

Student Outcomes Assessment and Success Report AY2018-19 Consult with your college dean's office regarding due date and how to submit. Deans will submit reports to the Office of Assessment & Accreditation annually by October 15.

Unit/Program Name: _____ Master of Public Administration_ Contact Name(s) and Email(s) _Nathan Myers; nathan.myers@indstate.edu

Part 1a: Summary of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

<p>a. What learning outcomes did you assess this past year?</p> <p>If this is a graduate program, identify the Graduate Student Learning Outcome each outcome aligns with.</p>	<p>b. (1) What assignments or activities did you use to determine how well your students attained the outcome? (2) In what course or other required experience did the assessment occur?</p>	<p>c. What were your expectations for student performance?</p>	<p>d. What were the actual data/results?</p>	<p>e. What changes or improvements were made or will be made in response to these assessment results or feedback from previous year's report? Can expand on this in Part 2.</p>
<p>1. Ability to think critically</p> <p>This is defined as the ability to answer a research question using a systematic process that requires the integration of academic literature and statistical data.</p> <p>Graduate ASL Outcome: Students achieve mastery of the skills (including using appropriate tools) required in their discipline or profession.</p>	<p>Final research design/statistical analysis project in PA 604: Research Methods in Public Administration.</p> <p>Critical thinking was evaluated based on the student's ability to run the appropriate analysis for the data, interpret the results of the analysis correctly, identify whether or the results supported their hypothesis, and then discuss the implications of this finding for public administration and policy.</p>	<p>80% of students will receive a grade of "B" or better on the critical thinking portion of the PA 604 final project rubric.</p>	<p>83% (10/12) of students in the course received a grade of 85% or better on the Critical Thinking rubric for the final project.</p>	<p>Extra credit was awarded to those distance students who participated in the class sessions in real time. Overall attendance for the course was strong during the semester, which I believe aided in student understanding of the material. Multiple types of analysis were still covered in the course, but with substantial time allowed for review.</p>
<p>2. Articulating a public service perspective</p> <p>This involves articulating the values of the public sector, how the public sector approaches problems</p>	<p>Discussion board assignments in PA 607: Public Budgeting in Government Agencies (average of three discussions)</p> <p>A rubric was used to evaluate this assignment. The rubric</p>	<p>80% of students will receive a grade of "B" or better for the average of the discussion board assignments in PA 607.</p>	<p>78.6% (11/14) of students in the course received a grade of 85% or better for the average on the discussion assignments in PA 607.</p>	<p>Of the three students who did not meet the standard, two did not complete any activity in the discussion boards at all. The third student received a lower grade because they did not respond to the work of</p>

<p>differently than the private sector, and the appropriate boundaries of government action.</p> <p>Graduate ASL Outcome: Students demonstrate professional communication proficiencies.</p>	<p>encompasses use of course materials, critical thinking, writing clarity, citation/formatting, and length.</p>			<p>other students. Of those students who did complete all the work, the lowest grade was an 87%.</p> <p>One change to discussion boards has been offering a variety of discussion prompts in courses like PA 605 or 607 to encourage an exchange of diverse ideas and avoid the fatigue that can come from multiple students writing on similar issues.</p>
<p>3. Recognizing and acting on ethical and professional challenges</p> <p>This involves using different types of ethical analysis to identify potential areas of wrongdoing and then considering different actions that one could take in a public sector context and the ramifications of those actions.</p> <p>Graduate ASL Outcome</p>	<p>Discussion board assignments in PA 609: Ethics in Public Administration (average of three discussions)</p> <p>A rubric was used to evaluate this assignment.</p>	<p>80% of students will receive a grade of “B” or better for the average of the discussion board assignments in PA 609.</p>	<p>75% (6/8) of the students in the course met this standard.</p>	<p>The final assessment outcome here is a little low. However, given the fairly low enrollment, the results are fairly encouraging. The two students graded below standard actually posted above average grades for the discussions they did enter. But both experience life and/or work problems that may have impacted their online activities. And both did score well on other graded activities.</p>

Note: If you would like to report on more than three outcomes, place the cursor in the last cell on the right and hit “tab” to add a new row.

