

ASSESSMENT WEBSITE INFORMATION

College: Humanities and Social Sciences
Chair/Director: Levenbach

Degree Program: Political Science MA

DATA SAY:

Since 1 January 2010 eight students have successfully completed their comprehensive examinations on their way toward earning their MA degrees. In one case, a student's work on major field essays was judged not fully satisfactory; following an oral examination and the student's preparation of another revised essay, the student was recognized as having passed the major field component. (It might be noted that this particular student was, in other respects, one of if not the best student among the eight.)

The other two measures planned for assessment (see below) were only designed in the fall of 2010 and meant to apply to students beginning their work in the fall of 2011. None of those students have worked their way through to their last semester, and so no data are yet available.

SO WHAT:

Based on the traditional, but not singly satisfactory, indicator (i.e., performance on the comprehensive examination) recent MA students have performed adequately. A more rounded evaluation will be possible once we have data from the other two, new measures (identified below).

HOW WE CHANGED:

The MA Committee agreed in November 2010 that it would assess students on the basis of three pieces of evidence. First, we would look at student performance on the comprehensive examination, a measurement tool long in place. In addition, we agreed to implement two new appraisals. For one, students will be required at the time of the comprehensive examination to submit for review an academic paper, revised as they wish, prepared during their MA studies. This paper must be at minimum B-level work in the eyes of each member of the MA Committee in order for a student to receive a pass on the comprehensive examination. (Effectively, success on the written comprehensive examination is contingent on a unanimously favorable review of the exemplar.) The other new appraisal is based on a short essay in which each student, at the time of the comprehensive examination, will be required to reflect on his or her statement of purpose submitted at the time of initial application to the program, assessing their academic experience in the MA program in light of their initial goals.

WHAT WE GOT:

At this point, we have only the comprehensive examination data, which is now utilized not only as a challenge on the way to earning a degree but also as one, not entirely sufficient measure of learning. More intelligence will be available once the first cohort of students required to generate the other two appraisals (the research exemplar and the reflective essay) approach the end of their degrees. This should occur by May or August of 2013.

