

Outcomes Assessment Plan

Public Affairs: Concentration in Political and Governmental Processes

M.A. Public Affairs, Concentration in Political and Governmental Processes

Plan: Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020, Spring 2021

Date Submitted: January 20, 2022

New Mexico Highlands University: Mission Statement

New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.

Mission of the Public Affairs Program

The Master of Arts in Public Affairs is an interdisciplinary program in the Social Sciences that provides academic training for careers in public and private organizations, both nationally and internationally. The multidisciplinary core curriculum includes courses in political theory, social theory and historical thought, human culture and economic theory. These courses foster a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural environment or public and private organizational policy design and implementation. The program prepares students for professional positions in managerial and leadership roles in government agencies, consulting firms, human services, public-interest organizations and businesses significantly affected by public policies, as well as training them for doctoral studies.

Goals of the Public Affairs Program, Political and Governmental Processes Concentration.

Political and historical awareness and understanding constitutes one of the chief attributes of a functional and involved citizen of the United States. Our goal is to provide an education that will contribute to the realization of this ideal by every student. We seek to train graduates to work in a variety of public and private sector jobs, utilizing their historical and political skills and knowledge.

College/University Goals Supported:

The university aspires to develop broadly literate citizens and leaders, educated in analytical and critical thought and the appreciation of the arts and sciences.

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose Linkage & Institutional Mission Reference:

The University's commitment to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures. Our program is committed to preserving, interpreting, and promoting the unique multicultural heritage of the region.

Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes:

1. Students exhibit an understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach in relation to the work they eventually do and the social environments in which they live.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of human behavior in all aspects of politics, government, and political processes through practical application, moving beyond observations to scientific inquiry in the study of politics.

3. Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, and communication. The acquisition of these skills will prepare graduates of the program for policy-making and administrative positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations, political campaigns and political office, and research/data-oriented positions, advancement into JD or PhD programs.
4. Students will master the scholarly literature and theoretical knowledge in their chosen field of concentration (Political Science).
5. Students will have participated in a civic engagement activity, project-based research, or an internship/practicum for the purpose of developing a better understanding of community issues and resources, thus cultivating a connection between students and community, whereby students develop a sense of social and political responsibility.

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students exhibit an understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach to graduate education.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills

Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

Students will successfully complete the program’s Interdisciplinary Core requirements earning a B or above in four (4) of the following courses:

- ANTH6510 – Seminar: Concepts of Human Culture (3)
- POLS5630 -- Political Economy (3)
- POLS6540 -- Seminar: The State (3)
- SOC6380 -- Advanced Classical Social Theories (3) or SOC 6390 Contemporary Sociological Theories
- HIST6150 – Contemporary Historical Thought

*A course may be approved for substitution for one of the core requirements which may be considered into the assessment.

ANTH6510 – Seminar: Concepts of Human Culture

Total number of students assessed	2		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	2	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

POLS5630 -- Political Economy (Course not taught in the Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020 or Spring 2021)

POLS5190 Public Administration (Substitution)

Total number of students assessed	3		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

POLS6540 -- Seminar: The State (Course not taught in the Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020 or Spring 2021)

POLS5580 Political Theory and Philosophy (Substitution)

Total number of students assessed	4		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	1

POLS6140 – Seminar: Public Policy

Total number of students assessed	4		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	4	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

SOC6390 Contemporary Sociological Theories

Total number of students assessed	1		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

HIST6150 – Contemporary Historical Thought

Total number of students assessed	1		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

MPA graduate students enrolled in one or more interdisciplinary core courses taking one-of-five core courses. Eleven MPA students enrolled in one or more of the core classes. Fifteen “As” were awarded and 12 “Bs” were awarded to the students. One student received a grade of “C.” Successful completion of this outcome was met.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of human behavior in all aspects of politics, government, and political processes through practical application, moving beyond observations to scientific inquiry in the study of politics.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective use of technology

Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

Students will achieve a grade of “B” or above in HIST/POLS620 Research Methods in History & Political Science or POLS 520: Research Methods in Political Science. Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by at least 75% of students earning an “A” or “B.”

POLS6200 Research Methods in History and Political Science

Total number of students assessed	5		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

POLS5200 Research Methods in Political Science

Total number of students assessed	6		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

Eleven students were assessed for outcome 2. Four students acquired a grade of “A” and one student acquired a grade of “B+” for POLS6200. In the POLS5200 Research Methods course one student acquired a grade of “A” and five students acquired a grade of “B.” Eleven students successfully met outcome 2.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, and communication. The acquisition of these skills will prepare graduates of the program for policy-making and administrative positions in governmental and non-governmental organizations, political campaigns and political office, and research/data-oriented positions, advancement into JD or PhD programs.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective Use of Technology

1st Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Students will achieve a grade of “B” or above in two of the following courses: POLS5630: Political Economy or POLS6540 Seminar in The State or POLS5190 Public Administration or POLS6140 Seminar in Public Policy. Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by at least 75% of students earning an “A” or “B.”

