

## ASSESSMENT PLAN TEMPLATE: GRADUATE ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAMS

This assessment plan template outlines a systematic approach to reviewing the student learning experience for your graduate academic degree program. A simple, straightforward assessment plan includes:

- **What** – What are students expected to learn? *Student learning goals that have been submitted can be viewed at [Inside Assessment](https://provost.wisc.edu/inside-assessment/) (<https://provost.wisc.edu/inside-assessment/>).*
- **Where** – Where in the curriculum are students expected to learn and apply the knowledge and skills specified as the learning goals? *A curriculum mapping worksheet is provided on the last page of this template.*
- **How** – How do program faculty know (what is the evidence) that students are learning what they expect them to learn? *Examples of direct and indirect methods of assessment can be found on the [UW Madison Assessment website](http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/doing-assessment.htm) (<http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/doing-assessment.htm>).*
- **So What** – After reviewing the assessment activity findings (evidence), determine if students are meeting the expectations. Validate that expectations are being met or consider ways to improve. *Information about annual assessment reporting can be found on the [UW Madison Assessment website](#).*

More information about developing learning goals and an assessment plan guide is available at the [UW-Madison Assessment website](http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/basic-assessment-plan.htm) (<http://provost.wisc.edu/assessment/basic-assessment-plan.htm>).

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Please email your program's Assessment Plan Template and Curriculum Map Worksheet to [regina.lowery@wisc.edu](mailto:regina.lowery@wisc.edu) by July 1, 2016.

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### Assessment Plan Template – Graduate Degree/Major Program

Whether program personnel decide to paste information into this template or to utilize a pre-existing document, all bolded items **must** be included and clearly labeled.

#### Identifying Information

**School/College:** Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs

**Graduate Degree/Major Program Name:** Master of Public Affairs (MPA)

**Graduate Degree Level (M.S., M.A., Ph.D., DMA, etc.):** MPA

**Faculty Director Contact/Title:** Hilary Shager, Associate Director

**Primary Contact Information:** [hshager@lafollette.wisc.edu](mailto:hshager@lafollette.wisc.edu)

#### **Student Learning Goals (*What*)**

Assessment of graduate-level learning goals is one of the many ways in which our campus ensures the integrity of its degrees and the quality of the student experience. List the graduate student learning goals for this academic degree program below. Feel free to add rows if the academic degree program has more than five learning goals.

The student learning goals that have been submitted for your academic degree/major program can be found on the [Inside Assessment website](https://provost.wisc.edu/inside-assessment/) (<https://provost.wisc.edu/inside-assessment/>).

**I. Knowledge**

- A. Students will demonstrate understanding of major current and past policy debates, research findings, and analytical methodologies in each of the following core areas: microeconomic policy analysis, quantitative tools for policy analysis, policy analysis, the policymaking process, and public management.
- B. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills. They will retrieve and examine the policy literature and evaluate evidence for and against hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses in existing literature, synthesize knowledge, and develop conclusions.

**II. Applied Research**

- A. Students will read, comprehend, and effectively summarize policy research and policy-relevant academic research.
- B. Students will effectively summarize data for a general (non-academic) or policy audience.
- C. Students will demonstrate competency in methods of inferential statistics including those associated with multivariate regression models.

**III. Communication**

- A. Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world policy problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.
- B. Students will communicate substance of point 1 highly concisely and in language understandable to a non-specialist.
- C. Students will communicate substance of point 2 orally.

**IV. Professional and Ethical Conduct**

- A. Students will identify and appropriately respond to scenarios involving the ethical and professional responsibilities of public administration.
- B. Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain human subjects protections when designing studies, collecting data and reporting results.
- C. Students will know and adhere to high levels of professional conduct, ethical decision-making and legal and regulatory compliance.
- D. Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods.

**V. Professional Skills and Career Preparation**

- A. Students will develop effective job-seeking tools and utilize job-seeking techniques.
- B. Students will complete high quality group projects, including demonstration of effective project management and teamwork.

**Plan for Assessing Each Student Learning Goal**

For each of the degree major/program student learning goals, indicate how the program plans to assess whether or not students are meeting the expectation, as well as when each learning goal will be assessed. Keep in mind that each academic degree program is expected to engage **in at least one assessment activity per year** and assessment activities, in total, **must include one direct assessment method**. While programs do not need to assess each learning goal every year, **all learning goals must be assessed within a period of three years**.

**Table 1: La Follette School Plan for Assessing MPA Learning Goals**

Assessment Planning (How)	Learning Goal #I-A	Learning Goal #I-B	Learning Goal #II-A	Learning Goal #II-B	Learning Goal #II-C	Learning Goal #III-A	Learning Goal #III-B	Learning Goal #III-C	Learning Goal #IV-A	Learning Goal #IV-B	Learning Goal #IV-C	Learning Goal #IV-D	Learning Goal #V-A	Learning Goal #V-B
1) Successful completion of course exam, final paper or assignment	Final exam or paper (PA 818, 880, 873, 874, 878)	Final exam or paper (PA 818, 880, 873, 874, 878)	Memo in PA 800, 873, or 878)	PA 818 descriptive stats assignment	PA 818 final exam								PA 800 portfolio	
2) Workshop in Public Affairs (PA 869) final project						Final report	Policy brief	Oral presentation	Final project in compliance	UW Human Participant Research Training	Final project in compliance	Final project		Final project (peer evals)
Timetable for assessment activity (at least 1 activity/yr; all goals reviewed in 3-yr cycle)	Yr 1	Yr 1	Yr 1	Yr 1	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 1
3) Student exit survey (indirect measure)	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2

**Note:** Most students complete the MPA program in two years. A few La Follette students (approximately 5-10 per cohort) pursue double or dual degrees or certificates in other departments, and may therefore take that department’s equivalent required courses or workshop course. We will try to obtain equivalent information for these students from those partnering departments. Timetable for assessment activities is based on normal progression through the two-year sequence, but may be adjusted for individual students who take courses out of sequence.

