

## Program Assessment: *Annual Report*

**Program(s):** Public and Social Policy, Ph.D. Program.

**Department:** Sociology and Political Science

**College/School:** College of Arts and Sciences

**Date:** June 29, 2020

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1. Which program student learning outcomes were assessed in this annual assessment cycle?

**#2** Students will be able to design and execute methodologically-sound policy research that extends the knowledge of both policy and other social science disciplines.

(Qualitative Methodological Literacy)

*As part of the annual retreat, PSP faculty members and students approved a new assessment plan in September 2019. (See Appendix A). This year we used dissertation chapters and written examinations to evaluate this outcome. As part of the written exam, students are expected to explore, in the methods section, potential qualitative problems with the study design of their research. The PSP core faculty now requires multiple readers for the exam to ensure that students are meeting the requirements set out in new rubric. See Appendix B.*

2. What data/artifacts of student learning were collected for each assessed outcome? Were Madrid student artifacts included?

1. We collected the dissertations completed in the Fall 2019 and written exams that were done in Summer 2019.
2. Annual evaluations were collected from students. The annual evaluations give students the opportunity to share their professional development activities such as CITI training.
3. No artifacts were collected from the Madrid campus.

3. How did you analyze the assessment data? What was the process? Who was involved?

**NOTE: If you used rubrics as part of your analysis, please include them in an appendix.**

1. The PSP program used a rubric developed by the PSP faculty to assess the written exams. All core faculty members identified by the student as a potential dissertation committee member read the written exams. Three students took the written exam. One student was asked to rewrite one part of the exam because there was a split vote in the quality of the exam. All faculty members have access to the written exams and dissertations.
2. All faculty members have access to all completed students' evaluations, which are located on a shared drive. The results of the evaluations are shared with faculty members at the September core faculty meeting. At the beginning of the fall semester a detailed report is given to all core faculty members on each student and the overall assessment of the learning outcomes is reported to faculty members.
3. At the annual retreat, faculty members and students, review the results of the learning outcomes and provide feedback to refine the outcomes and rubrics that are used to measure the student learning outcomes.

4. What did you learn from the data? Summarize the major findings of your analysis for each assessed outcome.

**NOTE: If necessary, include any tables, charts, or graphs in an appendix.**

There were three findings from this year's assessment:

1. Based on last year's assessment exercise, the PSP program has added a second track to complete the dissertation – a three-paper option. A new rubric for the three-paper option needs to be developed. The current rubric does not sufficiently guide students for a three-paper option.
2. The new rubric for the traditional dissertation for the written exams is working great. Students believe the new rubric provides a clear framework of how the written exams are graded. However, there was some concern among faculty members how to grade a student's work when there was a split in the faculty evaluation. The PSP faculty will revisit this issue in Fall 2020. One proposal is to have three faculty grade the examination. Another proposal is to have a third reader only grade a split decision.
3. The PSP program starting using the completed dissertations to assess the learning outcomes. This year we used the theory chapter. The PSP had one dissertation that was available for the assessment. See Appendix C.
  - a. Each year a different thematic chapter will be evaluated using a standardized rubric.
    - i. Year 1 – Methods
    - ii. Year 2 – Theory or Literature Review

5. How did your analysis inform meaningful change? How did you *use the analyzed data to make or implement recommendations for change* in pedagogy, curriculum design, or your assessment plan?

1. *A new rubric for the three-paper dissertation option will be presented to the students and faculty at the Fall 2020 retreat. Faculty who read the examination felt it is imperative to develop a new rubric for the three-paper dissertation option.*
2. *Faculty members and students will evaluate the new three-paper rubric at the Fall 2020 retreat. All feedback will be included in the revised rubric, when appropriate. Faculty members will officially vote on the new rubric (for the three-paper option) for the written exams at the October PSP meeting. The new rubric, for the written exams, will be implemented for students taking the written exams beginning Spring 2021.*

6. Did you follow up (“close the loop”) on past assessment work? If so, what did you learn? (*For example, has that curriculum change you made two years ago manifested in improved student learning today, as evidenced in your recent assessment data and analysis?*)

1. *The PSP program offers at minimum four open fora in which all students can attend. (1) Fall orientation; (2) Annual Faculty and Student Retreat (Fall), Fall PSP Graduate Roundtable (December) and Spring PSP Graduate Roundtable (May). A significant amount of time at the annual retreat is devoted to assessment.*
2. *At the 2019 faculty and student annual retreat, students were given the opportunity to talk about and offer feedback on the learning outcomes and rubric used for the written exam.*
3. *Based on the feedback from students and faculty, the rubric used for the written exam was revised and a new assessment was approved by students and faculty.*
4. *Based on the feedback from faculty, changes were made to the student handbook as well, which include a three-paper dissertation option.*

***IMPORTANT: Please submit any revised/updated assessment plans to the University Assessment Coordinator along with this report.***

