

**Academic Program Assessment Data Report (2015)**  
**Ph.D. degree program in Public Policy (PUBPPH)**  
Submitted by Brinck Kerr, Director  
May 9, 2016

## **Introduction**

This report includes the presentation of (1) PUBP student learning outcomes; (2) how learning outcomes are assessed; (3) timelines for data collection and analysis; and (4) guidelines for use of results. Assessment data for calendar year 2015 are presented below each learning outcome or set of outcomes in the section “Assessment of Student Learning.” All data are in bold.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

*(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)*

Students near the end of their coursework should be able to:

- (1) conduct research in a collaborative (or team) setting that will inform some aspect of policy making on a community issue;
- (2) apply policy recommendations to a real world problem or issue;
- (3) demonstrate that they have the requisite policy core, specialization, and methods skills necessary to progress to the dissertation stage;
- (4) demonstrate the ability to do independent research;
- (5) expand upon or “test” public policy and/or specialization area theories;
- (6) contribute to new scholarly/academic knowledge; and
- (7) contribute to policy relevant knowledge.

## **Assessment of Student Learning**

*(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)*

All educational/learning outcomes (i.e. outcomes 1 through 7 in section 2 above) are evaluated by program faculty.

Outcomes 1 and 2 are primarily evaluated in PUBP 6134, the Capstone Seminar. In their last semester of coursework, policy students participate as team members in a capstone service project. The service project is designed to (1) inform some aspect of policy making—usually

relating to a community issue—and (2) apply policy recommendations to a real world policy problem or issue. Students receive a grade for the seminar and they make a public presentation on their project [meeting program goals 2 and 3].

**The fall 2015 capstone team conducted an analysis of food security on the University of Arkansas campus. Jon Langner, Cami English, and Elizabeth Smith presented, “Barriers to Use: A Study on the Full Circle Food Pantry at the University of Arkansas,” at the 2016 Southwestern Social Science Association meeting. This research was a continuation of the work begun by the fall 2014 capstone team, which developed a framework for analysis of food security on the University of Arkansas campus. Both capstone teams made presentations to key stakeholders and government officials.**

Outcome 3 is primarily evaluated during the qualifying exam process. The exam process serves as an opportunity for discussion between the faculty and the student as the student integrates core/specialization classes and academic activities across subject areas and disciplinary approaches. The exam committee, under the leadership of the student’s advising chair, writes four questions relevant to the student’s class work, career goals, and dissertation agenda. Students are given guidance by the specialization and program faculty to help them prepare for these questions. One question addresses competencies in *research design and methods*. One question addresses the discipline of *public policy* and is written and graded in cooperation with the program faculty who teach the core policy courses. One question addresses *specialization* competencies. An additional question is written by the *specialization faculty and will cover another area* that the committee feels is important; this is often referred to as the wildcard question. If the quality of the written answers is acceptable, the advising chair will schedule the oral exam with the student’s exam committee. Oral exams cover only material from the written exams. Students may be asked to expand on their written responses; however, they may not be asked to cover material that is not addressed in the written exam questions. If the quality of answers is unacceptable, the exam committee shall propose remedies. This may include retaking of portions of the qualifying exam, assigning another written paper, taking an additional course/independent study, or perhaps, assigning some other option. If the student completes the written and oral portions of the exam, s/he is admitted to Ph.D. candidacy [meeting program goal 3].

**The following five PUBP students were admitted to candidacy during 2015:**

**Britni Ayers**

**Nathan Kemper**

**Amanda Krotke-Crandall**

**Elizabeth Smith**

**Lindsay Turner**

Outcomes 4 through 7 are evaluated during dissertation process. Upon admission to candidacy, the student selects a dissertation chair and at least two other committee members. The dissertation chair and committee will direct the student’s research so that the project is consistent with the following goals: (1) demonstration of the ability to do independent research; (2) expand upon or “test” theory; (3) contribute to new scholarly/academic knowledge; and (4) contribute to

policy relevant knowledge. These goals are also pursued by students through the writing and submission of manuscripts for conference presentation and publication [meeting program goals 1, 2, and 3].

**The following six PUBP students defended their dissertations during 2015:**

**Kalynn Amundson  
Anne Diallo  
Michael Flanigan  
Erika Gergerich  
Pearl McElfish  
Lindsay Turner**

**During 2015, PUBP students presented 21 papers at professional conferences.**

**During 2015, PUBP students published or had accepted for publication 14 peer-reviewed journal articles.**

**During 2015, PUBP graduates were placed in the following jobs:**

**Assistant Professor, Higher Education, University of Cincinnati  
Assistant Professor, Social Work, New Mexico State University  
Assistant Vice-President, Learning Assessment, West Texas A&M University  
Associate Professor, Sociology, Labette Community College, (Parsons, KS)  
Director of Research, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences-Northwest  
Statistician/Policy Analyst, Department of Education, State of Virginia  
Visiting Assistant Professor, Political Science & Public Administration,  
University of Arkansas**

### **Timelines for Data Collection and Analysis**

*(Specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)*

Data on capstone projects, admissions to candidacy, dissertation defenses, student conference presentations, student publications, and job placements will be collected for the calendar year. The data analysis will be presented in the PUBP's Annual Academic Assessment Report. The report will be transmitted to the GSIE Dean's Office by May 15 of the following year. Parts of the analysis will be presented/reproduced in the PUBP annual report, which is generally due in the GSIE Dean's Office on July 1.

### **Use of Results**

Feedback from student performance is continuously reviewed by the program administration and is used both to assess individual student performance and to review the program requirements. The results are included in the annual report of the program, submitted to the Graduate School, and in the seven-year program review.