Georgia State University
Assessment Data by Section
2012-2013 Political Science PhD
As of: 2/24/2014 01:15 PM EST
(Includes those Action Plans with Budget Amounts marked One-Time, Recurring, No Request.)

Mission / Purpose
The Department of Political Science at Georgia State University recognizes that a research department at a research university needs a genuinely strong doctoral program. As such, the PhD program aims to provide students with a comprehensive grounding in the methodology and philosophy of social science as well as specific training in multiple fields and subfields of the discipline. The PhD program focuses on producing high quality researchers and teachers. The Department strives to develop graduates who are successful at publishing and teaching, and who obtain tenure-track positions in the southeast and nationally. The training students receive in seminars should equip them to pursue their own research, present it at conferences, and secure publication of their work. The program aims to provide doctoral students with varied opportunities to develop research records and skill sets attractive to potential employers.

Goals
G 1: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field
Doctoral candidates are knowledge scholars with demonstrable familiarity with the breadth and diversity of models, approaches, and intellectual traditions within that student's major field of expertise.

G 2: Competency in Second Field or Subfield
Doctoral candidates are knowledge scholars with demonstrable competency in at least a second substantive area of political science.

G 3: High Level of Competency in Research Methods
Doctoral candidates are effective researchers with a high level of competency in research skills appropriate to their research endeavors and a familiarity with a broad range of methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative approaches.

G 4: Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization
Doctoral candidates are effective researchers with a full understanding of the research enterprise, including the ability to critique others' work and to be a contributing scholar by producing original research.

G 5: Teaching Effectiveness
Doctoral candidates are effective teachers with the ability to teach courses in their primary field and sub-fields of the discipline.

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives
SLO 1: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field (G: 1) (M: 1, 2, 3)
The student demonstrates familiarity with the breadth and diversity of models, approaches, and intellectual traditions within that student's major field of expertise.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- 2.3 Other efforts in support of Goal 2 (Graduate and Professional Programs).
- 3.1 Enhance a research culture.
- 3.6 Other efforts in support of Goal 3 (Leading Public Research University).

**SLO 2: Competency in Second Field or Subfield (G: 2) (M: 1)**
Students must demonstrate competency in at least a second substantive area of political science.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- 2.3 Other efforts in support of Goal 2 (Graduate and Professional Programs).
- 3.6 Other efforts in support of Goal 3 (Leading Public Research University).

**SLO 3: High Level of Competency in Research Methods (G: 3) (M: 2, 3)**
Students have a high level of competency in research skills appropriate to their research endeavors and a familiarity with a broad range of methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative approaches.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- 2.3 Other efforts in support of Goal 2 (Graduate and Professional Programs).
- 3.1 Enhance a research culture.
- 3.4 Enhance supporting infrastructure for the conduct of research.
- 3.5 Enhance Georgia State's contributions to the sciences, and health and medical research and education.
- 3.6 Other efforts in support of Goal 3 (Leading Public Research University).

**SLO 4: Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization (G: 4) (M: 2, 3)**
Students have a full understanding of the research enterprise, including the ability to critique others' work and to be a contributing scholar by producing original research.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- 2.1 Expand support for doctoral programs.
- 2.3 Other efforts in support of Goal 2 (Graduate and Professional Programs).
- 3.1 Enhance a research culture.
- 3.4 Enhance supporting infrastructure for the conduct of research.
- 3.5 Enhance Georgia State's contributions to the sciences, and health and medical research and education.
- 3.6 Other efforts in support of Goal 3 (Leading Public Research University).

**SLO 5: Teaching Effectiveness (G: 5) (M: 4)**
Students possess the ability to effectively teach courses in their primary fields and sub-fields of the discipline.

**Strategic Plan Associations**
- 2.3 Other efforts in support of Goal 2 (Graduate and Professional Programs).
3.6 Other efforts in support of Goal 3 (Leading Public Research University).
5.4 Enhance the global competency of students, faculty and staff.
5.5 Other efforts in support of Goal 5 (Globalizing the University).

