

**Fall 2006 Semester Assessment Report Form
DUE March 31, 2007**

Directions: Please complete a form for each of the programs within your department. This form was designed to provide a format for assessment reporting and should not be used to limit the amount of information provided. Each box that is attached to each of the sections is designed to adjust to varying lengths. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Bea Babbitt at x51506 or via email at: bea.babbitt@unlv.edu.

*****Please submit the report electronically to bea.babbitt@unlv.edu**

1. Program Information:

Program	Masters of Arts in Political Science
Department	Political Science
College	Liberal Arts
Program Assessment Coordinator	Dr. David F. Damore
Semester Data Collected	Fall 2006
Report Submitted by	Dr. David F. Damore
Phone/email	895-3217, david.damore@unlv.edu
Date Submitted	March 31, 2007

2. According to the Assessment Plan for this program, what were the planned assessments to be conducted during the Fall 2006 semester? You may want to copy and paste from this program's assessment plan.

Which outcomes for this program were measured?	How did you measure the outcomes?	What results did you expect? If the students performed well what would their performance look like, i.e. percentages, means, or comparisons to a national standard?
7 outcomes out of 12 outcomes were evaluated this semester.		
1. Development of critical thinking skills necessary for the evaluation of social science concepts.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.
3. Knowledge of the research process in the social sciences.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.
4. Development of the	Instructor evaluations	Significant improvement over the

skills and knowledge needed for informed information consumption.	via narratives of students' performances.	term.
7. Development of knowledge of the multiple motivations and constraints underlying political behavior.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.
8. Development of an understanding of the multi-causal nature that characterizes the social world.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.
9. Application of the social science research process.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.
10. Upon completion of the program students will have knowledge of the theoretical and methodological development and controversies within the discipline.	Instructor evaluations via narratives of students' performances.	Significant improvement over the term.

3. Results. What are the results of the planned assessments listed above? Describe below or attach to the form.

<p>Results</p> <p>During the fall of 2007, the Department of Political Science offered three graduate seminars: PSC 701 (Seminar in Research Design and Methodology); PSC 710 (Seminar in American National Government: Principles); and PSC 740 (Seminar in International Relations). Assessment of these courses was conducted by the individual instructors. Instructors were requested to submit narrative descriptions of their evaluations of students' ability to fulfill learning outcomes. What follows are summaries of the instructors' narratives.</p> <p>PSC 701 is a graduate level seminar that focuses on the four elements of empirical research: development of a research question, appropriate research design selection,</p>
--

statistical tools and calculations, and statistical application using SPSS. The class primarily drew political science MA students. Students had little trouble with hand calculations of the statistical problems and despite that none of the students had experience with SPSS, most students by the end of the term felt comfortable with the software and came to appreciate its role in the research process. Because students were given wide latitude in developing their research design projects, which required students to develop a focused and researchable question, review the relevant academic literature, and evaluate their question with the appropriate research design and methodology, and many students had no experience doing so, this was the most challenging aspect of the course. Overall, students showed substantial growth and improvement in their understanding of the research process in the social science, even those students who had difficulty getting their projects started. As such, the course and its accompanying assignments tap and fulfilled learning outcomes 1, 3, 4, 7-9.

PSC 710 is a graduate seminar that addresses the theoretical principles underlying — and disputed within — the American political regime since the founding. The class primarily drew political science MA students. The main requirements for the course were the development of term papers and participation in seminar discussions of the weekly course reading assignments. Students' performances over the course of the term were mixed. Four out of the ten students developed and wrote solid term papers, while three others wrote strong papers. The remaining three students struggled to fulfill the course's expectations for the term paper. Many students also struggled with discussing the reading and some were unwilling to enter into course discussions. Most of the oral analysis that was offered by students was summary and lacked analysis and insight, indicating to the instructor that many had difficulty comprehending the readings. As such, the course and its accompanying assignments tap learning outcomes 1, 4, 7, 8, and 10 and based upon the instructors' impressions, there was variability in students' ability to fulfill the learning outcomes.

PSC 740 is a graduate level seminar that examines concepts, methods and theories in the subfield of international relations and applies these tools to contemporary issues in international politics and economics. The class primarily drew political science MA students. The course requirements were quite demanding as students were required to read on average 400 pages per week, submit weekly reaction papers, develop a term paper, and complete a final exam. Students over the course of the term demonstrated uneven progress. Some students demonstrated clear progress, while others maintained mediocre skills and in some cases, were unwilling to put in the requisite time and effort needed to perform at the graduate level. Approximately half of the students appeared to lack the skills necessary to write a scholarly research paper and many students labored to write cogent weekly reviews of the course readings. In some cases, students resisted instructor recommendations on topics, methods, and literature. Other students, however, willingly undertook challenging topics and developed competent products. As such, the course and its accompanying assignments tap learning outcomes 1, 4, 7, 8, and 10 and based upon the instructors' impressions, there was variability in students' ability to fulfill the learning outcomes

4. Conclusions and Discoveries. What conclusions or discoveries were made from these results? Describe below or attach to the form.

Conclusions and Discoveries

The impressions of the course instructors indicate that in some cases expectations were met, while in other cases, students struggled to demonstrate improvement over the term (note that the primary expectation for the learning outcomes assessed during the fall 2007 semester was significant improvement from the start to the end of the term). In particular, the impressions of the instructors for PSC 710 and PSC 740 indicate two overall weaknesses: the lack of strong writing skills that are needed in graduate school and a willingness to exert the time and effort necessary to benefit from graduate education. Some of this may stem from the fact that this was the first semester in the program for many of the students enrolled in PSC 710 and PSC 740 and thus, they may not have fully understood the differences in expectations between undergraduate and graduate work. In contrast, the students enrolled in PSC 701 collectively demonstrated greater improvement over the semester. In all likelihood this is a function of the fact that most students enrolled in PSC 701 had little background in or knowledge of the basics of research design and methodology in the social science. Indeed, by the end of the course, students in PSC 701 were surprised at how far they had come.

5. Use of Results. What program changes are indicated? How will they be implemented? If none, describe why changes were not needed.

At the present time, the Department of Political Science does not plan to make any changes to the program. The reason for this is that the department has submitted a proposal to significantly overhaul the graduate program. Specifically, the proposal is for a PhD. in political science that would shift the focus of the graduate program from a general political science degree to a specialized degree in global studies. At the present time, the proposal is waiting approval from the administration. As a consequence, any attention that the department would devote to the MA program is likely to be short lived because when the PhD. comes on line the emphasis of the graduate program will change dramatically (e.g., more rigorous admission standards; a well defined plan of study; and increased expectations of student performance).

6. Dissemination of Results, Conclusions, and Discoveries. How and with whom were the results shared?

The information was distributed to all full time faculty members in the Department of Political Science. In addition, the report is posted on the Department of Political Science web page.