Helpful Hints for Completing this Table

- a. Use your outcomes library as a reference. Note any alignment with professional standards, as applicable.
- b. Each outcome should be assessed by at least one direct measure (project, practica, exam, performance, etc.). If students are required to pass an examination to practice in the field, this exam should be included as one of the measures. At least one of the program’s outcomes must use an indirect measure (exit interview, focus group, survey, etc.). Use your curriculum map to correlate outcomes to courses. Describe or attach any evaluation tools such as rubrics, scales, etc.
- c. Identify the score or rating required to demonstrate proficiency (e.g., Students must attain a score of “3” to be deemed proficient; at least 80% of students in the program will attain this benchmark.)
- d. Note what the aggregate level of proficiency actually was and the number of students included in the cohort or sample (e.g., 85% of the 25 students whose portfolios were reviewed met the established benchmark).

[Part 1b: Review of Student Success Data & Activities](#)

Use [Blue Reports](#) to generate the following information (as well as any other information helpful to you):

- 1) Cohort Sizes
- 2) Year-to-Year Retention
- 3) 5-Year Graduation Rate (Note: 4-year graduation rates were used).

Enrollment: Fall 2015: **55**; Fall 2016: **52**; Fall 2017: **51**, Fall 2018: **37**, Fall 2019: **33**

- 1) Fall 2015: **20**; Fall 2016: **13**; Fall 2017: **7**; Fall 2018: **11**
- 2) Fall 2015: **65%**; Fall 2016: **69%**; Fall 2017: **71%**; Fall 2018: **64%**
- 3) Fall 2014: **26%**, Fall 2015: **50%**; Fall 2016: **46%**; 2017: **29%**

What worked well in supporting student success this year?

In regard to helping students to excel in regard to critical thinking (as measured by students' ability to complete a research project from developing a research question to interpretation of statistical analysis in PA 604), Dr. Myers took a different approach by structuring the research project along the lines of a grant proposal as opposed to a traditional academic research paper. The purpose of this was to emphasize the potential that students could use these research methods skills in their profession should they need to pursue grant funding. This approach was not entirely successful, as the instructor did not clarify issues regarding the formatting of the project and the sections that would or would not be necessary. This led to some students being more concerned at the early stages about what sections would or would not be required than the actual project. However, we do believe there was value in having students specifically address issues like the aims of their study, its potential significance in the field, and whether or not it is innovative. Students who were able to most closely relate the project to their current job seemed to get the most out of the project and perform the best. As a result, a greater variety of data is being provided to students in PA 602: Statistical Analysis in Public Administration this fall.

The discussion boards used to measure student performance in the area of articulating a public service perspective were a new addition to the PA 607: Public Budgeting in Government Agencies course this year. We consulted with some graduates of the MPA program about a year ago to ask what could be added to the curriculum of the program that would benefit them in their career. One of the responses we received was focusing on issues of economic development as this is a major issue facing local governments. This led to the inclusion of economic development case studies in the readings for the PA 607 course. In conjunction with these readings, students completed discussion boards asking them to relate information from the case studies to material from the financial management textbook used for the course. These discussions asked students to articulate positions on issues like public support for sports stadiums and public sector involvement in developing affordable housing. This questions asked students to think about the appropriate role of government, particularly in terms of its relations with the private sector. These are important issues for those in public administration at the state and local level to consider, as such partnerships are becoming increasingly necessary to engage in economic development initiatives. Thus the discussion boards were able to solicit some interesting views from students to articulate public service perspectives regarding the role of government in the larger economy.

PA 609 (Ethical Concerns in PA) is an elective course offered, on average, every other year. As an elective, it is not taken by all students. However, enrollment in 609 is, we believe, a representative sample of all students enrolled in the PA program. So we select it as a gauge for one of our reported outcomes.