Measures, Targets, and Findings

M 1: Comprehensive exam assessments (O: 1, 2)

Based on the program's learning outcomes, the lead reader for each field or sub-field doctoral comprehensive committee shall write an assessment of the degree to which the answers provided by the students indicate success in achievement of the outcomes.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target for O1: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field

The Department’s performance target is for all doctoral students taking comprehensive exams to pass those exams at the first sitting. If not, then the Department aims for students to pass the exams on their second and final sitting. Comprehensive exams test students' knowledge of, at minimum, two fields in the discipline.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met

Comprehensive exams are offered twice a year; they were previously offered in December and May but we began last year offering the exams in September and February. Beginning this academic year, due to a lack of space in the department, we switched from on-campus, closed note exams to take-home, open-note exams. This academic year, a total of 9 students took comprehensive exams, and 4 passed all three of their exams (44%). This represents a somewhat large decrease from last academic year's pass rate of 80%, and the pass rate from two years ago, which was 64%. Of those passing their exams, two passed on their first try. The other two passed on their second tries. The two students who passed on their second tries both received at least one "high pass," with the evaluation committees finding that the exam answers were "excellent" and/or "outstanding." However, four students failed exams and the fifth was expelled for academic dishonesty as they were found to have plagiarized portions of the exams. One student failed for the third time after successfully petitioning the dean, and the three exams the student retook showed serious deficiencies; this student has since been terminated from the program. Another student failed for the second time and, again, the exams all showed serious deficiencies; this student has since been terminated. The other two students who failed exams have failed one time; one of the students only failed a single exam of the three required. They are both scheduled to retake these exams in a few weeks. Academic dishonesty is always of concern with take-home, open-note exams. That said, this particular case was quickly and easily identified as such, and the department successfully had the student expelled for plagiarism. We have since increased our efforts to educate students about academic dishonesty and the potential consequences. We also believe that we have sufficient controls in place to identify any future instances as well. Two years ago not only reflected a change in when comprehensive exams were offered but also in how they were administered and graded. Previously, students took a written exam, received a grade on that exam, and if the exam was rated as at least a “pass,” sat for an oral exam conducted by one member of each exam committee. The oral exam committee would then decide whether the student passed in total. Students now only sit for an oral exam if requested by a specific exam committee. In other words, students take a written exam and receive a grade of either high pass, pass, request an oral exam, or inadequate. This change means that rather than oral
exams performing a rather perfunctory function (and faculty finding it rather difficult to rate a student as “inadequate” when they successfully passed their written examinations), they now are used when students’ written exams are on the border between pass and fail, and provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate orally their mastery of the literature as well as for the exam committee to closely question the student on this literature. Initial reports are that this system is working well. If anything, the move to this system has actually resulted in a higher threshold for passage as faculty now feel they can rate an exam as "inadequate" after a less-than-adequate oral examination.

**Target for O2: Competency in Second Field or Subfield**

The Department’s performance target is for all doctoral students taking comprehensive exams to pass those exams at the first sitting. If not, then the Department aims for students to pass the exams on their second and final sitting. Comprehensive exams test students’ knowledge of, at minimum, two fields in the discipline.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Partially Met**

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provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate orally their mastery of the literature as well as for the exam committee to closely question the student on this literature. Initial reports are that this system is working well. If anything, the move to this system has actually resulted in a higher threshold for passage as faculty now feel they can rate an exam as "inadequate" after a less-than-adequate oral examination.

M 2: Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations (O: 1, 3, 4)

The members of each doctoral dissertation committee will individually provide to the Director of Graduate Studies a written assessment stating the degree to which the dissertation and its defense indicate success in achievement of the program's stated learning outcomes. Members are asked to rate the dissertation on a series of learning goals and objectives. A 5-point scale is utilized, ranging from 1, "very little degree of achievement," to 5, "very high degree of achievement" of thee specific learning goal. The assessment rubric also asks committee members for any additional thoughts or evaluations they wish to share about the specific dissertation.

