

University of Rochester, Department of Political Science, Doctoral Degree Program Assessment Plan

A. Program title: Political Science

B. Program degree: PhD

C. Program objectives:

Core knowledge:

The objective of the first year is that students master a number of essential skills and concepts in methodology and formal (also called “positive”) political theory. Two, two-course sequences are required, in addition to a required course in Scope of Political Science and political philosophy (if offered). In addition, students begin work on the subfields in which they are intending to specialize, usually by taking two or three courses in these subfields.

Knowledge and research skills in specialized areas:

The primary goals of the second year are: a) to expand and refine students’ methodological skills; b) to gain further insight and literature coverage of their chosen subfields in preparation for research and comprehensive exams; and c) to begin individual research that may develop into “second-year” papers (presented at the outset of year three).

Creative synthesis:

Students should develop a broader perspective of their specialized areas than represented by the individual courses. The Department provides students exposure beyond courses, such as time to prepare for qualifying exams that extend beyond coursework and opportunities to attend regular research seminars by faculty (often external) and fellow students.

Development of research agenda/scholarship:

The primary objective of the third year and beyond is to develop a research agenda and to begin making contributions to the literature.

Oral communication:

Ability to communicate is a critical component of training, especially with teaching in mind. Presentations at conferences, departmental seminars, and elsewhere are important for communicating one’s research. Good communication skills are also critical for job placement and performance in non-academic positions.

Written communication:

The results of political science research are disseminated through working papers, journal publications, and books. An important goal of the program is to teach students to present their contributions clearly in their writing.

Teaching skills:

Many of our graduates will take jobs as assistant professors in a university. Thus, one of the goals of the program is that students be able to effectively prepare and deliver classroom presentations.

Professional Ethics:

Accuracy, proper claims and attribution, and transparency are critical in research, teaching, and all professional work in political science. Contributing professionally, e.g., advising, reviewing, and contributing to the public good of one's institution are all highly valued.

D. Program assessment direct methods

As deemed necessary, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) gathers systematic information from graduate students on specific topics—e.g., on the overall amount of work required of students (i.e., beyond that in single courses).

The following methods are implemented annually and for each doctoral degree candidate. Test results and annual reviews by the faculty are gathered in student files.

1. Faculty, immediately after the end of the spring semester, meet in toto to evaluate each student in turn. The annual review includes an examination of grades in graduate classes. These are supplemented by faculty discussion about the work of each student, especially if grades are low. An overall assessment of student progress is communicated to each student in a letter from the DGS.
2. Comprehensive exams in specialized fields, are usually taken after the second year, in written form. Tests are evaluated by faculty in the relevant field. Completion of qualifying exams is reviewed each year by the DGS to assure that each student is on track for the degree.
3. Second-year original research papers, in written form, are evaluated in toto after an oral presentation to all faculty.
4. A doctoral dissertation proposal, in written form, is reviewed by the faculty advisor and a committee of at least two other department faculty using the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal Review Form. Data from forms will be presented to the DGS each year.
5. The department gathers student evaluations of graduate teaching assistants as well as evaluation by faculty teaching the course. Evaluations are reviewed by the Department Chair each semester.
6. Job-market seminar presentations to faculty and students are typically in the fifth year. These are evaluated by faculty in the field and often by additional faculty present at the presentation.
7. Drafts of doctoral dissertations, in written form, are reviewed by the student's faculty committee on an on-going basis.
8. The oral defense of the doctoral dissertation is conducted according to University procedures.
9. Student job placement is reviewed annually by both the DGS and the Department Chair.

E. Program assessment indirect methods

The following indirect methods will be implemented as noted:

1. Observation of ethical performance by students is made by all faculty during all years in the program (and after).

2. The department keeps close track of student job placement. This is made public by our record of where all students who have received PhD's are currently employed (<http://www.rochester.edu/college/psc/people/phd-alumni/>).
3. Observation of presentations at professional conferences.
4. Comparison of our course and other requirements with those of other major departments.

F. Alignment of program learning outcomes and program assessment methods

Program objective		Assessment method
Core knowledge	Mastery of knowledge of research methods and formal political theory.	<p>DIRECT METHODS</p> <p>First-year course exams--written Students expected to receive at least an average B grade in each of three major areas</p> <p>Course exams in both first and second years—written Students must show work consistent with B or better in any area required</p>
Research skills in specialized areas	Develop critical skills approaching research in specialized areas	<p>DIRECT METHODS</p> <p>Qualifying exams on specialized fields, after second year--written Students must pass exams at Ph.D. level.</p>
Creative synthesis	Develop a broad perspective on their specialized areas.	<p>DIRECT METHODS</p> <p>Qualifying exams on specialized fields, after second year--written Students must pass exams at Ph.D. level.</p> <p>Second-year original research paper—written Paper must be judged acceptable by the faculty in toto</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation proposal-- written Proposal must be judged acceptable</p>

Creative synthesis	Develop a broad perspective on their specialized areas.	<p>DIRECT METHODS</p> <p>Qualifying exams on specialized fields, after second year--written Students must pass exams at Ph.D. level.</p> <p>Second-year original research paper—written Paper must be judged acceptable by the faculty in toto</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation proposal-- written Proposal must be judged acceptable</p>
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<p>Development of agenda research agenda /scholarship Develop a research and produce scholarly contributions</p>	<p>DIRECT METHODS Second-year original research paper—written Paper must be judged acceptable by the faculty in toto</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation proposal--written Proposal must be judged acceptable by the candidate’s committee</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation--written Advising faculty committee must judge as acceptable</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation--oral defense Advising faculty committee and external committee members must judge as acceptable</p> <p>INDIRECT METHODS—observation Placement of students in academic and other positions</p>
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<p>Oral communication Develop effective presentations</p>	<p>DIRECT METHODS Teaching observation by faculty and student evaluation Student teaching will meet faculty expectations.</p> <p>Job-market seminar presentation Faculty in student’s area of specialty, along with others, must judge as acceptable</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation--oral defense Advising faculty committee and external committee members must judge</p>
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<p>Written communication Present contributions clearly in writing</p>	<p>DIRECT METHODS Doctoral dissertation proposal—written Proposal must be judged acceptable by faculty in the area</p> <p>Doctoral dissertation--written Advising faculty committee must judge as acceptable</p> <p>INDIRECT METHODS Placement of students in academic and other positions</p>
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<p>Teaching skills Present well organized lectures and other assignments that support student learning.</p>	<p>DIRECT METHODS Teaching observation by faculty and student evaluation Student teaching will meet faculty expectations.</p> <p>INDIRECT METHODS Graduate student placement Observation of presentations at professional conferences</p>
<p>Professional ethics Gain appreciation of importance of responsible conduct in all facets of their work.</p>	<p>INDIRECT METHODS Observation by faculty during all years in the program (and after)</p>