in July, 2016. The co-directors are in the process of establish a committee system that will be used to guide significant decisions regarding student learning objectives and assessment of student learning objectives. The members of the committee system will determine whether or not student writing skills is an area that needs continued attention and, if so, what approaches work best for improving and assessing writing skills.

Written Comprehensive Exams

Goal Description:

Students will gain knowledge and skills that are associated with advanced degrees in political science.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Written Comprehensive Exams

Learning Objective Description:

Upon completion of the MA in Political Science program, students will be able to:

1. Explain the key features of methodology.
2. Evaluate political theories and discuss the significant research in one of the program's subject areas: American government, public administration, comparative politics, or international relations.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Successful Completion Of Written Comprehensive Exams

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 comprehensive exam reading lists and the content of the overview courses (see department level goal of revise written comprehensive exam process for more information on the reading lists and overview courses).

Students' exams are graded by at least two faculty members (more when possible) who have expertise in the areas of study pursued by students. Exams are assigned one of the following scores: high pass, pass, and no pass. If the two faculty members issue conflicting scores (e.g., pass and no pass), a third faculty member will be asked to score the exams and issue a final ruling.

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:

One student took exams in fall of 2015. The student failed the exams. Two students, including the student who failed exams in fall of 2015, took exams. Both students passed. The exams that were scored a fail in the fall prompted a discussion regarding students' knowledge of citation rules. There was general agreement among faculty and administrators that the MA handbook and the MA comprehensive exam instructions need to contain far more information about appropriate academic citation.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Written Comprehensive Exams

Action Description:

New co-directors were appointed to the Masters in Political Science program in July, 2016. The co-directors are in the process of establish a committee system that will be used to guide significant decisions regarding written comprehensive exams. The members of the committee system will determine what improvements need to be made to the written comprehensive exam process and how to make the improvements.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

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

This coming year the department will begin taking the steps necessary to move the MA online. The move towards an online program will likely affect the type of students we recruit (i.e., traditional students versus full time professionals), the reasons the students are purposing the degree (e.g., wanting to use a MA as a means of getting into doctoral programs versus using a MA as a means of furthering an existing professional career), etc. The director and MA Committee will use this coming year to rethink key aspects of the program, such as: student learning objectives and program curriculum, comprehensive exam processes that are conducive to an online program, measurement tools that can be used to measure students' skill and knowledge before entering the program and upon graduating from the program, etc.

Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:

All actions linked to student learning objectives will be implemented. In addition, the department faculty will use this coming year to address a number of questions relevant to the development of the political science graduate program: What skills and knowledge should students possess upon graduating from the program? What courses should be included in the program's course offerings? Etc.

Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary:

Department progress on student learning objectives and the political science graduate program

Note: The political science graduate program underwent an external review in spring of 2016. This coming year the new graduate co-directors will work with faculty to implement the suggestions offered by the external reviewers.