**The La Follette School plan for assessing MPA learning goals will draw primarily from three data sources:**

- 1) **Successful completion of course exams, final papers, or assignments.** As indicated in the above table, specific assignments from required, core La Follette courses will be used as direct measures to assess several of the MPA learning goals. A list of required, core courses is provided in Table 2. Generally, a grade of B or above will be considered “successful completion” of these assignments; PA 800 (Professional Development Workshop) assignments are graded on a pass/fail basis.
- 2) **Workshop in Public Affairs (PA 869) final project.** As the culminating experience of their master’s degree program, MPA students work in teams to address real-world policy issues for clients from government, non-profit, or private sector organizations. Students complete a professional written report and oral presentation for clients. Students also address ethics issues via a confidentiality agreement, Human Participants Research Training, and other assignments. Successful completion of this project and various elements of the project will serve as direct measures of a number of learning goals.
- 3) **Student Exit Survey.** All La Follette students are sent a departmental exit survey via Qualtrics upon their graduation from the MPA program. Questions in the survey will be adapted to indirectly assess learning goals by asking students how confident they are in their ability to demonstrate or apply each of the goals.

Also provide answers to the following questions as part of your assessment plan.

1. **Who is responsible for assessment?** (identify an individual or team who will coordinate the implementation of the plan on an annual basis):

The La Follette School Associate Director, who is also the chair of the Curriculum Committee, will work with faculty on that Committee and the Student Services Coordinator (standing Curriculum Committee member) to coordinate implementation of the assessment plan on an annual basis.

2. **What is the plan for review of the assessment information?** (typically during an annual meeting of the program faculty and staff; note that at this meeting the program may want to review enrollment information, course progression, degree completion, and other structural features of the student experience in addition to the evidence about student learning):

Review and discussion of assessment information will take place at the annual faculty retreat (held in early fall semester), informed by the annual report to faculty written by the Associate Director. This report also contains information about enrollment, degree completion, and other structural features of the program.

3. **What is the plan for production of an annual summary report?** (the annual summary report includes the materials that form the basis of discussion at the annual meeting of the program faculty and staff, along with any recommendations made after considering the student learning assessment information presented):

As noted above, assessment information will be incorporated into the already existing Associate Director's annual report to the faculty during the annual faculty retreat (held in early fall).

4. **How will recommendations be implemented?** (explain the general process by which recommendations will be implemented):

In general, to implement recommendations, the Associate Director will work first with the Curriculum Committee to develop any changes in curriculum, assessment practices, other programming, and then will seek approval of these changes as needed from the Faculty Executive Committee.

### **Graduate Degree Program Curriculum Mapping Worksheet (Where)**

This worksheet, or similar document, **must be included** with the submission of the program's assessment plan.

- **Learning Goals** – Enter the academic degree program learning goals identified in the assessment plan on the top row of the following chart. (If the learning goals have been submitted to the Office of the Provost, a pre-populated template is available; contact [regina.lowery@wisc.edu](mailto:regina.lowery@wisc.edu)) Feel free to add columns if the academic degree/major program has more than five learning goals.
- **Degree/Major Program Courses/Experiences** – List all degree requirements (in some cases co-curricular experiences may also be included). Feel free to add rows as needed.
- Indicate with a check (X) where the course or learning experience contributes to each of the learning goals. Courses may contribute to multiple learning goals.

Table 2 below tracks how students achieve learning goals in required MPA courses. Many students also achieve goals through elective courses, internships or work experiences, which are not required, and are not shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: La Follette School Curriculum Mapping Worksheet-MPA**

<b>Curriculum Map (Where)</b>	Enter program-level learning goals (LG) and check (X) which course or experience contributes to which learning goal.													
<b>Degree Program Required Courses or Experiences</b>	LG #I-A	LG #I-B	LG #II-A	LG #II-B	LG #II-C	LG #III-A	LG #III-B	LG #III-C	LG #IV-A	LG #IV-B	LG #IV-C	LG #IV-D	LG #V-A	LG #V-B
PA 800: Professional Development Workshop	X	X					X						X	
PA 818: Introduction to Statistical Methods for Public Policy Analysis	X	X	X	X	X									
PA 880: Microeconomic Policy Analysis	X	X	X											
PA 878: Introduction to Public Management	X	X	X			X	X	X	X					X
PA 873: Introduction to Policy Analysis	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X		
PA 874: Policy Making Process	X	X	X											X
PA 869: Workshop in Public Affairs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

*Minimally, all of the courses/experiences required to complete the major degree program should be listed. Optionally, elective courses may be included in addition to the required courses.*

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