

Political Science MA  
Assessment Plan Summary

Political Science MA

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

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 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:

Four students graduated from the MA program in the past year. Three of the four students took comprehensive exams. Comprehensive exams are scored as high pass, pass, or fail. All three students passed their exams on the first attempt and all three students received scores of pass. One of the four students wrote a thesis and participated in a defense of the thesis. Her thesis defense performance was successful (i.e., she did not have to make any revisions as a results of her defense performance).

As noted in the response to the external review report (see department level assessment MA Program Review Results section), the department does not have the resources to offer a capstone course as a means of assessing graduate student learning objectives. Thus, comprehensive exams will continued to be administered. The current comprehensive exam system is insufficient for assessments purposes. The system is in need of more clear statements about student learning objectives and grading rubrics that reflect the objectives. .

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

Political Science MA Program Action

Action Description:

We believe that the revisions to the core curriculum will positively affect the comprehensive exam structure. Specifically, the MA program director will work with MA faculty to systematize the comprehensive exam structure so that the questions directly reflect the material in the three required subfield courses (POLS 5330, POLS 5371, POLS 5373). During 2017-2018, MA faculty will work to develop a single set of objectives that governs the exam (on the whole) and more specific objectives regarding the specific subfield questions as well as detailed rubrics.

The MA Committee will identify two additional assessments tools beyond comprehensive exams to use when evaluating student learning outcomes.

Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement

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

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.

**Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

The MA Program responded to the majority of the concerns set out in the external review report.

**2016-2017 Plan for Continuous Improvement****Closing Summary:**

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