***APPENDIX A***

<b>Ph.D. Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Curricular Mapping</b>	<b>Year</b>
<p>Students will be able to design and execute methodologically-sound policy research that extends the knowledge of both policy and other social science disciplines. (Quantitative Methodological Literacy)</p>	<p>SOC/POLS 6100 – Regression Analysis and Non-Linear Models SOC 5650 – Intro to GIS Written Examinations Dissertation Chapters</p>	<p>Year 1</p>
<p>Students will be able to design and execute methodologically-sound policy research that extends the knowledge of both policy and other social science disciplines. (Qualitative Methodological Literacy)</p>	<p>SOC/POLS 5060 – Qualitative Research or SOC/POLS 5060 – Grounded Theory Written Examinations Dissertation Chapters</p>	<p>Year 2</p>
<p>Students will be able to evaluate, critique, and synthesize competing theoretical explanations in their chosen area of study.</p>	<p>POLS 6310 – Policy Process or POLS 6330 – Public Finance Theory Written Examinations Dissertation Chapters</p>	<p>Year 3</p>
<p>Students will be able to evaluate, critique, and synthesize competing policies related to their chosen area of study.</p>	<p>SOC/POLS 5850 – Policy Evaluation and Assessment Written Examinations Dissertation Chapters</p>	<p>Year 4</p>

***APPENDIX B***  
***Rubric for Learning Outcome***

**#2** Students will be able to design and execute methodologically-sound policy research that extends the knowledge of both policy and other social science disciplines

Dimension One - Comprehension

	Weak	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Qualitative	Limited understanding of qualitative methods and literature reviews and leaves out relevant aspects in projects and homework and leaves out most of the relevant aspects of the research	Limited understanding of qualitative methods and literature review and leaves out relevant aspects in research projects and homework	Comprehensive understanding of qualitative methods and literature reviews but leaves out some relevant aspects in research projects and homework	Comprehensive understanding of qualitative methods and literature reviews. The project and homework are done with the highest level of craftsmanship and rigor
<i>Score</i>	<i>Good</i>			

Dimension Two - Synthesis

	Weak	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Qualitative	Present information and No signs of synthesis and no effort to make connections to theory	Present information and little signs of synthesis and little effort to make connections to theory	Present information and show signs of synthesis and tries to make connections to theory	Synthesizes information at the highest levels and make connections to theory
<i>Score</i>	<i>Good</i>			

Dimension Three - Comparison and Organization

	Weak	Adequate	Good	Excellent
Qualitative	Provides evidence, but it is not organized and/or is unrelated to the topical area.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences or similarities related to the topical area.	Organizes evidence to reveal some important patterns, differences or similarities related to the topical area.	Organizes and synthesizes evidence to reveal insightful patterns, differences or similarities related to the topical area.
<i>Score</i>	<i>Adequate</i>			

***APPENDIX C***  
***Rubric for Written Exam***



# **Rubrics for Assessing Preliminary Examination Chapters**

## **The first paper (ultimately a chapter of the dissertation – i.e., Literature Review)**

The first paper focuses on the ability of the student to identify literature relevant to the problem being addressed; to critique the existing research, and clearly articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the studies relevant to the student's own project; to demonstrate how the current project fits into the scholarly flow of research in the area. The paper should demonstrate the following three characteristics:

1. The student will provide a problem statement which specifically describes the gap in knowledge that the research will fill.
2. The student will provide a comprehensive knowledge of appropriate scholarship (historical and/or contemporary) relevant to the topic.
3. The student will use the literature review to provide a framework to describe ongoing policy discussions and debates relevant to the topic.

## **The second paper (ultimately a chapter of the dissertation – i.e., Methods and Data)**

The second paper focuses on the ability of the student to identify and formulate a researchable problem and methodology. The paper should demonstrate the following three characteristics.

1. The student will articulate research question(s) and hypotheses that specifically describe the gap in knowledge that the research will fill. The student will articulate the precise unique and intellectual contribution(s) the research will make to the current body of knowledge.
2. The student will describe the potential data (that may be used or collected) and what competing methodologies may be used in the research project.
3. The student will articulate why and how the potential analysis will impact or inform public policy.

# Rubrics for Assessing Preliminary Examination Chapters

## Both papers need to demonstrate a student's ability to:

- Clearly communicate in a way that is accessible to both lay and professional audiences.
- Articulate and explain theoretical and empirical terms clearly.
- Show mastery of the mechanics of grammar, footnotes, and punctuation.
- Demonstrate professional level writing skills.

## Evaluation

The papers will be evaluated by two faculty members based on your proposed dissertation committee. Each part of the paper will be graded using the following criteria: exemplary, competent, or developing. For a student to pass he/she will need an overall evaluation of exemplary (passed) or competent (passed). A student that receives a developing grade will need to retake the examination. A student will receive a failing grade if he/she fails to turn in the papers by the due date.

## Faculty Assistance

A student may ask and obtain oral assistance from his/her dissertation chair (or other faculty members if approved by the chair) in working on their papers. However, we emphasize that the preliminary examination is a test of the student's ability to perform dissertation research on their own and faculty assistance should be limited to oral communication.

## Due Date

You can start your exam on June 1, 2019. Please email your two papers to Mary Lapusan ([lapusanm@slu.edu](mailto:lapusanm@slu.edu)) by September 3, 2019 by 8 a.m. Please CC, Drs. Sandoval and Cropf.