STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
SUMMARY FORM AY 2018-2020

Degree and Program Name:	M.A. in Political Science

Submitted By:	Ryan P. Burge

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PART ONE

What are the learning objectives?	How, where, and when are they assessed?	What are the expectations?	What are the results?	Committee/ person responsible? How are results shared?
1. The student will demonstrate the ability to think and write critically.	Our Department used two measures for this learning objective: 1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment rubric Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate critical thinking skills when students defend theses or present capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 5 point scale, with 5 being exceptional, 4 above average, 3 satisfactory, 2 below average, and 1 failure. The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year, upon	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students would be at least 4, or above average. 2. Conference Presentations and publications We expect 20% of our students to present at a conference or have a publication. With average enrollment over the two	1. Thesis Defense/Capstone Assessment Rubric In 2018-2020, the average critical thinking evaluation was 4.11 for 19 students who completed their thesis or capstone exceeding expectations by 3.6%. Capstone students had an average score of 3.97. Thesis students had an average score of 4.5, which is about a quarter of a point lower than the previous assessment cycle average. Although, this is a smaller sample size this	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chairman and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA. The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department.

	completion of a thesis defense, or capstone presentation. 2. Conference presentations and publications We also use an indirect measure to assess our students' ability to present research at professional conferences and publish their writing in professional academic outlets, including publications in academic journals, as book chapters, book reviews, or encyclopedia entries. Throughout the year, the graduate coordinator collects data on all graduate student research presentations and publications. External editors, reviewers, conference organizers and discussants evaluate graduate student research.	years at 55 students, this percentage would result in 11 students participating in these research activities. However, in the past two years, two changes may affect this percentage. First, the lingering effects of the state budget crisis in AY 2016-2017 restricted funding opportunities for graduate student research travel in subsequent years. Second, we began offering a fully online MA option in AY 2016-2017, which enrolls about three quarters of our graduate students. These students are more likely to be working professionals, away from campus, and unable to engage in professional research conferences at the same level as students enrolled in our face-to-face MA option. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect a lower level of participation.	cycle with just 4 students completing a thesis during the time period in question. 2. Conference Presentations and Publications From 2018-2020, 10 students made 14 presentations, and 1 student had a publication, or 20% of students enrolled. Despite funding challenges and curriculum changes, students still met the expected 20% participation rate.	
2. The student will demonstrate content knowledge in their primary area of study.	1. Thesis Defense/Capstone Assessment Rubric Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate content knowledge when students defend their theses or presented their capstone projects. The same scale	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric In 2018-2020, 19 students defended a thesis or presented a capstone project. The average content knowledge of	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chairman and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA.

	is used as described in Learning Objective #1 (see above). The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year as thesis defenses and exams are scheduled.	during the academic year would be at least 4, which is above average.	policy problems was 4.47, exceeding expectations by 11.8%. For content knowledge of the scholarly literature, the mean score was 4.16. This exceed our benchmark by 4%. When comparing capstone students those who chose the thesis option, the difference in scores was small, with thesis students scoring 4.42 vs 4.24 for those completing a capstone. We ran a correlation between the average content knowledge score at degree completion and the # of online credits, and found no relationship existed.	The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department.
3. The student will develop the ability to apply appropriate social science research methods.	1. Thesis Defense/Capstone Assessment Rubric Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate content knowledge when students defend their theses, or present their capstone projects. The same scale is used as described in Learning Objective #1 (see above). The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students during the academic year would be at least 4, which is above average.	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric In 2018-2020, 19 students defended their theses or presented their capstones. The average research methods evaluation was 3.89, a slight decline from the earlier stage of assessment, 2.7% below the expected average.	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chairman and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA. They have also led to curricular changes to the newly added PLS 5054 class – focusing on methods that are

