Annual Academic Assessment Report Cover Sheet
Assessment reports are due the 1st Wednesday after the Fall Term
Email to: assessment@unlv.edu

Program Information:

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<th>M.A. and Ph.D. Programs</th>
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<td>College</td>
<td>Liberal Arts</td>
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<td>1-8-2018</td>
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Please attach a narrative (not to exceed 4 pages, excluding appendices) addressing the following:

- What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list.
- Which learning outcomes were assessed?
- How were they assessed? (Programs must use at least one direct assessment of student learning.)
- Undergraduate programs should assess at least one University Undergraduate Learning Outcome (UULO) each year, which may or may not overlap with a program learning outcome.
- Graduate programs should assess at least one outcome related to one of the following graduate level requirements each year:
  - student engagement in research, scholarship, creative expression and/or appropriate high-level professional practice.
  - activities requiring originality, critical analysis and expertise.
  - the development of extensive knowledge in the field under study.
- What was learned from the assessment results?
- How did the program respond to what was learned?
What are the student learning outcomes? Please provide a numbered list

Upon completion of the M.A. or Ph.D. program in Political Science, students should be able to:

1. Use advanced critical reasoning skills for problem solving.

2. Write persuasively and use evidence in order to develop, support and defend an argument.

3. Acquire knowledge of appropriate social science research methods to engage in high quality, original scholarship.

4. Develop knowledge of advanced theories and methods in the major fields of Political Science.

5. Acquire knowledge and skills to conduct research that leads to presentation of papers at scholarly meetings or publication in peer-reviewed outlets.

6. To prepare students for job opportunities in higher education and the private sector

Which learning outcomes were assessed?

We assess a limited number of outcomes (as this reflects best practice, based on the guidance provided by assessment staff). Consistent with our assessment report for 2016, we assessed outcomes 3-5.

How were they assessed?

The department collects data on two assessment measures. First, we survey faculty members who serve on completed M.A. and Ph.D. committees during the evaluation period. Faculty members are asked to rate whether student theses “demonstrat[ed] originality and knowledge of advanced theories and methods,” using a 1-5 scale (1 = unsatisfactory; 2 = needs improvement; 3 = satisfactory; 4 = above average; 5 = outstanding/excellent). The benchmark for performance is that the overall mean from faculty is “3” or higher.
The second measure focuses on student research. We collect data on MA and Ph.D. students who submitted papers for presentation at regional or national meetings of scholarly associations. The benchmark for performance is that at least 50% students’ conference paper proposals are accepted for presentation. (We also collect data on student submissions to peer-reviewed publication outlets; however, it should be noted that the sample size for student submissions to journals or books tends to be small).

**What was learned from the assessment results?**

*Analysis of Faculty Committee Members’ Views of Ph.D. Theses and M.A. Professional Papers*

During 2017, a total of four students completed the Ph.D. degree, while one student completed the M.A. professional paper. Because only one student completed the MA professional paper, we consider only the “grand” mean for the doctoral dissertations. For the dissertations, the mean evaluation score provided by committee members was 4.75/5. Some of the faculty members noted that the topics were extremely timely, the methods were sound, and that the findings contributed to the theoretical literature. This finding is in line with our expectation for outcomes #3 and #4 for the graduate program.

*Analysis of Scholarly Conference Papers submitted by Doctoral Students*

In 2017, a total of 10 doctoral students submitted 18 paper proposals for presentation at scholarly conferences. Some proposals were single-authored, while others were coauthored proposals with other doctoral students or a faculty member. The conferences included the American Political Science Association (APSA) meeting, the premier meeting of the discipline, and the International Studies Association, a large, international meeting that has over 1,000 panels. In addition, our doctoral students also proposed papers to the Midwest Political Science Association, which is generally viewed as an excellent discipline-wide meeting, and other quality regional and pedagogical conferences (e.g., APSA Teaching and Learning Conference; Southern Political Science Association; Western Political Science Association; and International Studies Association-West). During the year, all of the papers that were submitted were accepted for conference presentation. Given that some of these meetings are fairly selective and highly visible, acceptance of graduate student paper proposals is a very good achievement that is consistent with learning outcome #5 for the graduate program.

Several graduate students were also successful in publishing articles or in obtaining book contracts with refereed publishers. During the year, four students submitted coauthored papers for publication in refereed journals, while one student submitted a coauthored book prospectus. For the journal articles, three of four coauthored papers were accepted for publication (following editorial decisions of “revise and resubmit”). The journal
outlets were very good. One student had a coauthored article accepted in *Party Politics*, a very selective outlet that has an impact factor of 1.85, while another student had a pedagogical article accepted and published in *PS* (impact factor = 0.95), the official journal of APSA that focuses partly on teaching and professional development. In addition, two other students had coauthored papers accepted and published in *Latin American Policy* (Google Scholar Metrics, h5 median =13), a relatively new journal, and in *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research and Religion*, edited at Baylor University. In addition, the coauthored book prospectus (submitted by a faculty member and doctoral student) was placed under contract with Lexington, a refereed division of Roman and Littlefield publishers. Overall, the publication data is suggestive that the program is achieving a performance consistent with outcome #5.

**Response of the Program**

The annual assessment data (through December 2017) were only recently collected and analyzed. The report will be forwarded and reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator and the members of the Graduate Studies Committee. After their review, the department faculty will discuss the findings and consider any program changes that might be necessary.