

Public Administration MPA

Written Comprehensive Exams

Goal Description:

Students will gain knowledge and skills that are associated with advanced degrees in public administration.

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

Written Comprehensive Exams

Learning Objective Description:

Students must demonstrate competency in the some of the core areas of public administration including financial management, research methods, and ethics.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

Written Comprehensive Exam Outcomes

Indicator Description:

We utilize written comprehensive exams as a tool for measuring students' knowledge and skills. Prior to graduation students complete three 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:

MPA students complete three comprehensive exams. Student exams are scored as high pass, pass, or fail. Nine students completed exams in the past year. Five of the nine students received a high pass and two passes on their exams. Four of the nine students received passes on their exams. all students passed on their first attempts.

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

MPA Program Actions

Action Description:

The MPA Committee will work to develop a single set of objectives that governs the exams (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 public administration 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 MPA Program responded to the majority of the concerns set out in the external review report.

2016-2017 Plan for Continuous Improvement

Closing Summary:

The MPA Committee will work to develop a single set of objectives that governs the exams (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.