	throughout the year as thesis defenses and exams are scheduled. 2. Conference presentations and publications Student conference presentations and publications serve as an indirect measure of research methods skills, since all empirical research in Political Science requires an appropriate methodology. Additionally, review essays and related research requires students to be aware of how to evaluate research methodologies. Conference section heads, discussants, and editorial boards evaluate the quality of student work. Throughout the year, the Graduate Coordinator keeps track of how many students present at research conferences or have scholarly publications.	2. Conference Presentations and publications We expect 20% of our students to present at a conference or have a publication. With average enrollment over the two years at 55 students, this percentage would result in 11 students participating in these research activities. See Objective 1 for our concerns about curricular and budgetary impacts on this expectation.	2. Conference Presentations and Publications From 2018-2020, 10 students made 14 presentations, and 1 student had a publication, or 20% of students enrolled. Despite funding challenges and curriculum changes, students still met the expected 20% participation rate.	using by practitioners in public administration.
4. Students will develop the ability to orally communicate concepts appropriate for graduate studies in political science.	1. Thesis Defense/Capstone Presentation Assessment Rubric Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate oral communication skills when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The same scale is used as	1. Thesis Defense/Capstone Presentation Assessment Rubric Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students during the academic year	1. Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric In 2018-2020, 19 students defended their thesis or presented their capstones. The average oral communication evaluation was 4.26,	The results of these direct measures have been shared with the Department Chairman and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee prior to submission to CASA. The results of this report are also shared

| | described in Learning Objective #1 (see above).

The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year as thesis defenses and exams are scheduled. | would be at least 4, which is above average. | exceeding expectations by 6.5%.

Capstone students had an average score of 4.19. Thesis students had an average score of 4.46, very close to the average for the previous assessment cycle.

We ran a correlation between the average oral communication score at degree completion and the # of online credits, and found a small (.09) Pearson's correlation, where students who took more online hours demonstrated higher average scores. | and discussed with the entire department. |

PART TWO

Describe your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the CASA Director's comments on last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

The past two years of assessment data indicate relatively stable results, which is a good sign given that the program has gone through some fairly dramatic changes in the last two-year time period. To be frank, we have spent much of the last two years just trying to accommodate the incredible increase in student demand that we have seen over that time period. To be specific, we had 47 students in the program in 2017. That jumped to 66 students in 2018. Then increased to 75 students in 2020. In the Fall of 2015 we had zero online graduate students; now we have 55.

As previously mentioned, we implemented major curricular changes beginning in Fall 2016, with the addition of an online MA option in Political Science, focusing on Public Administration and Public Policy (maintaining a face-to-face Political Science MA). But we have had to continue to adapt and evolve to meet the staffing challenges of adding so many students in such a rapid time frame.

With that growth, we are enrolling more non-traditional graduate students, including late-career graduate students, first generation, minorities, and veterans. We have worked to provide them with the resources for graduate school success, including a D2L orientation/resource page for all students, mentoring from the graduate coordinator and graduate faculty, and multiple means of communication with students. We are pleased to see that there are minimal differences between student assessment scores between our online and face-to-face options. We can say that initial results of moving from a thesis to a capstone option have been positive. We are seeing initial signs that students are completing their capstone projects at a faster rate and their assessment scores are remaining relatively high. However, we must admit that it is early. We have just begun graduating more students who initially enrolled online two or three years ago. A clearer picture will emerge in the next two years.

Finally, we had one student received a King-Mertz award for a non-thesis research paper.

PART THREE

Summarize changes and improvements in **curriculum, instruction, and learning** that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Assessment has led us to make the following changes:
- We are working to improve the delivery of high-quality Master's level research methods training. To that end we have reconfigured our graduate level research methods course. In the fall of 2018, we began offering two different research methods class. A face-to-face version is ideal for students completing the thesis option and seeking Ph.D. placement or careers requiring data analytics. The online research methods class is geared towards applied research methods, focusing on teaching students how to use software that they typically would have on the job, and geared towards more mixed methods.
- Beginning in the fall of 2018, we are no longer offering PLS 5001/Introduction to Political Research. The content from that course was integrated into the two new (or revised) research methods courses, as well as our D2L Graduate Student Orientation and Resources page.

