

Master of Public Administration

Annual Program Report

Year:	2023-2024
Program:	Master of Public Administration
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Summary of Continuous Improvement Efforts since Last Report

Provide a brief description of how assessment results have been used for program improvement. Point to a specific example of how an assessment provided the program with data it could use for improvement and what that improvement was, if possible, also show evidence of the improvement. You may look at data from the two previous academic years to support this case.

Respond here:

After the redesign of the Master of Public Administration program in 2017, the program initially relied upon the POLS 5330 Public Administration: Theory and Methods seminar to provide a program orientation and an introduction to graduate level writing and research expectations. Faculty availability has since provided the ability to create a zero credit hour POLS 501 Orientation and Assessment lab, conducted by the MPA program director without compensation. New students and those scheduled to sit for comprehensive examinations, are enrolled in POLS 501 Orientation and Assessment. New students would take an entrance assessment to measure basic public administration, organization, and policy knowledge. Those students who are sitting for comprehensive examinations, will prepare for and complete their written comprehensive examination through the POLS 501 Orientation and Assessment lab. Students sitting for comprehensive examinations will also complete the exit assessment. The exit assessment has the same content as the entrance assessment with the purpose of measuring the amount of knowledge gained by students during the core course work of the program. The literature review and basic graduate level research expectations have been shifted to a stand-alone course designed by a PhD holding member of the graduate faculty in the Department of Political Science. However, the reorganization of the program to include POLS 501 Orientation and Assessment along with POLS 5301 Qualitative research Methods have not produced viable assessment grounds. POLS 501 and POLS 5301 will continue; however, the data has revealed that the assessment function needs to be shifted to a capstone course to be taken the last semester of the program. We have conducted a review of all NASPAA certified programs in the United States and found that the large majority do not conduct comprehensive examinations, rather a capstone course is conducted. A pilot capstone course will be conducted by the MPA director in the Fall 2024 semester to help develop the course content and structure which will be submitted for permanent creation. The capstone course will include a research and program assessment element to be used in assessing the programs effectiveness. We will shift the entrance exam back to the POLS 5330 Public Admin Theory and Methods course to ensure we have an entrance exam for all students and an exit exam for all students that complete the program. While the data collected does show program improvement, we have determined that the assessment methods need to be adjusted in the manner described to obtain a clearer picture of the program effectiveness.

Program Highlights Since Last Report

Identify and briefly discuss any programmatic curriculum changes made since the last report (e.g. new courses, course changes, SLO changes, course deletions).

Respond here:

Table 1. Assessment Results and Analyses for Current Cycle.

STAGE 1: PLAN				STAGE 2: DO		STAGE 3: STUDY
Departmental Student Learning Goal	Program Student Learning Outcome	Assessment	Assessment Method/Location	Benchmark Expectations	Data Results	Actions/Goals Based on Data Results* What do the data tell you? How will you use this data? How were data from the last cycle used to make changes during this cycle, and What were the results of those changes?
Provide students a solid and advanced understanding of public administration, policy, and organization theory and show improvement in public administration knowledge.	Graduating MPA students will have acquired advanced knowledge and understanding in the substantive fields of Public Administration and Policy.	Exit Assessment Compared to Entrance Assessments	All incoming MPA students will take an entrance examination in their first semester of coursework in the program through the Orientation and Assessment lab online. The same examination will be given as an exit examination to all graduating MPA students during their last semester of	Our goal is to achieve an overall percentage increase of 50% knowledge gained in the major (core) subfields of the discipline. Our target is that students will achieve at least a 70% on the assessment by the time the student finishes the program.	An entrance and exit exam was administered during the Spring 2023, Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 semesters. The entrance assessment resulted in an average 39.29%, 47.96%, and 52.36% respectively while the exit assessment resulted in an average 61.54%, 50.45%, and 66.64% respectively.	We see a 56.6% increase between the incoming and outgoing students of the Spring 2023 semester. While this does not reach the 70% average pass target for outgoing students, it does exceed the 50% increase target that was set. However, while we see an increase in the average score for the entrance exam from Spring 23 (39.29%) through Fall 23 (47.96%) and Spring 24 (52.36%), the exit exam scores fluctuate with 61.54% Spring 23, 50.45% Fall 23, and 66.64% Spring 24. These are general number since the entrance and exit exams were not mandatory for the first exam periods. Therefore, we are unable to assess enough entrance and

