



JUNE 30, 2020

**PLSCMA PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PLAN
AND PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT 2019-20**
ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN WITH REPORTED OUTCOMES

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Program Goals of the M.A. in Political Science

The M.A. in Political Science is a 36 hour, two-year, program. In addition, the Department also offers a dual degree program with the UA Law School. Starting with the fall 2020 semester, the program will include a wider array of political science classes than international relations and comparative politics. The School of Law accepts nine (9) semester hours of M.A. courses to satisfy requirements for the J.D. degree. These can now be chosen from the following courses: PLSC 5503 Comparative Political Analysis, PLSC 5803 Seminar in International Politics, PLSC 5203 Seminar in American Political Institutions, PLSC 5213 Seminar in American Political Behavior, PLSC 5253 Politics of Race and Ethnicity, and PLSC 5833 International Political Economy.

Currently, the department's M.A. program offers courses among three subfields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. The department made a minor change in the curriculum for the M.A. degree, which began in the fall 2019 semester. The core courses changed from three to two research methods seminars. The program still includes at least one class be taken in the area of American Politics and one class in either Comparative Politics or International Relations. The aim is to facilitate discourse across the subfields in political science.

In addition, all students must either (1) complete six hours of thesis credit and defend the thesis, or (2) pass a written comprehensive examination.

At the end of their program, students should be able to:

- (1) demonstrate a general knowledge about trends in the discipline of political science, including epistemological diversity when studying complex issues.
- (2) demonstrate the ability to apply that knowledge to specific policy or political contexts by using qualitative and quantitative data.
- (3) demonstrate an understanding of global trends in areas such as governance and political economy, as well as complex policy issues involving, gender, race, and ethnicity.
- (4) demonstrate the ability to conduct independent research and communicate the results effectively in both oral and written form.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Departmental faculty evaluate these educational goals by:

- assessing students' performance on an array of assignments such as extensive writing assignments, presentations, and examinations.
- providing a rigorous assessment of students' work performed in internships and other experiential assignments, preferably by seeking feedback from clients with whom they interned.

- Having students demonstrate their writing and analytical capabilities through the successful completion of a thesis, research/conference paper or a comprehensive examination that is reviewed critically by a committee of faculty members.

The following are examples of processes used to determine student competency aligned with those goals.

Goal 1: may be assessed by introductory level graduate classes that provide students with a general knowledge of the literature in these fields. Given the breadth of student intellectual and academic backgrounds, we examine how students develop capabilities to critically assess materials that expose them to complex policy or political issues. The faculty use literature reviews, research papers and examinations in these courses to assess student progress. Moreover, faculty can assist students by identifying knowledge or methodological deficiencies early in their course of study when they can be more readily rectified.

Goal 2: may be assessed in courses that are specifically designed to enhance the student's methodological knowledge and their qualitative and quantitative data analysis abilities. Students are directed to appropriate courses for their fields as well as courses in which skills overlap across political science subfields (such as international relations). The faculty members are able to assess this knowledge through literature review essays, research papers, work with quantitative and qualitative data sets, or other applied research with which the faculty member may be involved.

Goal 3: is assessed in our international relations and comparative politics classes in political science or international affairs classes in other departments as appropriate. Faculty members assess students' understanding of these issues in the quality of their research papers or applied projects that test their ability to use their knowledge in specific policy or political arenas.

Goal 4: is most readily assessed when students participate in internships or other experiential assignments that bring them in contact with institutions and organizations which they analyzed in their academic readings. Students also have the ability to meet this goal by their classroom participation and presentations, conference participation and presenting a paper on their current research, and other scholarly activity.

A report is annually submitted to the Dean of the college and includes the following:

- results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.
- any changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis.
- any changes to the assessment process made or planned.

Results of Assessment of Level of Achievement of Program Learning Outcomes

Results of the assessment of the level of achievement of specific program learning outcomes by students close to the end of their degree program involves the following:

1. Improving Retention

- Periodic assessment of our advising practices provided the following areas requiring improvements:
 - Improved rigorous assessment in the first semester by working with faculty teaching required courses
 - Improved professional orientation to better familiarize students with the demands in specific careers so that students see a better connection between classes taken and career goals
 - Early intervention with students struggling in their coursework.

