

**UG Assessment Report**  
**Department of Political Science, November 5, 2019**  
Craig Kauffman, Chair of the Curriculum Committee

In AY 18-19, the Political Science Department launched a process for surveying undergraduate majors to help in assessing its undergraduate program (in terms of meeting learning objectives) using survey responses. As an initial step, an exit survey was sent to all graduating majors during the Spring 2019 term. Taking the survey is voluntary, and thirty-three students chose to complete the survey. Because this was the first survey, it is impossible to engage in comparison over time. This report summarizes the responses from this initial survey. In future years, we will have more information to analyze and report.

The vast majority of respondents (91 percent) declared their majors in the Freshman or Sophomore years. Only 18 percent transferred in from another college or university. On average, respondents rated their interest in politics as 5.9 on a 7-point scale.

AY 18-19 was the first year that majors could apply for a Career Path Certificate. Fifty-one percent of the respondents said they applied for one or more Career Path Certificates (30 percent did two). The most common certificate was Global Engagement (12), followed by Public Policy and Political Action (9), followed by Politics, Law and Justice (6).

The first 14 questions asked students to rate the degree to which Learning Objectives 1 through 7 were met in their case using a 7 point scale (1=strong disagree; 7 = strongly agree). For most of the questions, the responses average between 5.8 and 6.45. Respondents reported strong agreement that they had become stronger analytical writers, are more capable independent researchers, and can identify, understand and explain major concepts in political science. There was one question in particular where students reported (on average) less agreement—the idea that they had become better at oral presentations on complex topics (4.7 on a 7-point scale). Other survey responses similarly suggest a department focus on theoretical writing, but less of a focus on policy-oriented writing (e.g., policy memo) or oral presentations.

While a majority of students reported reading regularly about current events and participating in demonstrations, a minority (roughly one third) reported having an internship or volunteering with a political or public-policy organization.

Students provided mixed evaluations of support provided by the department. Thirty six percent reported working closely with a faculty member on an individual project. The average rating of PS Advising Support was 5 out of 7. However, UO Advising was rated as 4.8. When asked to rate how positive or negative students felt overall about their experience in the Political Science Department, the average score was 5.27 out of 7.

Questions designed to measure student perceptions of how inclusive the department is toward racial, ethnic, and immigration backgrounds produced average scores ranging from 5.7-6.0. Comments varied, with some being critical and others being very complimentary. There are comments accusing Political Science faculty of upholding “anti-black” positions as well as comments accusing faculty of being “anti-white.” However, several comments noted that class

conversations skewed heavily to the left without considering conservative viewpoints. On average students scored the department low in terms of being inclusive to diverse political viewpoints and beliefs (4.7 out of 7). The department was rated much higher in terms of being inclusive toward diverse sexual and gender preferences (6.1-6.2).

**Graduate Assessment Report**  
**Department of Political Science, December 13, 2019**  
 Burke Hendrix, Director of Graduate Studies

We have only this year started compiling metrics on our graduate students, so this report only includes information on students who began their degree program between Fall 2011 (when our longest-enrolled graduate students began their program) and Summer 2019. Because the data are only a small sample, we are not yet able to draw strong conclusions about changes in our graduate program over time. Because we had one major rule change in the time period under consideration, we evaluate the data in relation to that first, before going on to areas in which such program changes did not occur.

Second Year Paper Transition

During the period in question, we had a substantial change in rules that has altered timelines throughout the program as a whole. Prior to Fall 2013, students were required to complete a field paper at the time of their choosing prior to the writing of their dissertation prospectus. They could do this before, during, or after their third-year comprehensive exams, with most opting for after. Students beginning in Fall 2013 and afterward were required instead to complete a second year paper during year 2 of the program, before advancing to their third-year comprehensive exams. The second year paper is now our program’s first major benchmark, which is intended to help us recognize students who will struggle in the program early on, before they advance further into their studies. A comparison of rates of completion of the two benchmarks and other information is outlined below.

*Flexible-Time Field Paper*

A total of 16 students were subject to the field paper system. Their degrees of success are below:

<b>Field Paper</b>	Fail	Low Pass	Pass	High Pass
Fall 2011 and 2012	1	2	11	2

Several students who ultimately passed required more than one attempt to meet this benchmark:

<b>Attempts to Pass</b>	One Attempt	Two Attempts	Three Attempts
Fall 2011 and 2012	8	6	1

The student who required three attempts was ultimately required to leave the program at the dissertation stage, when she proved unable to make significant progress according to committee evaluations. Of those who passed the paper on the first attempt, one has yet to complete their degree and one has voluntarily left the program. Of the 7 who took more than one attempt to complete this benchmark, 4 are still in the program working to complete their degree, while 2 have completed their degree and gone on to term-limited academic positions (see placement data below). There are no obvious outcome-related patterns for the specific timing of their paper (before, during, or after comprehensive exams).

