

**Department of Political Science**  
**Political Science Graduate Program**  
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Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
Master of Arts in Political Science	Exit Interview	3
	Comprehensive Exams	4
	Methods Courses	11
	Thesis/Creative Component Defense	2
	Surveys of Students' Committee Chairs	2
	Presentation of Research	0
	Student Evaluation of Courses	0

**Analysis and Findings:**

Graduates were interviewed at or near the end of their degree programs. Additional discussions were held with most graduate students on an informal basis. The most consistent concerns were course offerings, expectations for comprehensive examinations, and instruction offered by visiting faculty, particularly in the required methods course. No comprehensive examinations were failed, and the two graduates during this period both successfully defended their creative components.

*Exit Interviews:* Only three students graduated from the MA program during this period; two in the spring and one in fall, 2003. All had generally favorable comments about their experiences. Some concern was expressed about the level of ongoing communication. The other concerns that were mentioned were low levels of graduate stipends and course scheduling issues. Course cancellations (due to low enrollments) continued to be an issue. Scarcity of internship opportunities and other post-graduation employment concerns were also mentioned.

*Comprehensive Exams:* Three students took a total of four comprehensive examinations during the period. All passed.

*Methods Courses:* Eleven students enrolled in and completed the required departmental methods course, POLSC 5013. There were also six enrollments in research methods courses outside the department. POLSC 5013 was taught by a visiting faculty member, and students expressed concerns about the style and content compared with other semesters. Nevertheless, all successfully completed the requirement and several expressed the opinion that the course fulfilled its intended function.

*Thesis/Creative Component Defense & Surveys:* Both of the graduating students elected to do a creative component. Both successfully completed the requirement and received praise from their respective committee chairs and members.

*Presentation of Research:* None of the students presented research at professional conferences.

*Evaluations of Courses:* Standardized course evaluations were not performed for graduate seminars. However, informal discussions with graduate students revealed a high level of satisfaction with courses and faculty overall. As noted above, there was some concern with one of the visiting faculty members, and there is ongoing frustration with course cancellations and limited offerings.

**Uses of Assessment Results:**

Significant progress has been made in the areas identified in past assessments. Reforms and changes suggested in past assessments have been largely implemented, and a few additional measures have been taken. Specifics include the following areas/measures:

1. *Information/Communication:* Detailed and updated documents on the requirements and standards for the M.A. program have been completed and disseminated to students. New documentation regarding specific expectations for comprehensive examinations and preparation for them have been developed and distributed. The Graduate Coordinator has developed and maintains an

informational website for political science graduate students. Frequently updated, this website contains all such program information/documentation along with relevant schedules, projected course offerings, and announcements. Materials concerning internship opportunities, study aids, copies of past comprehensive examinations, and other useful items. Downloadable Plan of Study forms, assistantship applications, and other administrative forms may be found there. Links to the department, the GSPSA, and the graduate college are included, as is an invitation for ongoing feedback /communication to the Graduate Coordinator.

2. *Course Offerings:* The department has expanded its graduate course offerings, created a more reliable advance roll-out projection for subsequent semesters, and has had far fewer course cancellations due to low enrollments than in the past. Part of this is due to enrollments from students from outside the department (notably the School of International Studies), but mostly it is the result of growing enrollments in the program and improved advising. New courses that have proven to be popular have also been developed (e.g., "globalization").
3. *Internships/Job Assistance:* This remains an area of concern. Information regarding possible internships and/or interviews is better publicized than in the past, but the department still lacks a comprehensive internship program. The Graduate Committee is currently organizing an internship database to be made available to students and serve as contact information for advisors.

The department is considering making travel monies available to graduate students to encourage participation in professional meetings and conferences, especially for those desiring to continue for a terminal degree. A successful Ph.D. program proposal should reinforce this initiative (see point #5 below).

4. *Methods Courses:* The faculty offering our required methods course and its content are being standardized, within the limits of academic freedom. We are also developing (in the context of a Ph.D. program proposal, discussed below) a two-course standard sequence of methods courses wholly within the department. At present, students must take one methods course from outside the department to meet our requirement.
5. *General Program Reform:* As discussed in last year's assessment, the department has adopted a program reform initiative that identifies and emphasizes our strengths. This reform has not been fully implemented, chiefly due to the recent opportunity to advance a formal proposal to create a Ph.D. program. If successful, this proposal will resolve the issue noted in point #4 above, as it includes a standardized internal methods course sequence that will be extended into the M.A. program. A new Ph.D. program should also assist with course enrollments and variety of offerings.
6. *Results of 2003 Graduate Program Alumni Survey:* The response rate of the 2003 survey was low to the point of making statistical analysis meaningless. However, the responses reported confirm the impressions noted above. Of particular note were expressed desire for greater assistance with internships and job-seeking.

*Assessment results are presented at faculty meetings and associated documentation is provided to any faculty member upon request. Also, all associated committees (e.g. Graduate Committee, committee to develop the Ph.D. proposal) reference assessment reports as a normal part of their deliberations.*