			coursework immediately prior to graduation through the Orientation and Assessment lab online. The MPA Director is responsible for administer and reporting to the Department Chair the results of the entrance and exit examinations.			exit scores for the same student for assessment. We are in the process of creating a capstone course to be taken the last semester before graduation. This course will include an exit exam. The entrance exam will be moved to the POLS 5330 course so that all students will be required to complete the entrance and exit exams for assessment. We will continue to administer these assessments in the orientation and assessment lab to monitor for average score trends.
Provide students with the knowledge, skills and abilities to demonstrate proficiency in the ability to synthesize, analyze, and think critically about scholarly theories in the discipline of Public Administration. Graduating MPA students will be able to demonstrate the ability to apply theoretical concepts to the practice of public administration, through written	All graduating MPA students are required to take written comprehensive examinations in three of the substantive subfields of the discipline. MPA faculty members serving on each student's comprehensive examination committee (comprised of no less than three faculty members each holding a Ph.D. in Political Science or an equivalent Public Administration subfield) will assess	Written comprehensive examinations are administrated	All MPA faculty members serving on the student's comprehensive examination committee will grade the overall oral examination based on a pass/fail criterion. Examinations are administered online with proctoring. Students are allotted a 5 hour period to	One hundred percent of all graduating MPA students are expected to pass written comprehensive examinations. One hundred percent is selected as a goal because the department expects any student who have passed all required courses in the MPA program to be able to pass	The 2023-2024 period had 20 eligible students sit for comprehensive examinations and 15 during the 2023-2024 period with all 35 passing. This results in a 100% pass rate.	The program is providing a rigorous and quality academic experience through coursework to enable students to successfully apply theory to solve practical problems in public administration. However, since we are seeing a steady 100% pass rate and upon review of all NASPAA Certified MPA programs in the United States, we have identified the need to move away from comprehensive examinations to be in line with the majority of certified MPA programs across the US. A capstone course will be pilot tested in Fall 2024 to determine the viability of creating a permanent capstone

communication of hypothetical and actual problems that arise in the practice of public administration	the written examination in their respective field of expertise using the attached MPA Written Examination rubric.		address two real world situations utilizing knowledge gained from the five core courses in the MPA program. Students are expected to think critically and adequately address the situation and communicate a response with proper academic and research techniques supported by scholarly literature. Students have may take the examinations a second time if the are not successful the first time. If unsuccessful the second attempt, the student will be dismissed from the program.	comprehensive examinations.		course for exiting students to be taken during the last semester of the program. This course will provide an assessment of the students' public administration knowledge as well as a student evaluation of the program. Comprehensive examinations will be discontinued after Fall 2024 dependent upon an assessment of the pilot run of the capstone course in Fall 2024.
To provide a solid understanding for students to	Students will be able to evaluate research and determine the	Evaluation of term papers completed	A random sample of individual term	80% of all MPA term papers assessed during	No Data to assess at this time.	POLS 5301 Qualitative Research Methods course creation has been approved by

demonstrate proficiency in the skills needed to conduct research and critically evaluate research in public administration. Obtaining skills to conduct and critically evaluate research in public administration expands students repertoire of resources available to them after graduation.	needs of the field in order to complete a research grant proposal that meets the future needs of the field.	during the Qualitative Research Methods course.	papers ('n' to be determined as based on the number of MPA students enrolled in courses in Fall and Spring that require an individual term paper) will be assessed by a committee of PhD. holding faculty.	the reporting cycle will achieve a score of 12 points or higher using the MPA Term Paper rubric.		the board of regents. However, this was determined to not be a viable way of evaluating the programs effectiveness in producing research skills at this point because only conditionally admitted students have been allowed to take the course in the initial semester. The course is intended to increase the conditionally accepted students ability to perform at the master level and increase the odds of completing the program. Therefore, this would only assess the skills of conditionally admitted students rather than all students in the program. A capstone course will be created that will include a research project that will combine all of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students have gained during the program. This will allow us to better asses the programs research skill development.
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Table 2. Continuous Improvement Results Since Last Report

Stage 4: ACT		
Actions/Goals Based on Data Results <i>*Copy last cycle's actions/goals and report on progress toward continuous improvement on those here.</i>	Status <i>C=Complete P=Progressing N=No Action Taken</i>	Discussion of Status <i>If C, describe efforts that led to accomplishment of actions/goals. If P, provide update on progress made toward accomplishing actions/goals and what tasks remain. If N, discuss why action toward accomplishing actions/goals has been delayed and what work will be initiated toward accomplishment.</i>
Goals will remain the same with a 70% pass rate for exiting students.	P	The entrance / exit exam will be evaluated to ensure that the exam reflects knowledge learned in the program. The entrance exam will be moved to the POLS 5330 Public Administration Theory and Methods course since it is a core and required course for all students upon entrance into the program. The exit exam will be moved to the capstone course which will be required of all students during their last semester to graduate.
Goals will be shifted as we continue to see a 100 percent pass rate for students taking comprehensive examination. A capstone course will be created to include skills and ability with knowledge gained throughout the program. New goals will be determined during the 2024-2025 assessment period to include research skills with knowledge assessment.	P	Creation of a capstone course will be created, and the comprehensive examination will be removed from the program to align the program with the majority of NASPAA certified MPA programs across the US.
We have determined that assessing students during the first semester is not a viable practice. Goals will remain the same to assess research functions, however, the venue will shift to the proposed capstone course at the end of the program.	P	We will continue to require the Qualitative Research Methods course for all conditionally accepted students during their first semester. All fully admitted students will be required to take Applied Research Methods. Then all students will be required to take the capstone course which will be submitted for creation to the core curriculum of the program in Fall 2024 to begin in Spring 2025.