Source of Evidence: Performance (recital, exhibit, science project)

Target for O1: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field

At least 75% of successfully defended doctoral dissertations will receive a score of of "high" or higher, and at least 10% will receive a score of "very high" in terms of a comprehensive understanding of the student’s major field.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met

Four doctoral dissertations were successfully defended this year (from fall 2012 through summer 2013). Students are assessed as to a number of different learning objectives; the scale ranges from 1, very little degree of achievement of the learning objective, to 5, very high degree of achievement of the learning objective. Based on averaging the assessments completed by each student's dissertation committee members, all of the students (100%) received a score of "very high" in terms of achieving a comprehensive understanding of their major field. All of the dissertations were described in the comments sections in a highly positive manner, with language such as "excellent," "a very strong account," and "creative." These dissertations thus far exceeded the department's goals in terms of the achievement of these learning objectives.

Target for O3: High Level of Competency in Research Methods

At least 75% of successfully defended doctoral dissertations will receive a score of of "high" or higher, and at least 10% will receive a score of "very high" in terms of competency in research methods appropriate to the discipline.

Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met

Four doctoral dissertations were successfully defended this year (from fall 2012 through summer 2013). Students are assessed as to a number of different learning objectives; the scale ranges from 1, very little degree of achievement of the learning objective, to 5, very high degree of achievement of the learning objective. Based on averaging the assessments completed by each student's dissertation committee members, all of the students (100%) received a score of "very high" in terms of achieving a high level of competency in research skills and methods. All of the dissertations were described in the comments sections in a highly positive manner, with language such as "strong, original analysis" and "the analysis is sound and convincing." These dissertations thus far
exceeded the department's goals in terms of the achievement of these learning objectives.

**Target for O4: Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization**

At least 75% of successfully defended doctoral dissertations will receive a score of "high" or higher, and at least 10% will receive a score of "very high" in terms of demonstrating a full understanding of the research enterprise, including the ability to critique others' work and an ability to be a contributing scholar who produces original research.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

Four doctoral dissertations were successfully defended this year (from fall 2012 through summer 2013). Students are assessed as to a number of different learning objectives; the scale ranges from 1, very little degree of achievement of the learning objective, to 5, very high degree of achievement of the learning objective. Based on averaging the assessments completed by each student's dissertation committee members, all of the students (100%) received a score of "high" in terms of demonstrating a full understanding of the research enterprise, and three (75%) were evaluated as demonstrating this at a "very high" level. All of the dissertations were described in the comments sections in a highly positive manner, with language such as "excellent," "a very strong account," and "creative." These dissertations thus far exceeded the department's goals in terms of the achievement of these learning objectives.

**M 3: Conference presentations, publications and grants (O: 1, 3, 4)**

This measure gauges research competency and professional socialization by assessing the success of graduate students in placing their work at conferences and in publishing outlets and in attracting funding to support their research.

Source of Evidence: Presentation, either individual or group

**Target for O1: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field**

Doctoral students should present their work at at least one professional conference each year. Doctoral should students regularly submit work for publication and for grant competitions.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

At least 15 doctoral students presented their work at professional conferences this year (based on student reports of last year’s accomplishments). These conferences range from small gatherings to the most prestigious (and competitive) in the discipline. For example, three students presented at the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association Conference, a highly prestigious conference in the discipline. A number of our students were also accepted and/or invited to conferences hosted by entities such as the World Bank and the Latin American Studies Association Congress. In addition, both doctoral and masters student members of the Political Science Graduate Student Association organized their fourth annual conference at Georgia State on building political institutions, attracting scholars from around the country and even from abroad to Georgia State. Six of our PhD students were published this year, in a variety of outlets. Numerous other students also submitted their work for publication in peer-reviewed journals. We also had a number of our students apply for grants. Four students received an internal doctoral dissertation improvement award.