### *Pre-Exam Second Year Paper*

A total of 26 students have taken the pre-exam second year paper since our move to that system. Here are their degrees of success:

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Paper</b>	Fail	Low Pass	Pass	High Pass
Fall 2013 to 2017	1	4	16	5

Of the students who passed, all but 2 were able to pass on the first attempt.

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Paper</b>	One Attempt	Two Attempts	Three Attempts
Fall 2013 to 2017	23	1	1

The two students who did not pass on the first attempt subsequently decided to leave the program. Two students who received an evaluation of low pass on their first attempt at the paper were subsequently required to leave the program, one after failing a comprehensive exam and one for academic misconduct. This means that our program has only one current continuing student who received an evaluation of low pass on the second year paper.

### *Structural Reform Evaluation*

Although it is hard to draw strong conclusions, the change from the field paper system to the second year paper system may have provided more effective early feedback to students about their readiness to continue in the program than did the field paper system, which came quite a bit later in the process. It also may have served as an early warning sign about students who were likely to fail in a subsequent program benchmark. At the same time, however, our data is limited, with no students subject to the second year paper requirement yet having completed the program. Exactly how much difference this policy change has made is so far difficult to ascertain with confidence.

### Comprehensive Exams

Our further benchmarks have not changed during the period under evaluation. They are described here and in subsequent sections of the report.

### *Major Field Comprehensive Exams*

Within our sample period, 32 students took Major Field comprehensive exams. Here are their results:

<b>Major Field Exam</b>	Fail	Low Pass	Pass	High Pass
	1	7	18	6

There were no strong patterns among the students who received evaluations of low pass on their major field exam. While two students who received grades of low pass were eventually required to leave the program, and another left voluntarily, 2 of the remaining low pass students have subsequently completed their degree and gone on to term-limited academic appointments, while one is about to complete their degree before going on to a term-unlimited appointment, and one is about to enter the dissertation stage.

There were noticeable differences across the difficulty levels of our subfields, with the exam area of International Relations being most difficult:

<b>Subfield</b>	Fail	Low Pass	Pass	High Pass
Comparative Politics		2	5	3
Formal Theory and Methods				1
International Relations	1	4	6	
Political Theory			2	2
US Politics		1	5	

Students are permitted to take exams twice if they fail on the first attempt. International Relations was the only subfield in which a student failed both tries at an exam, leading to the student's expulsion from the program. Although it was our most difficult subfield, International Relations was also the most popular, with slightly more test-takers than the next most popular field of Comparative Politics.

#### *Minor Field Comprehensive Exam*

Twenty-nine students took Minor Field comprehensive exams during this period. Here are their performances:

<b>Subfield</b>	Fail	Low Pass	Pass	High Pass
Comparative Politics			3	
Formal Theory and Methods			1	
International Relations		4	1	
Political Theory			4	
US Politics			1	1
Public Policy		3	7	4

The largest number of minor field exams were in the minor field-only area of Public Policy (48% of all minor field exam takers). Once again, the field of International Relations was more demanding than other fields, while remaining a popular area in which to take exams (second only to Public Policy).

There are no obvious conclusions to be drawn from those students who received an evaluation of low pass. While 2 were eventually required to leave the program for failing later benchmarks and one withdrew to re-enter legal work, 1 successfully completed their degree and went on to an academic position, while three more continue to move through the program at appropriate speed.

Research Prospectus

Our students are required to complete a research prospectus before going on to write their dissertations. A total of 25 students in our sample have advanced to this stage.

<b>Research Prospectus</b>	One Attempt	Two Attempts	Three Attempts
	17	7	1

The student who required 3 attempts was subsequently required to exit the program after failing to make appropriate progress on her dissertation. (This was the same student who required three tries at her field paper as noted above.) There are no noticeable patterns among those who took two tries to complete the prospectus compared to those who took one try.

Degree Completion

During the period in question, 8 students completed their PhD degree, all of them from the Fall 2011 and Fall 2012 cohorts. Our program also contains 5 students from these cohorts who have not yet completed their degrees, though one has accepted a term-unlimited position to begin upon degree completion in Fall 2019.

Of those who completed degrees, the average time to completion was 19.6 terms, about one and a half terms over our desired target of 18 terms (6 years). Presuming that the students still in our program do eventually complete their degrees, our average time to completion including them will be over the 7-year mark.

Career Placement

Of the 8 students who completed their degree during this period, 5 are currently in term-limited visiting academic positions or post-docs. Of the 3 students who are not working in academia, 1 works as a policy analyst for the State of Oregon, while 2 are not working in areas that apply their degree directly. Additionally, one current student has accepted a term-unlimited position contingent upon successful completion of her Fall 2019 dissertation defense.

There are unfortunately no obvious patterns in the data showing relationships between our program benchmarks and eventual career success. The student who secured the indefinite-term position contingent upon a Fall 2019 defense, for example, received an evaluation of low pass on her field paper, major field comprehensive exam, and minor field comprehensive exam, while two of the students who are not applying their degrees directly received an evaluation of high pass for at least one of these benchmarks.