

## STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM

Program Name: Master of Arts

Dept: Political Science

College: College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Submitted by: Dr. Ryan Burge, Assistant Professor and Graduate Coordinator

### Part 1:

<p>CGS Learning Goal #1 A depth of content knowledge</p>	<p>Program Learning Goal(s): The student will demonstrate content knowledge in their primary area of study</p>
<p>How are learners assessed?</p>	<p>Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate content knowledge when students defend their theses or presented their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.</p> <p>Three questions on the assessment tap this area:            Knowledge of social science methods            Knowledge of scholarly literature/appropriate sources            Knowledge of their area of research or policy problem</p> <p>The maximum score on this scale would be 12, the minimum would be 3.</p>
<p>What are the expectations for the students?</p>	<p>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 9 on the combined measures assessing content knowledge, which is above average.</p>
<p>What are the expectations for the program?</p>	<p>50% of the students completing capstones will receive an assessment on content of at least ten on a scale of twelve on content knowledge.            80% will receive a score of at least 9 out of 12 on content knowledge.            No student will receive a combined score lower than 6 out of 12.</p>
<p>What were the results?</p>	<p>The overall content score was 9.99 for students completing the capstone in the 2021-2022 academic year.</p>

	<p>Of the 26 students completing capstones, 17 of them scored a ten or above. That's 65%. 19 students out of 26 scored at least a nine out of 12. That translates to 73%, a few points short of our goal of 80%.</p> <p>One student received a combined mean score of 5.33 on content knowledge out of 26 completed capstones.</p>
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	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.

CGS Learning Goal #2: Critical thinking and problem-solving skills	Program Learning Goal(s): The student will demonstrate the ability to think and write critically
How are learners assessed?	<p><b><u>Thesis Defense/ Capstone Assessment Rubric</u></b></p> <p>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 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.</p> <p>The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year, upon completion of a thesis defense, or capstone presentation.</p>
What are the expectations for the students?	Since students are completing their graduate degrees at this level, we expect that the average rating for all students would be at least 3, or above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	At least 80% of students will score a 3 or above on critical thinking skills.
What were the results?	<p>The overall average score for critical thinking was 3.26 among students who completed a capstone in the prior academic year.</p> <p>Of the 26 students who completed a capstone in the prior academic year, 21 of them had an average score of 3 or higher – 81%.</p>

How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	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.
CGS Learning Goal #3: Effective oral and written communication skills	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will develop the ability to communicate orally and through written work the concepts appropriate for graduate studies in political science.
How are learners assessed?	Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate oral communication skills and writing skills when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.  The Department's graduate coordinator collects the data throughout the year as thesis defenses and exams are scheduled.
What are the expectations for the students?	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 3 on oral communication and writing skills, which is above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	At least 80% of our students will score a 3 or above on oral communication At least 80% of our students will score a 3 or above on written communication At least 50% will receive a combined score of six or seven on both dimensions of communication included in the assessment.
What were the results?	19 of 26 students received an average score of three or higher on oral communication – that's 73% of the sample. 21 of 26 students received an average score of three or higher on written communication – 80% of the sample. 18 of 26 students received a combined score of six or higher on oral and written communication – 69% of the sample.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of these 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.

CGS Learning Goal #4: Evidence of advanced scholarship through research and/or creative activity.	Program Learning Goal(s): Students will use the research skills they have learned in the program to disseminate their research through appropriate avenues for social science scholars.
How are learners assessed?	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.
What are the expectations for the students?	Students are to collaborate with faculty to produce work suitable for publication or presentation. Students will seek out opportunities to present their work at local/regional conferences with the mentorship of the faculty. Students will apply for Williams Travel Grants to make conference participation possible. Students will win awards at EIU or other organizations for scholarly activity.
What are the expectations for the program?	We expect 10% of our students to present at a conference, win a research award or research grant, or have a publication. With average enrollment over the two years at 60 students, this percentage would result in 6 students participating in these research activities.
What were the results?	In the prior academic year, we had one student present at a conference, two students earn publications, three students win a research grant, and three students win research awards including first place for the Booth Library graduate research award. In total nine students participated in research activities – exceeding our goal.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. The faculty will be actively encouraged to partner with graduate students to generate scholarship together or to suggest seminar papers be submitted for consideration for local/regional conferences.
CGS Learning Goal #5: Ethics and Professional Responsibility	Program Learning Goal(s):