**Target for O3: High Level of Competency in Research Methods**
Doctoral students should present their work at at least one professional conference each year. Doctoral should students regularly submit work for publication and for grant competitions.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

At least 15 doctoral students presented their work at professional conferences this year (based on student reports of last year's accomplishments). These conferences range from small gatherings to the most prestigious (and competitive) in the discipline. For example, three students presented at the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association Conference, a highly prestigious conference in the discipline. A number of our students were also accepted and/or invited to conferences hosted by entities such as the World Bank and the Latin American Studies Association Congress. In addition, both doctoral and masters student members of the Political Science Graduate Student Association organized their fourth annual conference at Georgia State on building political institutions, attracting scholars from around the country and even from abroad to Georgia State. Six of our PhD students were published this year, in a variety of outlets. Numerous other students also submitted their work for publication in peer-reviewed journals. We also had a number of our students apply for grants. Four students received an internal doctoral dissertation improvement award.

**Target for O4: Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization**

Doctoral students should present their work at at least one professional conference each year. Doctoral should students regularly submit work for publication and for grant competitions.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

At least 15 doctoral students presented their work at professional conferences this year (based on student reports of last year's accomplishments). These conferences range from small gatherings to the most prestigious (and competitive) in the discipline. For example, three students presented at the 2012 Midwest Political Science Association Conference, a highly prestigious conference in the discipline. A number of our students were also accepted and/or invited to conferences hosted by entities such as the World Bank and the Latin American Studies Association Congress. In addition, both doctoral and masters student members of the Political Science Graduate Student Association organized their fourth annual conference at Georgia State on building political institutions, attracting scholars from around the country and even from abroad to Georgia State. Six of our PhD students were published this year, in a variety of outlets. Numerous other students also submitted their work for publication in peer-reviewed journals. We also had a number of our students apply for grants. Four students received an internal doctoral dissertation improvement award.

**M 4: Teaching Effectiveness (O: 5)**

Utilizing syllabi and data from student evaluations of graduate students teaching courses, the Director of Graduate Studies shall assess the competence of the doctoral graduate students in teaching courses.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

**Target for O5: Teaching Effectiveness**

The Department wants all syllabi in courses taught by doctoral students to be in conformity with departmental, College, and University standards. The Department also seeks overall
teaching effectiveness scores of at least 4.0 on Question 17 of the student course evaluations.

**Findings 2012-2013 - Target: Met**

The department finds that this goal was met this year. Seventeen instructors taught a total of 37 sections in Fall, Spring and Summer of 2012-2013 (stable from last year, but up from 13 instructors teaching 21 sections in 2010-2011). This almost doubling of graduate student instructors in recent years reflects both the increase in incoming freshmen, necessitating more sections of both POLS 1101 and 2401, and the need for full-time faculty to teach our departmental CTW courses. Fourteen instructors taught 16 sections in fall 2012 (including four upper-division courses, one of which was a wholly new Model NATO course) while a fifteenth taught the first six weeks of two upper-division courses while a professor was on maternity leave; fourteen instructors taught 19 sections in spring 2013 (including two upper-division courses), and two instructors taught 2 sections in summer 2013. Six instructors taught 16 sections of POLS 1101 (Introduction to American Politics) and ten instructors taught 15 sections of POLS 2401 (Global Issues). Nine of these 31 sections were over-100 students, and none of the sections taught contained less than 48 students (two years ago, 9 sections were capped at 25 or less), and 15 of the sections contained between 60 and 75 students. Syllabi were examined by the 2401 and 1101 coordinators and found to be substantially in compliance with departmental, College and University standards. In addition, these coordinators have developed a set of common learning outcomes for 2401 and 1101. The average score for overall teaching effectiveness (question 17) was 4.3 for 1101 and 4.2 for 2401 (the relevant numbers were 4.5 and 4.2 last year); it ranged from 2.9 to 4.8 for 1101 and from 3.3 to 4.9 for 2401. These numbers are quite impressive for graduate instruction in introductory courses, and show clearly that our graduate students are providing high quality instruction. Indeed, instructors in fourteen of the 31 sections, almost half, received evaluations of 4.5 or higher. Nevertheless, several instructors received lower marks than we would like on question 17. That said, of the four instructors receiving evaluations under 4.0, one taught for the first time, and their score moved to a 4.2 the following semester, indicating that learning is happening. Another who received low marks taught 3 distinct sections of 1101 in the Fall with a total of almost 300 students; when this GTA taught a single section the following semester, the evaluations were easily above the 4.0 mark. The department also instituted an in-house teacher training course in May 2010 targeted to political science instruction. We believe this course has helped us maintain high teach standards, especially in the face of a greatly increased need for graduate student instructors.

**Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)**

**Continue to fund grad student conference travel**

Budget permitting, the department will continue to offer financial support to students for travel to conferences to present their work. Last year, we were able to offer students $250 per conference for a total of two conferences per student per year. This year we had to cut that back to one per student per year at $250.

*Established in Cycle: 2008-2009*

*Implementation Status: In-Progress*

*Priority: High*

*Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):*

  Measure: Conference presentations, publications and grants | Outcome/Objective:
Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field
| High Level of Competency in Research Methods | Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization

**Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate director, department chair

**In-house teaching prep course for grad student instructors**
The department will develop an in-house course required of all PhD students and open to MA students, before they are assigned a course of their own to teach. The course will cover basic pedagogical topics as well as techniques for effective teaching of some of the substantive material in POLS 1101 and POLS 2401, the two courses most often taught by graduate students.

*Established in Cycle:* 2008-2009  
*Implementation Status:* Finished  
*Priority:* High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
  - **Measure:** Teaching Effectiveness  
  - **Outcome/Objective:** Teaching Effectiveness

**Implementation Description:** Maymester  
**Projected Completion Date:** 04/2010  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Grad director, course instructor  
**Additional Resources:** Ideally, we could have funds dedicated for this course to be taught each Maymester.

**Pre- and post-tests in required methods sequence**
To strengthen our ability to assess and teach competency in research methods, we will implement pre- and post-tests in our two required methods courses, POLS 8800 (Elements of Research Design) and POLS 8810 (Applied Intermediate Statistics). These courses are taught each fall and spring respectively. The Graduate Director will work with the two instructors (each course is normally taught regularly by the same instructor) to come up with appropriate tests and ensure inter-coder reliability. Because it makes sense to collect data following the course sequence, we will implement this measure in August 2010 and report first results in June 2011.

*Established in Cycle:* 2008-2009  
*Implementation Status:* On-Hold  
*Priority:* High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
  - **Measure:** Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations  
  - **Outcome/Objective:** High Level of Competency in Research Methods

**Implementation Description:** Because it makes sense to collect data following the course sequence, we will implement this measure in August 2010 and report first results in June 2011.  
**Projected Completion Date:** 07/2010  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate director, graduate committee, instructors of 8800 and 8810.

**"C" Grade Limit**
The department voted this spring that no course grade under "C" could be used for credit towards the MA or PhD, and the graduate catalog has now been updated to reflect the change.

*Established in Cycle:* 2009-2010  
*Implementation Status:* Finished  
*Priority:* High

**Implementation Description:** Added to the graduate catalog and enforced by the college graduate
Admission reform
Last spring the department adopted a "single meeting" approach to evaluating our MA and PhD applicants in lieu of the rolling procedure of the past. This new approach allowed us to rationalize our admissions decisions and to make better use of our scarce assistantship resources.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
- **Implementation Status:** Finished
- **Priority:** High
- **Implementation Description:** Graduate director and graduate committee organizes a single meeting to discuss applicants and assistantships.
- **Projected Completion Date:** 02/2010
- **Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate director and graduate committee.

Elimination of Public Policy and Administration
The department voted last month to eliminate "Public Policy and Administration" as a major comprehensive exam and course distribution field. This change reflects the current lack of faculty in that field as well as the growth of the public management and policy department in the Andrew Young School and brings the official rules into line with the current scholarly emphasis of the department.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
- **Implementation Status:** Finished
- **Priority:** High
- **Implementation Description:** Added to graduate catalog and enforced by graduate director and college graduate office.
- **Projected Completion Date:** 09/2010
- **Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate Director

Faculty advisors
The department has decided to resuscitate our advisement program for incoming graduate students. This semester, all new graduate students were assigned a faculty advisor in their area who can provide them with advice until they can choose their own thesis or dissertation advisors.

