

## Assessment Plan Graduate Program

### Goals:

The Department of Politics & Government at Illinois State University, offers a master's degree in Political Science in order to promote human knowledge and skills in the areas of scholarship, teaching, and service in and about the political dimensions of social life.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

1. The student possesses the ability to understand and evaluate political institutions and processes at an advanced level;
2. The student possesses the ability to conduct independent research on politics and government;
3. The student possesses skills at effective oral and written communication in professional communities that deal directly with politics or government;
4. The student possesses skills of effective civic and political engagement.

Measures	Outcomes				Use of Information
	1	2	3	4	
Focus group with graduate students	x	x	x	x	Students are led in a discussion by Director of Assessment and Graduate Committee, and extensive notes (almost a transcript) are compiled of what each participants says. A summary of findings is written, and then both the summary and the notes are shared with the faculty and retained each year for program review. The focus group is used to gain input from graduate students, a key stakeholder, as well as to ask them how well the program is reaching the four goals.
Graduate Survey	x	x	x	x	All graduate students are strongly encouraged to fill out a survey with both closed- and open-ended questions. The purpose of the survey is to compensate for limitations in the focus group, notably that it improves our ability to generalize about what the graduate students believe. Like the focus group, the survey is used to gain input from graduate students, a key stakeholder, as well as to ask them how well the program is reaching the four goals.
Comprehensive Exams and Thesis	x	x	x		The department will report comprehensive exam and thesis completion rates,

					including the median years to MA. Besides basic graduation statistics, the document will also include the comprehensive exam questions for each subfield for the designated period as an indicator of learning outcomes.
Alumni Survey			x	x	The department will examine the responses of the alumni survey to determine how much the program helped them achieve their career goals.

**Examples of Changes Based on Assessment:**

The focus group with graduate students has led to a number of changes. Students argued that there should be more seminars, including more seminars in research. The program has begun offering an increased number of graduate seminars during the 2007-08 academic year, including two extra research oriented courses. The students also argued that there should be an orientation for incoming graduate students. The graduate committee has added several orientations.

**Steps for Improving Assessment:**

A number of steps will be taken beginning the Spring of 2008 to improve the annual assessment of undergraduates:

1. The department will begin using information on theses and comprehensive exams to help determine how well it is reaching its learning outcome goals, as proposed above;
2. The graduate focus group will include questions that explore how well the department is reaching its learning outcomes;
3. The survey of graduate students should include questions that measure how many graduate students agree with statements made during the graduate focus group;
4. The graduate program should taken steps to insure that every graduate student fills out a graduate survey, since the number of graduate students are too low for sampling;
5. The department will take steps to increase the response rates of the alumni survey, so as to make the analysis of this data more valuable.