- As such, our entry-level assessment of students in PLS 5001 is no longer be possible, requiring a revised assessment plan. We recognize that this has not been completed as of the Fall of 2020. As previously mentioned, we have devoted quite a bit of time to changing our curricular offerings to meet rising student demand and are just now beginning to circle back to developing an assessment plan. What complicates this task is that our students no longer have a single point of entry. While all students used to take the same research methods course, that is no longer the case because we offer two different methods courses. Additionally, many online students do not take research methods their first semester as a student.
- Given that many of our students are online and that they deliver their capstone presentation via video chat, we have moved all our assessment to a digital format. Each committee member receives a link to a Machform which they complete and a receipt is emailed to them as well as the department chair. We have found this to be a tremendous boost to our efficiency and generates much more accurate record keeping. This is all the more important with our workflow being disrupted by COVID-19.

We have the following plans for the next assessment cycle:
- We will be integrating more resources from Booth Library and Career Services into our online classes and hope to integrate more services from the Writing Center too.
- We would like to collaborate with other departments on campus to create certificate programs that would lead to more skills-based learning. For instance, we just had a conversation with the Geology/Geography department about making it possible for our online students to complete a certificate in Public Planning entirely online.
- We plan to explore ways to formulate an intake assessment as a way to demonstrate growth in student's skills and academic ability as they complete our program. One possibility under consideration is to require newly enrolled students to submit a small portfolio of their written work to the graduate assessment committee to be evaluated.
- Now that we have larger numbers of students completing our online option, we plan to administer a student survey and alumni survey, to gain more indirect, but valuable evidence about the graduate options we offer. The student survey may be particularly helpful to gauge the accessibility of EIU resources in an online setting. We also would like to track where our online graduate students go in the workforce and how the skills that they are learned in our graduate program helped them to advance in their careers.

Student Learning Assessment Program
Response to Summary Form
Graduate Program 2020
April 13, 2021

Department: Department of Political Science
Degree and Program Name: M.A. in Political Science
Reviewer: Dr. Nikki Hillier, Graduate Assessment Coordinator, Graduate School

Category	Comments
Learning Objectives	The objectives for the program encompass all the graduate learning goals established by EIU's Council on Graduate Studies.
How, Where, and When Assessed	The report clearly states how students are assessed: publications and presentations, and through a rubric used to assess learning objectives through a capstone project or thesis defense. Student work is evaluated by several graduate faculty in the program.
Expectations	Expectations are reasonable for graduate learning goals and are clearly defined.
Results	The report indicates that the program is meeting or exceeding expectations for most measures. One noted exception is the ability to apply appropriate social science research methods, but that expectation was only barely missed and has been addressed through curriculum revisions.
How Results Will be Used	Results are shared with the Chair and the Department's Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee, and discussed as a department. Results are clearly used meaningfully as you have analyzed the results (checking for relationships in scores and number of online credit hours), and issues are addressed.
Recommendations	Your program has experienced immense growth over the last few years, and you have been able to accommodate that growth while still meeting expectations for student learning. Your program takes assessment seriously and uses results to make programmatic improvements. For example, when you recognized that students were not meeting expectations for application of research methods, you revised the program to ensure 1) the program was addressing the needs of all students (practitioners *and* scholars), and 2) that students are prepared to meet expectations. We recommend continuing the work you are doing. You noted the change in curriculum resulted in not having an early assessment for students; perhaps you can identify a new means for conducting an earlier assessment of student learning moving forward that would benefit your students and program. Given some of the barriers to publishing and presenting that you have outlined, you may want to look at another measure for those learning objectives. Finally, the ideas you have proposed for the next assessment cycle sound promising, particularly the intake assessment and post-graduation follow-up. Your assessment efforts are impressive, including your implementation of notable and progressive revisions.

The Council on Graduate Studies approved of revised learning goals on December 8, 2020, which included the addition of an Ethical and Professional Responsibility learning goal. Please consult with your graduate faculty members to determine how to incorporate this learning goal into future assessment activities.