- **Established in Cycle:** 2009-2010
- **Implementation Status:** Finished
- **Priority:** High
- **Implementation Description:** Graduate director assigns advisors
- **Projected Completion Date:** 08/2010
- **Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate Director

Methods Sequence Reform
The department plans to add a third course to the required methods sequence for PhD students. This is partially in response to data gathered through the assessment process that shows that some of our PhD students do not have adequate methodological skills. The specific details of the proposal are as follows:

1. The 8800 and 8810 requirements would be maintained as they exist now, such that students must take 8800 in their first semester and 8810 in their second.
2. PhD
students (not MA students) would be required to take a third methods course, either "Advanced Quantitative Methods" or "Advanced Qualitative Methods", as they prefer. 3. "Advanced Qualitative Methods" would be offered every other spring semester and could be taken at the same time as 8810. This sequence would allow students to take the course within two years of beginning the program. 4. "Advanced Quantitative Methods" would be offered every other fall semester and would have to be taken after completion of 8810. Students entering the program in the year it is not offered could take it the following fall. Those entering in the year it is offered would have to wait until the first semester of their third years to take the course. For this reason it would be better to offer the course every year, but if resources (or enrollment concerns) make that impossible, we can allow students in this position to go forward with comps at the end of their second year even without having taken the course. That way, their progress would not be slowed. 5. "Advanced Quantitative Methods" would cover the most commonly used statistical methods not fully discussed in 8800 or 8810, as determined by the instructor. These could include, for example, maximum likelihood estimation, duration models, panel models, and hierarchical models. The focus of the course would be on giving students a practical, applied knowledge of these techniques. 6. "Advanced Qualitative Methods" would cover the most used qualitative techniques not fully discussed in 8800 and 8810, as determined by the instructor. These could include greater depth on case selection and process tracing as well as discussion of QCA, content analysis, elite interviewing, and other topics. 7. Students would be required either to complete a fourth methods course or to pass a foreign language exam, with students of comparative politics required to choose the latter option. 8. The new course would count as a methods course for the purposes of the distribution requirement, such that students would only need to complete courses in two other subfields of political science (IR, CP, AP, or Theory) to fulfill that requirement. This would allow students to fulfill the distribution requirement and the requirement to complete three courses per comp field without exceeding the required 30 hours of coursework and extending the length of the program. 9. Students wishing to take the comprehensive exam in methods would need to complete one methods course beyond the newly required course. Justification 1. The large majority of political science departments at peer and aspirational universities require three methods courses (see other attachment). 2. Methods training, whether qualitative or quantitative, is increasingly central to placing our graduates in tenure track positions. At the moment, many of our students are not adequately trained in the most common techniques. 3. While we do sometimes offer methods courses beyond 8810, these tend to cover very specific topics. As a result, these courses often have difficulty attracting enough students to make, and they still leave our PhD students with no formal way of learning many of the most common methodological approaches out there. Students have sought to plug these gaps in their education by taking directed readings (such as Sean's multilevel modeling directed reading this semester, which was almost large enough to make as an actual class). As we all know, directed readings courses are time consuming for faculty and offer few rewards; implementing this proposal would likely reduce the demand for them while simultaneously expanding our coverage of methods. Our more specific methods courses could continue to be offered to allow students without foreign language skills to complete their fourth methods requirement and to prepare students for comping in methods. 4. At the moment, students who wish to expand their knowledge of methods (especially qualitative methods) are often forced to take courses at Emory. As a full service PhD granting department, we should be offering this training in-house. 5. There would be no concern about the new methods courses attracting enough students to make as they would be required. In addition, implementing the proposal would only require that we offer one new course per year. 6. In my conversations with current graduate students this semester, our limited methods offering was the single most common complaint I received.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
  Measure: Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations | Outcome/Objective: High Level of Competency in Research Methods

Implementation Description: We need a new faculty member to offer one of the courses, and we are hiring the position now. The graduate director and chair will cooperate in implementing the new policies.
Projected Completion Date: 08/2011
Responsible Person/Group: Graduate director and chair.
Additional Resources: New faculty member

Teaching Course for Graduate Students
The department introduced a new teacher training course for our graduate instructors in May 2010. This course targets political science instruction and allows students multiple opportunities to practice their teaching, and we believe that it will further improve our already good graduate student teaching evaluations.

