Political Science

WASC Assessment Plan for MA & PhD Programs

The goals and assessment of learning outcomes of the Department’s Ph.D. program are selected to advance the prospects of our graduates in securing academic positions with both instructional and research responsibilities. In addition, the discipline of political science contains within it a number of recognized subfields that are distinct in terms of core literatures and theoretical orientation. The goals and assessment of learning outcomes of the Ph.D. program therefore must accommodate the differences among these subfields.

In addition, the department’s goals for the limited number of MA students admitted each year are a sub-set of the Ph.D. program goals (modified as appropriate to different degree requirements) and are intended to promote acquisition of academic skills needed for admission to/success in Ph.D. programs following completion of the MA degree. The applicability of goals and outcomes to the MA program, as well as the Ph.D. program, is designated below by the parenthetical reference “(MA & Ph.D.)”. All other goals, outcomes, and methods of assessment are applicable solely to the Ph.D. program.

This plan’s goals, learning outcomes, and methods of assessment are designed to be: (1) **comprehensive** in their coverage of the phases and dimensions of graduate education and training, (2) **continuous** over the course of the program, (3) consistent with the practicable program administration and delivery, (4) **useful** in assessing graduate progress or training at each stage of the graduate program, and, finally, (5) sufficiently **clear** to be of practical use to graduate students and faculty.

**Goal I:** Train students in the fundamental concepts and basic methods of social science research.

**Outcome 1 (MA & Ph.D.):** Mastery of the fundamental concepts of social scientific inquiry.

**Method of Assessment:** Successful completion of POSC 201 (covering philosophy of science, conceptual foundations of social science, introduction to research design, and ethical issues in conduct of research) during their first year. (I.1)

**Outcome 2 (MA & Ph.D.):** Mastery of basic research methodologies.

**Method of Assessment:** Successful completion of the first year graduate methods sequence covering introductory statistics and quantitative methodology (POSC 202A, 202B), and introduction to qualitative research methods (POSC 203) during the first year. (I.2)

**Outcome 3 (MA & Ph.D.):** Broad knowledge and mastery of the fundamental concepts, theories, and methodological approaches used in one of five subfields
(American, Comparative, International Relations, Mass Political Behavior, and Political Theory) to satisfy the course work requirement for major field of study.

**Method of Assessment:** Successful completion of the core subfield course and requisite number of additional course credits by the end of the third year in the Ph.D. program (end of first year for MA students). (I.3) (See also II.1 below)

**Goal II:** Train students in two major fields in political science.

**Outcome 1:** Mastery of the fundamental concepts, theories, and the core scholarly literature of a major and minor field in political science.

**Method of Assessment 1:** Successful completion the requisite number of course credits in one of five subfields of political science (American, Comparative, International Relations, Mass Political Behavior, and Political Theory) to satisfy the course work requirement for the major field of study. (II.1)

**Method of Assessment 2:** Successful completion of the requisite number of course credits in one of five subfields of political science to satisfy the course work requirement for the minor field of study. (II.2)

**Method of Assessment 3:** Performance on written Ph.D. comprehensive examinations in two subfields assessed by faculty examination committees in each subfield following completion of the requisite coursework (a subfield exam may be re-taken once in cases where the first attempt is deemed unsatisfactory). (II.3)

**Goal III:** Teach students to undertake independent academic research and write academic scholarship.

**Outcome 1:** Independently design an original academic research project.

**Method of Assessment 1:** Successful drafting and oral examination defense of a dissertation prospectus detailing research design/strategy and theoretical and/or empirical contribution to scholarly literature. (III.1.1)

**Method of Assessment 2:** Successful competition for research fellowships and/or grants. (III.1.2)

**Outcome 2:** Independently engage in original scholarly research and writing.

**Method of Assessment 1:** Critical review of draft dissertation chapters and final approval of the dissertation by the dissertation chair and committee members. (III.2.1)

**Method of Assessment 2:** Successful oral defense of the dissertation before dissertation chair and committee members (subject to waiver per campus rules). (III.2.2)

**Method of Assessment 3:** Publication of original research and writing in peer-reviewed scholarly venues. (III.2.3)

**Goal IV:** Train students to acquire teaching skills appropriate to a university setting.

**Outcome:** Demonstration of teaching effectiveness in a university classroom.
Method of Assessment 1: Review of student evaluations of graduate student instructors (GSIs) to verify adequate classroom performance and identify potential problems. (IV.1.1)

Method of Assessment 2: Completion of required GSI orientation. (IV.1.2)

Method of Assessment 3: Completion of University Teaching Certificate Program. (IV.1.3)

Method of Assessment 4: Completion of additional training offered through the campus Teaching Assistant Development Program (TADP) by GSIs who have scored poorly on teaching evaluations (IV.1.4)

Goal V: Assess graduate student satisfaction with the program.

Outcome: High levels of graduate student satisfaction with academic quality of and professional training provided by the PhD program.

Method of Assessment 1: Exit interviews with each graduate upon completion of the program soliciting their perceptions of program strengths, weaknesses, and areas and/or strategies for improvement. (V.1)

Method of Assessment 2: Regular discussions about current graduate student concerns with the head of the departmental chapter of the campus graduate student association. (V.2)

Method of Assessment 3: Informal discussions between the departmental Graduate Advisor and individual graduate students about individual and programmatic concerns. (V.3)

Goal VI: Prepare students to obtain academic employment after completing their degree.

Outcome: Placement of PhD graduates in academic teaching and research positions following graduation from the program.

Method of Assessment 1: Proportion of graduates placed in tenure track (or equivalent) faculty positions at time of, or following, graduation. (VI.1)

Method of Assessment 2: Proportion of graduates placed in post-doctoral positions at time of, or following, graduation. (VI.2)