	The graduate candidate demonstrates an understanding and respect for professional ethics in the discipline.
How are learners assessed?	Graduate committee members apply a rubric to evaluate professional ethics when students defend their theses or present their capstone projects. The rubric specifically addresses this objective, applying a 4-point scale, with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 satisfactory, 1 unsatisfactory.
What are the expectations for the students?	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 3 on professional ethics, which is above average.
What are the expectations for the program?	That at least 50% of the students who graduate from the Public Administration/Public Policy option will successful complete the course on PA Ethics or Civic and Nonprofit Leadership which contains a module on ethical leadership.
What were the results?	Of the 26 students who completed the capstone, 25 of them scored at least a 3 on the assessment for professional ethics – 96% of the sample. Of those 26 students who graduated in the prior academic year: 50% of them completed the public administration ethics course, 79% had taken civic/nonprofit leadership. Thirty-eight percent of graduates took both courses and just 13% had taken neither course upon graduation.
How are the results shared? How will these results be used?	The results of this report are also shared and discussed with the entire department. Discussion about students being encouraged to enroll in PA Ethics and finding ways to integrate ethics throughout other courses.

## Part 2

**Describe what your program's assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the Graduate Assessment Summary Response from last year's report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.**

The last twelve months have presented our program with a significant set of new problems that are being addressed. Namely that at the beginning of the Fall 2021 semester, we had seventy-one graduate students enrolled in our program. By mid-October of 2022, just fourteen months later our major count was forty students. This has led us to rethink our course rotation and our marketing materials to try and regain some of the enrollment loss we sustained over the last year. Doing this assessment has helped crystallized why exactly that happened – our program graduated twenty-six students in just one academic year and over forty since December of 2020. Without those students being replaced with new ones, our numbers were going to drop into the mid-forties. That's exactly what has happened.

It is noteworthy that even though we are graduating a record-breaking number of students from our program that are overall scores have stayed relatively high. It's also worth pointing out that we have produced a high number of students who are publishing scholarship, going to conferences, and winning scholarly awards. If anything, our quality of student seemed to improve over the last two years.

## Part 3

**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?**

One way that we have used this data is to think carefully about how we will continue to integrate professional ethics into the overall program for our graduate students. We had a course in public administration ethics approved through CGS over the last year and have put it in the regular rotation of courses. Our data indicates that exactly half of our graduating students took that course as part of their degree program. We are considering whether to make that course required for all graduating students in our PA/Policy option. Or, possibly, making the Civic and Nonprofit leadership course mandatory. In this way, all our students will get some exposure to professional ethics for those who are charged with leading organizations.

We are also moving forward with a plan to return a course on socialization into the discipline back in the curriculum. Previously, we had a one credit course (PLS 5001) that was focused on this topic, but it was removed. We think that trying to integrate that material into our research methods course is becoming unwieldy and that there's just not enough time in the semester to cover all the material. We feel that exposing students to information about how to present at conferences, submit work for publication, and seek out internships would be incredibly valuable.

Unfortunately, we have not managed to fully implement our exit interview process just yet. This is partially due to the high number of capstones and theses that were presented over the last academic year. Given that many of these students will be just six to twelve months removed from the program – it seems high likely that would still be willing to participate in an exit interview. This is something we will redouble our efforts on after we have spent some time and resources on marketing our program to new students.

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. This is being accelerated by the fact that the Writing Center now is pivoting to be more online focused.

Making either Public Administration Ethics or Civic/Nonprofit Leadership a required course for all students in our graduate program.

Fully implement an exit interview and an alumni survey for those recent graduates from our program as a way to understand what issues and topics they are facing in the workforce that are not being addressed in our current curriculum.

Develop partnerships with other programs like Economics and Sustainability to create dual master's degrees. This is an area of interest that we have seen in just the last few months and it is worth further exploration.