This semester (Fall 2018), students were engaged in three general assignments. Readings were assigned weekly. Readings consisted of assignments in a text; readings from academic journal articles and other academic publications; and discussion cases taken from various sources. There were nine online discussions—covering approximately two-thirds of the weeks in the semester—each based on readings for the week (or sometimes, two weeks).

Students were also required to write three papers. Papers were written in response to questions, posed by the instructor, whose answer required students to review the literature over approximately one-third of the course. In the first paper, students reviewed the Abu Ghraib situation that occurred after the invasion of Iraq during the G.W. Bush Administration. They were asked whether the ethical failures there could be individually assigned, or were the result of organizational problems within the US military. In later papers, students were asked to address ethical problems of a county commissioner who faced a possible conflict-of-interest over land assessment and sales; and conflicts resulting in the possible abatement of institutional hiring standards by a lone actor within a public institution. As a finale, students were asked to critique the model of the “responsible administrator” constructed by Terry Cooper. All papers, save the last, were based on cases taken from life. Several students commented that they had encountered similar cases in their own careers.

In effect, discussions and writing assignments constrained students to read, review and, we hope, internalize the information presented in the course; and to use it to analyze a series of questions across the two general assignments, discussions and papers. The knowledge gleaned from these exercises—which included information taken during exchanges with colleagues in discussions—we hope, prepared our students for ethical challenges each of them is bound to encounter during their careers as public servants.

In terms of measures, discussion grades fell a little below expectations, as reported above. However, students averaged 92 across all three papers, which pulled all but one student into the “A-” range of final grades. So we were generally encouraged by the outcomes.

In regard to retention of students, the faculty are having to be increasingly sensitive to the personal and professional challenges that can create obstacles to students’ staying in the program. Some of this is done through advising, as we make clear that two courses per semester is the norm, but students are welcome to take only one class a semester or even take a semester off as needed. Some students want to take three courses a semester in the beginning, and we strongly advise against that. We make it clear in the syllabi for courses that extensions are an option for many course assignments should they face a situation where a work or family situation stands in the way of meeting a deadline. Even though it is an on-line program, we meet with those students in the immediate area face-to-face on a regular basis to answer questions and make ourselves readily available to out-of-state students via phone or email. For those students that run into situations where they have to withdraw, we make it clear that we will do whatever is in our power to help them to return to the program should they decide to do so. We continue to use approaches like hybrid classes and discussion boards to encourage a sense of community among the on-line students.

Graduation rates can be a challenge due to the fact that the capstone involves largely self-directed independent research. Some students demonstrate outright opposition to doing such work and others have a difficult time motivating themselves to complete the work in a timely manner. We did have good results regarding capstone completion in the 2018-2019 academic year, with 92.9% (13/14) of students who enrolled in PA 697 completing the project. The average score for the completed capstones was 91.1% (A-). A number of students seem to be building upon research they did previously in 604 and 602, which may make the process less daunting.

What are the most significant opportunities for improvement upon which to focus in the coming year?

In regard to critical thinking, we continue to explore ways to teach research methods and statistics in a way that will engage students and allow them to relate to their lives and/or careers. We are also exploring other ways to introduce new and relevant material into the curriculum, such as introducing material on non-profit organization leadership into PA 605: Organizational Behavior in Government Agencies. In regard to retention and graduation, one possible approach to identifying ways to better help students would be to create surveys, one that could be provided students after their first year and the other after they graduate from the program. These surveys could be used to get a sense of the biggest obstacles to success students experienced in the program and things we might offer to address those obstacles.

