2018-2019 ANNUAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

College/Program/Liaison
- College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program
- Dr. Henrik Minassians, Assessment Liaison

Please check off whichever is applicable:

A. ______________ Measured student work within program major/options
B. ______________ Analyzed results of measurement within program major/options
C. X ____________ Applied results of analysis to program review/curriculum/review/revision major/options
D. ______________ Focused exclusively on the direct assessment measurement of General Education Natural Sciences learning outcomes

Overview of Annual Assessment Project
We utilized MPA 698S – Graduate Project for assessing student teaching and learning in the MPA program.

Part of the assessment plan the program has identified are six new Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) in line with the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) competencies. These competencies are as follows:

1. Articulate and Apply Public Service Perspective
2. Lead and Manage in Public Governance
3. Participate in and Contribute to the Public Policy Process
4. Analyze, Synthesize, Think Creatively, Solve Problems, and Make Decisions
5. Communicate and Interact Productively with Diverse and Changing Workforce and Citizenry
6. To Rely on Professional Ethics While Making Policy, Managerial and Program Decisions

The main SLO that was utilized for assessment was SLO #2, Lead and Manage in Public Governance. The faculty has prepared the following rubric for identifying student competency in the program. The graduate project as a final culminating experience encompasses all theoretical and analytical skills that a student should have acquired throughout program, thus the assessment becomes the ideal mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of faculty teaching and student learning.
We sampled 45 out of 156 graduate projects using the rubric provided above. The report will utilize summative format indicating the frequency that students in each area of the rubric.

After the consultation with faculty, we will continue with the same assessment process for 2019-2020 academic year with results to be reported in Fall of 2020 to the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review.

**Preview of Planned Assessment Activities for 2018-2019**
The MPA program will focus on SLO #2, as determined by our assessment planning for this program in transition. The program utilized NASPAA’s competency #2 as the overarching measurements of teaching and learning in the MPA program.

For the 2018-19 academic year assessment, the program committee adopted five MPA 698S classes offered during the summer of 2019. MPA 698S – Graduate Project is culminating experience course where students undertake writing a major work (25+ pages) examining a specific issue in the area of field of study.

This course requires from the students to identify:

- a problem/researchable topic;
- identify a body if peer reviewed literature examining the issue at hand;
- identify an appropriate methodology, if the case was going to be implemented what methods would be utilized; and,
- finally, overall organization and writing style.

The table below shows the percentage of students across five MPA 698S classes. The number of students were approximately 156 students. Random sample of 45 percent (n= 45) was utilized in order to reach the assessment of teaching and learning for the MPA program. Random sampling of the 156 students across four MPA 698S courses suggests that student ability to identify a researchable question (after working with faculty closely) stands at 70 percent satisfactory and 20 percent unsatisfactory. The main challenge with unsatisfactory research question and objective is related to the type of topics that students choose. This is reflective of lack of coordination within the program with student class projects and students are allowed to write on topic not directly related to the field of study.

Another major finding is that the majority of students are incapable of identifying appropriate literature relevant to the field of study. Use of academic resources remained limited and command of literature limited. This is a direct reflection of the limitations to what occurs in classes or the depth of coverage and student learning. Considering that the MPA program does not have full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty (only three faculty with the subject matter expertise with appointments in two different departments) suggests that coverage and exposure to the latest literature and research remains limited. The MPA program offers 16-20 courses per semester, and majority of classes are taught by faculty from various field of studies or by adjunct
faculty. Successful teaching and student learning require more faculty with subject matter expertise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduate Project COMPETENCIES Assessments</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Research objectives/research question(s)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organization</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Command of literature</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Methodology and research design</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Use of sources</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Formatting, mechanics of writing (e.g., grammar, spelling, documentation)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Quality of writing</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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**Faculty Comments**

The biggest deficiency of the 698S students was writing ability. Many students wrote at a poor level, far below what I believe should define a masters-level student. Many struggled with basic grammar. Also, most students had only a superficial understanding of research methods and how to connect their research question to a method by which they could answer that question. And, many struggled with the basic components of the project, such as knowing how to write a literature review, understanding how that literature review links and leads into their research question, and how to piece together all the components of the project.

**Thoughts and impressions**

- Students truly struggled with sentence structure, conceptual clarity, language level, basic grammar, etc. The students also had a hard time complying with the APA citation style guide, using the third person and moving away from an essay-type of writing, in general.
- Methodological literacy was uneven. I have also identified major problems with time management and project management skills.
Some students were also a bit confused or puzzled with my standards and expectations. They were under the impression that whatever they submitted should be deemed “passable” and get the credit.

Overall, there seems to be a lack of preparation from students. What I define as normal graduate level thinking and writing skills had not been previously developed (this was flagrant in some case). Some students had a lot of effort to put into developing those skills that should have been taught and reinforced prior to the graduate project.

I believe students should also have more opportunities to produce critical syntheses of scholarly articles as part of their other classes’ assignments so that they develop the ability to produce an articulated critique of scholarly work.

I agree with other faculty that it is critical to reinforce throughout the entire MPA curriculum what is a literature review and how to write it. They should also begin using a technical and impersonal writing style (as well as a neutral and not connoted vocabulary) much earlier on in their MPA. They also should to be familiarized with the APA standards in every class they take.