

Program Level Assessment: Annual Report

Program Name (no acronyms): MA in Political Science and Public Affairs Department: Political Science
Degree or Certificate Level: MA College/School: CAS
Date (Month/Year): June 2023 Assessment Contact: Morgan Hazelton

In what year was the data upon which this report is based collected? 2022-23

In what year was the program's assessment plan most recently reviewed? updated

Is this program accredited by an external program/disciplinary/specialized accrediting organization? subject to state assessment (provide details of assessment in this cycle.)

Students will be able to design original research and seminar projects that investigate political processes with appropriate methodologies and contribute to ongoing scholarly debates.

2. Assessment Methods: Artifacts of Student Learning

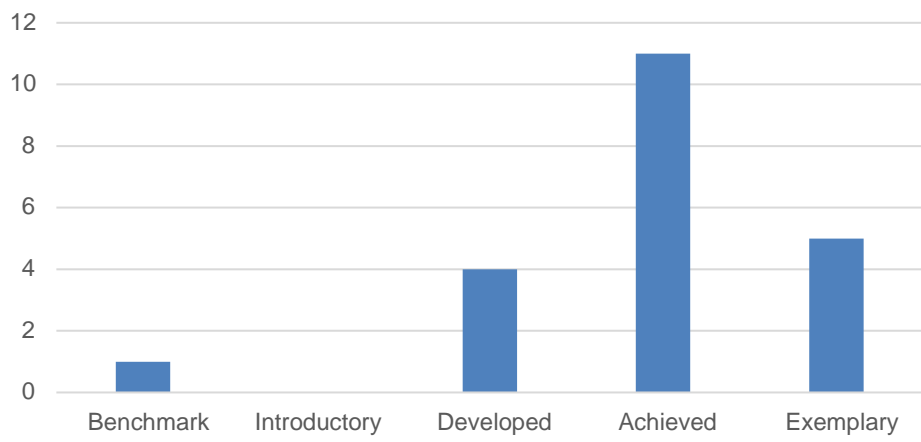
Which artifacts of student learning were used to determine if students achieved the outcome(s)? Please describe the artifacts in detail, identify the course(s) in which they were collected, and if they are from program majors/graduates and/or other students. Clarify if any such courses were offered a) only at the Madrid campus or c) at any other off-campus location.

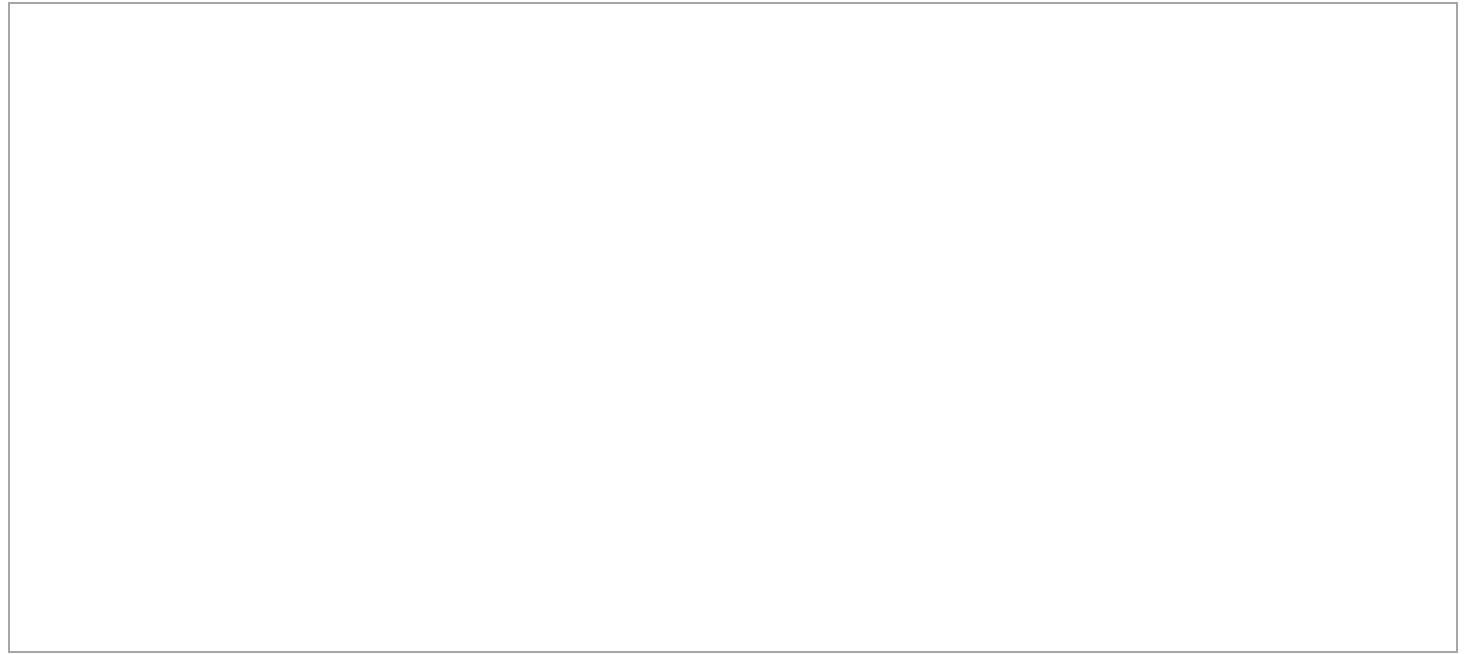
Students in POLS 5650 War, Peace, and Politics spent the summer writing an independent research paper (4,500-6,000 words). All students wrote the paper regardless of major/program status, but evaluations of the artifacts in subsequent questions differentiate between majors and non-majors (this is true of all artifacts listed here). In POLS 5530 Authoritarian Politics, students completed two short papers throughout the semester in which they assessed the research from that week and then proposed a research design to build on existing research.