Part 1c: Summary of Career Readiness Activities

Please submit your Career Readiness Competencies curriculum map along with this report as a separate attachment. You can find the template here: <https://www.indstate.edu/assessment/plan-components>

Part 2: Continuous Quality Improvement

Reflect on the information shared above regarding student learning, success, and career readiness. In no more than one page, summarize:

- 1) the discoveries assessment and data review have enabled you to make about student learning, success, and career readiness (ex: What specifically do students know and do well—and less well? What evidence can you provide that learning is improving? How might learning, success, and career readiness overlap? What questions do your findings raise?)**
 - 2) findings-based plans and actions intended to improve student learning and/or success (expansion of Part 1a, box e as needed)**
 - 3) what your assessment plan will focus on in the coming year**
 - 4) how this information will be shared with other stakeholders**
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- 1) Students generally do well at relating materials from the courses to their professional lives. While the results are tainted to some degree by those students who opted not to complete the assignments, evidence from the discussion boards indicate that students are successful in relating information from different readings to each other and then relating that combined information to their professional life. Students do less well in terms of working with abstract concepts from research methods/statistics. The concept of a theory and how it applies to academic research remains an on-going struggle. We attempt to address this by providing different ways to conceptualize the theory and explain theories, as, in part, a way to organize conversations surrounding different areas of research in public administration. The critical thinking scores from last year demonstrate some improvement, as do the completion rates for the capstones. Students who are able to articulate to themselves why the material in the MPA program is relevant to their life and career tend to be more successful in their course work and continue on to completion of the capstone.

- 2) When teaching research methods and statistics, we allow more time for review of the material. This applies not only to discussion of statistical analysis, but the writing of literature reviews as well. We will also continue to work on making discussion boards engaging and interactive for students. One approach would be to have students alternate between posing questions and answering questions. On retention and graduation, we will look at approaches (such as surveys) to check in on students and be proactive about identifying areas in which they are struggling. We will also ask students on the verge of graduation about their challenges.
- 3) We will continue to focus on critical thinking for next year as it will be important to track this consistently in order to get meaningful data on improvement. Mastering an appropriate literature will also be reviewed as that metric and critical thinking are closely aligned. If students can better understand and appreciate the conversation that is taking place in academic research, it might help them to appreciate its value and the value of practitioners engaging in research for the public good. An increased focus on mastering academic literature will also hopefully help to address on-going uncertainty about the meaning and role of theory. Finally, we will continue to focus on articulating a public service perspective, as tracking this measure will allow us to gauge whether inclusion of new material into courses (such as economic development case studies and information regarding non-profit leadership) is providing added value to the program.
- 4) Information will be shared through formal meetings of the faculty, informal discussions among faculty members, as well as through email communications.

Please prepare this report as a Word document. Do not include any attachments. Instead, provide links to important supporting materials (e.g., detailed—but not student-specific—assessment results; rubrics; minutes; etc.), or upload them to the college’s assessment site in Blackboard.

Dear Nathan,

Thank you so much for sharing your assessment process and findings for AY 2018-19 with the Assessment Council. You will find feedback and ratings on the rubric below. It is understood that some of the feedback might encompass practices that you already engage in but were not documented in this report. As the purpose of this evaluation is focused on recognizing great work and helping faculty improve assessment practice, it is not necessary to retroactively add documentation. Please feel free to let me know if you have any questions or if there is any way I can assist you in further developing assessment in your program.

This report will be shared with the Associate Dean(s) and Dean of your college and summarized findings will be shared as composite college/institutional data with the President's Office and the Provost's team.

Sincerely,

Kelley (x7975)

Program: M.P.A. Public Administration	Overall Rating: Exemplary (3.00/3.00)
Strengths	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning outcomes are clear, specific, and measurable with good descriptions of the type of performance students will achieve. They are aligned with the Graduate Student Learning Outcomes.• Courses and assignments used for assessment are clearly described. Evaluations of student performance on assignments were also clearly described (e.g., running data analysis, use of an analytical rubric). Great use of average scores of multiple works for a more comprehensive picture of student performance over time.• Expected and actual student performance are clearly described.• Good use of class averages and comparison to past performance to view results in a more relative context, especially in consideration of the small n.• Reflective analysis provides great insight into the findings, including limitations based on missing work, student life challenges, and small enrollments.• Great discussion of a variety of strategies to improve engagement with assignments and decrease missing work, clarify assignment structure, continue to keep assignments relevant to actual experience, and continue support through advising.• Excellent use of program graduate feedback to inform content.• Clear information about involving faculty and sharing results.	