Established in Cycle: 2009-2010
Implementation Status: Finished
Priority: High
Implementation Description: This course was introduced in May
Responsible Person/Group: Dr. Rashid Naim is teaching the course.

Expanded Recruitment
The department will begin reaching out to metro Atlanta schools more fully to recruit new graduate students. We will also continue with our expanded recruitment efforts, which last year included purchasing GRE scores, emailing minority APSA scholars, and contacting faculty at a number of Georgia and southern undergraduate institutions.

Established in Cycle: 2010-2011
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High
Implementation Description: See above
Projected Completion Date: 04/2012
Responsible Person/Group: Director of Graduate Studies

Creation Major Area Paper requirement
The Department voted to implement, beginning in Fall of 2013, a new requirement whereby students must write a "major area" paper in lieu of taking a third written sub-field comprehensive exam. The goal of this new requirement is to aid students in progressing from the comprehensive exam stage of the doctoral program to the dissertation stage. The Department believes that having students write a paper targeted at their dissertation topic area, and focused on identifying the major research questions, findings and gaps in the relevant literature, will serve as the necessary bridge to helping students design and write better dissertations.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
  Measure: Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations | Outcome/Objective: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field
Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization

**Implementation Description:** The Department voted on this change in August 2012, and the necessary changes to the graduate catalog have been submitted for the 2013-2014 Graduate Catalog.

**Responsible Person/Group:** Political Science

**Additional Resources:** None

**Implementation presentation requirement**
The Department recently voted to require that all doctoral students present a paper at the GSU Political Science Graduate Student Conference by the end of their second year. This requirement is aimed at socializing doctoral students into the practice of preparing work for presentation, and then presenting that work publicly. The hope is that students will then revise these papers for presentation at a national conference and/or for submission to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012
**Implementation Status:** In-Progress
**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- **Measure:** Conference presentations, publications and grants | **Outcome/Objective:** Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field
- **Outcome/Objective:** High Level of Competency in Research Methods | Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization

**Implementation Description:** Policy approved by Political Science Department in August 2012

**Responsible Person/Group:** Graduate Director; students

**Additional Resources:** none

**Methods teaching & lab assistants**
Beginning in 2011-2012, we allocated at least one advanced graduate student with superior methods skills to serve as a methods teaching and lab assistant. These students hold weekly office hours in the Political Science graduate computer lab, and their job is to answer student questions about research methods, including data management, data analysis and the proper estimation techniques. By providing additional support for students taking the required research methods sequence, our aim is to ensure all of our graduates have a very high degree of competency in utilizing the proper research methods.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012
**Implementation Status:** In-Progress
**Priority:** High

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**
- **Measure:** Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations | **Outcome/Objective:** High Level of Competency in Research Methods
- **Measure:** Conference presentations, publications and grants | **Outcome/Objective:** High Level of Competency in Research Methods

**Implementation Description:** Each semester we hire 1-2 graduate students to hold office hours in the computer lab or hold training sessions on different topics.

**Responsible Person/Group:** Political science faculty teaching advanced graduate methods; advanced graduate students who have taken and received high scores in our advanced methods courses.

**Additional Resources:** None
Revision comprehensive exam process
In the middle of the academic year, the department changed how comprehensive exams were administered and graded. Previously, students took a written exam, received a grade on that exam, and if the exam was rated as at least a “pass,” sat for an oral exam conducted by one member of each exam committee. The oral exam committee would then decide whether the student passed in total. The Department revised the process such that students, beginning in February, only sit for an oral exam if requested by a specific exam committee. In other words, students take a written exam and receive a grade of either high pass, pass, request an oral exam, or inadequate. This change means that rather than oral exams performing a rather perfunctory function (and faculty finding it rather difficult to rate a student as “inadequate” when they successfully passed their written examinations), they now are used when students’ written exams are on the border between pass and fail, and provide an opportunity for the student to demonstrate orally their mastery of the literature as well as for the exam committee to closely question the student on this literature. Initial reports are that this system is working well.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Comprehensive exam assessments | Outcome/Objective: Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field

Implementation Description: Committees now do not have to hold an oral exam; rather, oral exams are used when students are on the border between passage and failure.