In POLS 5171 Law, Policy, and Society, students submit a draft research plan and either executed research or research design and appropriate information for an IRB application in final form.

For POLS 5670 Politics of International Trade and Finance, the main tool for assessing the outcome was the final paper. The students are required to write a 4500-6000-word-long final paper during the semester. Before they write the final paper, students met with the instructor to decide on a research project. Following this meeting, they submit a research proposal/outline with an annotated bibliography, then a literature review, then a rough draft, which is blindly reviewed by one of their peers (and they review one of their peer's draft), which is followed by a research presentation, and the final paper. After each step, they receive detailed feedback from the instructor.

The instructor for POLS 5730 used a research paper as the main artifact for measuring students' ability to situate their research in the context to scholarly debates. Students were evaluated on whether the paper explained the larger problem area, how existing scholarly opinion falls short, and how this research will add to it.





5. Findings: Interpretations & Conclusions

What have you learned from these results? What does the data tell you? Address both a) learning gaps and possible curricular or pedagogical remedies, and b) strengths of curriculum and pedagogy.

Our main takeaway is that the overwhelming majority of our students are achieving or exceeding expectations on this SLO. Furthermore, faculty expressed that majors performed as well as or better than minors, on average.

Nevertheless, faculty identified a number of specific areas for improvement. Most have to do with the creative processes of research rather than the application of skills and tools, for example developing research questions both in terms of choosing a topic and progressing from a topic to a feasible research question.

Multiple faculty noted that one-on-one discussions between the student and the instructor are critical for developing this part of the research project. Since every research project is unique, it stands to reason that individualized feedback is necessary. One of the strengths of our program continues to be that our small

A. When and how did your program faculty share and discuss the results and findings from this cycle of assessment? Faculty received a draft of this report which was then discussed at our department "retreat" meeting in August 2023.

Key points of this discussion included

- Faculty found the assessment rubrics helpful and plan to continue using them
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A. What is at least one change your program has implemented in recent years as a result of previous assessment data?

- 1) Several faculty report “chunking” assignments that build towards a final paper, a strategy that we discussed at length as a result of the 2022 assessment.
- 2) The POLS assessment director responded to feedback from University assessment director on a previous assessment by developing rubrics for faculty to fill out for every student. Faculty agreed to use the rubric and discuss what did or did not make sense for their classes. For the 2023 assessment, all instructors used the rubric

B. How have these changes been assessed?

- 1) Faculty examined the artifacts described above, including both final papers and intermediate assignments, for evidence that students were incorporating feedback from intermediate assignments into future or culminating assignments
- 2) Faculty responses to rubrics

C. What were the findings of the assessment?

Faculty found ample evidence of students taking feedback from intermediate assignments and incorporating it successfully into future assignments.

D. How do you plan to (continue to) use this information moving forward?

Faculty will continue to divide large research projects into a series of intermediate assignments, and will provide timely individualized feedback on each component assignment that can be incorporated into the overall product.

IMPORTANT: Please submit any assessment tools, artifact prompts, rubrics with this report as separate attachments or copied and pasted/appended to this Word document. Please do not just refer to the assessment plan; the report should serve as a stand-alone document. Thank you.