

Master of Public Administration 2014-2015 Assessment Plan Summary

Learning Outcomes

1. To lead and manage in public governance:

- A. A graduate of our program will be able to understand how both structure and culture of public organizations affect organizational effectiveness
- B. A graduate of our program will know how to effectively manage human resources and provide leadership in this regard

2. To participate in and contribute to the policy process:

- A. A graduate of our program must be able to identify key stakeholders, their positions, coalitions, and the political context
- B. A graduate of our program must be able to understand and apply the different aspects of the policy making cycle

3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions:

- A. A graduate of our program must be able to utilize scholarly research, data and other analytic techniques, and best professional practice, systematically analyzing and making decisions on administrative and policy in the public service
- B. A graduate of our program can communicate results clearly, in writing or orally, to an appropriate audience
- C. A graduate of our program must be able to apply these concepts to a real world (substantive) case

4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective;

- A. A graduate of our program will be able to make informed decisions and manage public service organizations in the public interest by effectively utilizing and balancing key public administration values
- B. graduate of our program will understand the value of fair and transparent administration, and will be able to effectively and ethically engage citizens in public service organizations

5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry:

- A. A graduate of our program will have the ability to develop and exercise intercultural sensitivity with employees and other stakeholders
- B. A graduate of our program will be able to engage effectively and respectfully with multiple audiences

Assessment of Learning Objectives

Learning Outcomes 1-5 Assessment Method:

Comprehensive Exam

The primary means by which the program will assess competence is the MPA Comprehensive Exam. Passing the MPA Competency Exam is a requirement for graduation for all students, and the material covers the core curriculum with the exception of PS 5630 (Statistics & Data Analysis in Political Science I) and PS 7375 (Professional Development Seminar). The exam consists of a five-hour, computer-based exam, and consists of a case study analysis and two questions to answer.

The exam will have the following structure:

- The case study in Part A will rotate among different cases, the library and list will be maintained by the MPA director. *The case study will always be used to assess the analysis domain ("...to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions").* The case study is designed to measure and assess learning objective 3.
- The questions in Part B will rotate among the other four domains or learning objectives. These will be planned out a year in advance, beginning with the fall semester. Specific questions will be selected from a bank of questions by the MPA director. Students will not be told specifically which domain will be covered, but they will still be given the study guide ahead of time. The questions in Part B are designed to measure and assess learning objectives 1, 2, 4, and 5. Each question pertains to a single learning objective.

Exam answers are graded by two faculty members. Student names are concealed. Possible grades are fail, pass, and pass with distinction. For purposes of performance assessment, the grades pass and pass with distinction are collapsed into a single code, "pass." The grades assigned by the two faculty members to a specific student answer furnish the data to assess the overall performance of students with respect to a particular learning objective. The comprehensive exam is given three times a year to varying numbers of students. Over a year long period, approximately 25 students take the exam. All of them will answer questions on a case study, learning objective three. Varying numbers will write answers on questions on Part B of the examination. Students write on two of four questions (their choice). Thus, in an average year, there will be 50 grades on the case study (2 graders x 25 answers) and 100 grades on Part B questions distributed across the other four learning objectives (2 graders x 50 answers). Thus, annually, there will be about 25 grades with respect to learning objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5. The measure of performance for learning objective 3, relating to the case study, is the percentage of answers that are graded either "pass" or "pass with distinction."

The measure of performance for learning objectives 1, 2, 4 and 5 is the percentage of answers with respect to Part B questions assessing that objective that are graded either "pass" or "pass with distinction." These performance measures are calculated annually and can be tracked over time. To improve the reliability of grading for both Part A, the case study, and Part B, faculty grading answers use common rubrics, one for Part A, another for Part B.

Results

The assessment plan is being implemented beginning Fall 2014. The comprehensive exam is scheduled for October 18. The assessment plan was approved by NASPAA, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, an accrediting organization for graduate programs in public affairs.

Program Action Plan

MPA program faculty meet monthly to discuss and assess the program. They are supported by a Practitioner Advisory Council. On 18 May 2015 the nucleus faculty will hold a retreat at which it will analyze and discuss initial findings with respect to learning objectives 1 through 5. It is anticipated that this will involve a review of the effectiveness of the curriculum with respect to particular learning objectives and if necessary revision of the curriculum and/or delivery modes. To this end, MPA program faculty members will share syllabi and discuss the content of their courses as this content supports the learning objectives. Results of the comprehensive exam will also be discussed using the matrix provided in the Results section. In this effort, the Practitioner Advisory Council advises the MPA program faculty on the curriculum and its relevance to both the learning objectives and to professional careers in public service.

Goals for Academic Year 2015-2016:

- 1) 100 % passage rate on the case study component
- 2) All five of the domain competencies will be assessed through the comprehensive exams given during the academic year - goal is at least 90% passage rate across all five

Reporting to Stakeholders-

The results are inputted into Compliance Assist and posted on the Political Science Department website. They are also reported to our national accrediting body (NASPAA, the Network of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration) and to our Practitioner Advisory Committee, which meets once a semester.