Responsible Person/Group: Political Science faculty
Additional Resources: None

Revision of required methods sequence
Beginning in Fall 2013, the Department has revised and expanded its required methods sequence to address concerns about the level of preparation and competency shown by our students with regards to research methods. Previously, all students were required to take a two-course sequence. Now, all doctoral students will be required to take a required four-course sequence: (1) a stand-alone research design course; (2) an introductory course on quantitative analysis; (3) an intermediate quantitative analysis course; and (4) either an advanced quantitative analysis course or a qualitative methods course. The expectation is that increasing students’ training in basic research design and data analysis will lead to better quality dissertations.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Assessment of Doctoral Dissertations | Outcome/Objective: High Level of Competency in Research Methods
| Research Enterprise and Professional Socialization
Measure: Conference presentations, publications and grants | Outcome/Objective: High Level of Competency in Research Methods

Implementation Description: Course curriculum changes have been adopted; the necessary changes to the graduate catalog for 2013-2014 have been submitted and are awaiting approval.

Responsible Person/Group: Political Science faculty with ability to teach graduate research methods
Comprehensive exam preparation
The department has further increased its efforts to prepare students for comprehensive exams. In particular, we started holding twice-yearly workshops on preparing and studying for comprehensive exams as well as having faculty include assignments in graduate seminars that aid in comp preparations.

Established in Cycle: 2012-2013
Implementation Status: In-Progress
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Comprehensive exam assessments | Outcome/Objective: Competency in Second Field or Subfield
| Comprehensive Understanding of Major Field

Implementation Description: On-going
Responsible Person/Group: graduate faculty
Additional Resources: none

Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

ACADEMIC PROGRAM QUESTION 1:
What changes in the assessment process has your degree program made since last year's assessment report? (e.g. revised learning outcomes, measures, targets, etc.) Why were these changes made? What changes and improvements in the assessment process will you make in the coming academic year?

Based on feedback received on the 2011-2012 report, we revised our targets for this current report to make them more meaningful and better able to capture potential distinctions among students. We utilize a learning outcome assessment form that all committee members are asked to complete after a student successfully defends a dissertation; committee members are asked to evaluate the dissertation on a number of different learning outcomes. We previously used a single, broad target to assess student performance, and the use of this target likely meant that we potentially lost important information about how our students have performed. The revised targets ask us to determine whether at least 75% of dissertations received at least a score of "high" on the relevant learning objectives, and whether at least 10% of dissertations received a score of "very high" on the relevant learning objectives. We recently revised the graduate catalog and program degree requirements to institute a formal first and second year review of all doctoral students. We are currently working on the format for these reviews, and we seek to create some additional measures and/or targets of doctoral student achievement from these reviews.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM QUESTION 2: What is the impact of the data obtained from assessment findings on your educational degree program? What changes and improvements to your educational program will be made based on this year's assessment data? (e.g., revised curriculum, courses, sequence, etc.) If changes to curriculum or courses are made for other reasons, please explain.

Beginning this Fall, we are instituting a fairly dramatic overhaul of our doctoral program to try and address long-standing concerns about student performance in terms of research design and execution. First, we used to require a 2-course sequence that combined research design and quantitative analysis. The new sequence for PhD students is 4 courses: a single course on
research design, a single course on basic statistical analysis, an intermediate statistics course, and then a choice of either an advanced statistics course or a qualitative methods course. We have also revised our comprehensive exam structure to require students to take two exams, each in a major field, rather than our previous three exams, either in three fields, or two fields and a sub-field. Students will now also write a Major Area Paper based on their proposed dissertation topic. Our hope is that this new structure will focus students more on their exams, and help them transition more smoothly from the comp stage to the dissertation stage. Finally, we have also increased the number of comprehensive exam workshops we offer each year to ensure students are prepared for exams; many professors have also introduced assignments targeted at aiding students in their long-term comp preparations.