Evaluation Criteria	Exemplary	Mature	Developing	Undeveloped
<p>Student Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>At least one learning outcome that is aligned with program coursework is assessed this cycle.</p> <p>Learning outcome(s) is specific, measurable, and student-centered.</p> <p>Rationale for assessment of this outcome(s) is made clear (ex: it is part of a standing assessment cycle, a need was identified, etc.)</p> <p>Learning outcome(s) directly link to college, institutional, and/or accreditor goals/standards.</p>	<p>At least one learning outcome that is aligned with program coursework is assessed this cycle.</p> <p>Learning outcome(s) is specific, measurable, and student-centered.</p> <p>Rationale for assessment of this outcome(s) is made clear (ex: it is part of a standing assessment cycle, a need was identified, etc.)</p>	<p>At least one learning outcome that is aligned with program coursework is assessed this cycle.</p> <p>Learning outcomes(s) is measurable.</p>	<p>No learning outcomes are identified for assessment or the outcomes that are identified are not linked to program outcomes aligned with program coursework (e.g. – curriculum map) or are not measurable.</p>
<p>Performance Goals & Measures</p>	<p>Performance goal identified for each learning outcome is clear and reasonable (ex: based on previous performance data, professional standards, etc.).</p> <p>Identified measures are designed to accurately reflect student learning, including at least one direct measure.</p> <p>Tools used to measure student performance are described and were reviewed for validity or trustworthiness prior to use (note this in the report; attach tools if applicable – ex: rubrics, checklists, exam keys, etc.).</p>	<p>Performance goal identified for each learning outcome is clear and reasonable (ex: based on previous performance data, professional standards, etc.).</p> <p>Identified measures are designed to accurately reflect student learning, including at least one direct measure.</p> <p>Tools or processes for evaluating student performance on measures are described (attach tools if applicable – ex: rubrics, checklists, exam keys, etc.).</p>	<p>Performance goal(s) is identified for each learning outcome.</p> <p>Identified measures (ex: assignments, projects, tests, etc.) are poorly suited to performance goals or are solely indirect measures.</p> <p>Tools or processes for evaluating student performance on measures are not described.</p>	<p>No goals for student performance of learning outcomes is identified, and/or no measures are provided.</p>

Analysis & Results	<p>Data is collected using the measures and tools identified.</p> <p>Results are reported with clear description of quality analysis (e.g., analysis follows accepted statistical or qualitative procedures).</p> <p>Results are shared in relation to performance goals.</p> <p>Results are discussed in relation to college, institutional, and/or accreditor goals/standards.</p>	<p>Data is collected using the measures and tools identified.</p> <p>Results are reported with clear description of analysis (e.g., analysis follows accepted statistical or qualitative procedures).</p> <p>Results are shared in relation to performance goals.</p>	<p>Data is collected using the measures and tools identified.</p> <p>Results are reported with little description of analysis.</p>	<p>No data is being collected.</p> <p>No results are provided.</p>
Sharing & Use of Results for Continuous Improvement	<p>Clear information is provided about sharing and using results to inform practice.</p> <p>Discussion of what was learned from results is provided and connected to plans for sharing and using results to inform practice.</p> <p>A plan for adjusting performance, goals, assessment, and/or program components based on results is outlined.</p>	<p>Clear information is provided about sharing and using results to inform practice.</p> <p>Discussion of what was learned from results is provided and connected to plans for sharing and using results to inform practice.</p>	<p>Limited information is provided about sharing or using results to inform practice.</p> <p>Some discussion of what was learned from results is provided.</p>	<p>No information is provided about sharing or using results to inform practice.</p> <p>No evidence of reflection on results is provided (ex: discussion, conclusions drawn)</p>
Overall Rating	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exemplary	<input type="checkbox"/> Mature	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing	<input type="checkbox"/> Undeveloped