2. Internationalizing our Curriculum

- Many of our MA students focus their studies on international affairs.
- Faculty in International Relations and Comparative Politics seek to build the curriculum by having more of these classes offered at the graduate level. Recent hires of new faculty in International Relations and in Comparative Politics should continue to improve the quality of offerings in the M.A. program and exposure to career opportunities. For example, in spring 2020 a Qualitative Methods graduate class was introduced.
- The department will continue to improve its international relations and comparative politics curriculum by continually monitoring student interest in our core areas (Latin America; Middle East; Asia) and some of our international relations classes.

3. Enhance Career Preparation

- Continue to improve the rate of graduate student paper presentations at academic conferences (goals 1 and 2).
- Work to improve the rate of participation in internships, especially among students who are planning to enter the workforce directly after graduation (goal 4).
- Encourage more students to attend sessions conducted by the departmental Executive-in-Residence (goal 4).
- Increased awareness of Dual-Degree Programs: (goals 3 and 4).

Planned Improvements

1. Improving Retention and Timely Graduation:

Retention starts with high quality screening and advising before students enroll in a graduate program to ascertain their suitability for that program. Students who have been admitted to the program are strongly encouraged to attend Graduate School and departmental graduate orientations. These are held early in the fall semester of each year.

Students meet with the Graduate Coordinator at least twice a year to discuss progress, examine career goals, and explore professional opportunities.

While all students receive a comprehensive evaluation at the end of each school year, earlier methods of intervention may be needed to identify struggling students and provide them with support. This requires closer cooperation with faculty teaching introductory level classes and by those faculty offering a written status report on students by mid-term. Struggling students will then be monitored to better address areas of deficiencies and chart a suitable course of classes for those students, including some remedial work if needed.

***For the academic year 2019-2020, our master's students, whether they accomplished a thesis or the comprehensive examination, did graduate in a timely manner; i.e., in two years. This is encouraging and we will continue our focus on activities to retain and graduate our master's students in the two-year timeframe. In 2019-2020, 5 of 6 students who graduated did so in two years.

2. Build the Master of Arts and Dual-Degree Programs

The enrollment trends of the MA program are consistent with declining enrollment nationally. The faculty is committed to addressing areas that would make the program more attractive to potential students. Recent work with the Communications Project Manager in the Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences to develop marketing materials and strategies as well as visits to political science upper division undergraduate classes by the department's chair and vice chair to promote our graduate programs exemplified efforts to increase enrollment.

We will also continue to increase awareness of the dual degree program (JD/MA) by making sure that the Graduate Coordinator works closely with the Dean of Academic Affairs Office at the Law School to recruit students to the joint JD-MA. This effort will take several years to determine improved outcomes (see next section) but broadening the political science M.A. class options is a step in the right direction.

3. Improve Career Readiness

We plan to continue to encourage students to take advantage of internships and opportunities to present their work at professional conferences. The Graduate School and International Education funds students to present their work at one conference in an academic year. The department financially supports graduate students out of its own funds to be able to attend and deliver research presentations at a second conference. The department continues to invest in technology for our students and faculty members collaborating with them. With junior faculty now developing graduate level courses, the breadth of offerings is growing. The qualitative methods class introduced in spring 2020 is a prime example.

Analysis of Post-graduation Career and Employment Outcomes

One of our biggest challenges is to track students after they leave our program. With the creation of the Alumni Update form on our website and use of LinkedIn and Facebook we have been able to track the majority of our students, though none of this is done in a systematic fashion. Going forward, the plan is to use measures such as data from the Economic Success Metrics (ESM) to analyze outcomes. The tracking of our graduates can also help showcase the M.A. program. For example, one of our spring 2020 M.A. graduates will enter the doctoral program, with a fellowship, at the University of Notre Dame in the fall 2020 semester.