Total number of students assessed	7		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	7	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3.1:

POLS5630 and POLS6540 were not offered in the Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 semesters. During the previous stated semesters, three students were enrolled in POLS5190 and four students were enrolled in POLS6140. One student acquired a grade of “A”, and two student acquired a grade of “B+” for POLS5190. In the POLS6140 course, two students acquired a grade of “A” and two students acquired a grade of “B.” Seven students successfully met outcome 3.1

2nd Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Student secured a position with:

- a) policy-making and/or administrative governmental or non-governmental organizations,
- b) a political campaign/s,
- c) a political office, or
- d) a research/data-oriented positions, or
- e) advancement into JD or PhD program.

Total number of students assessed	3		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3.2:

Three students were assessed for outcome 3.2.

- 1) One student is the Director of Planning and Zoning for San Miguel County. New Mexico.
- 2) One student started a small business.
- 3) One student moved to Amarillo, Texas, and is actively seeking employment.

3rd Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

Students fill out surveys (see Attachment B) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program’s impact on their research, writing, and analytical skills. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all three areas.

Total number of students assessed	0		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3.3:

The survey is being revised and upon completion will be emailed to the students. Upon receipt of the completed surveys, the results will be interpreted and entered into the 2021-2023 Outcome Assessment

Student Learning Outcome 4:

Students will master the scholarly literature and theoretical knowledge in their chosen field of concentration (Political Science).

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 4:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills

1st Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

Each faculty evaluator will complete the examination rating form (see attachment A) of the graduating students’ work product (written comprehensive examination, professional paper or thesis). Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by an overall (total rating) of rating of good or excellent on the relevant evaluative measure.

Each faculty evaluator will complete the examination rating form (see attachment A) of the graduating students’ work product (written comprehensive examination, professional paper or thesis). Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by an overall (total rating) of rating of good or excellent on the relevant evaluative measure.

Total number of students assessed	3		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	3

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4.1:

Three students completed their program of study by taking and completing the comprehensive examination successfully. three students completed the comprehensive exam with a score of “4.” The examination rating form (attachment A) only applies to students completing his or his/her comprehensive exam.

2nd Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

Students fill out surveys (Attachment B) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including a question about the program’s impact on their mastery of the literature relevant and theoretical knowledge to their programs of study. Criterion for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all three areas.

Total number of students assessed	0		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4.2:

The survey is being revised and upon completion will be emailed to the students. Upon receipt of the completed surveys, the results will be interpreted for the 2021-2023 Outcome Assessment Report will be updated.

Student Learning Outcome 5:

Students will have participated in a civic engagement activity, project-based research, or an internship/practicum for the purpose of developing a better understanding of community issues and resources, thus cultivating a connection between students and community, whereby students develop a sense of social and political responsibility.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 5:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills

Means of Assessment for Outcome 5:

The student survey (Attachment B) includes a question addressing their participation in a civic engagement activity, project-based research, or internship/practicum. Successful completion of this outcome will be indicated by at least 50% of graduating students participating in one or more of those activities.

Total number of students assessed	0		
Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 5:

The survey is being revised and upon completion will be emailed to the students. Upon receipt of the completed surveys, the results will be interpreted for the 2021-2023 Outcome Assessment Report will be updated.

Utilization of Results:

The Outcomes Assessment process provided the Political Science faculty with useful information for the development of the MA in Public Affairs, concentration in Political and Governmental Processes.

- 1) Little to no resources are allocated to the recruitment into the Graduate program. Many of our undergraduate students, upon completion of their BA in Political Science and who meet the requirements for the graduate program, are accepted into the Public Affairs program. Given our limited resources, in particular—one Political Science faculty—the interdisciplinary core courses provide our students with the opportunity to take classes from Historians, Sociologist and Anthropologists; as a result, students obtain a comprehensive approach to the study of political processes, governmental entities, and community.
- 2) The research courses (POLS520 and POLS620) provide students with the necessary tools to apply historical research techniques to public policy issues. Moreover, the acquisition of quantitative

methods provides students with the skills need for policy analysis and evaluation. Also, students in Political Science have benefitted from their training in GIS. Political Science faculty are interested in developing a certification in GIS for the Social Sciences.

- 3) The successful outcome—two of four graduate students (50 percent)—continuing into Law School or a Ph.D. program or secure a job in the state government suggests that the courses we are providing students are preparing them for excellent job opportunities in their fields on interest. Our department has discussed creating a four-plus-one master’s degree program for students who receive a BA in Political Science and move into our Public Affairs Master’s program. Also, our department has had informal meetings with the Business department to create an MA in Business and Public Administration. Both “new” programs would generate an increase in graduate students for the Department of History and Political Science.
- 4) Six students were admitted into the MPA, and three degrees were awarded in the 2019-to-2021 academic years.

Comprehensive Examination Rubric

(Attachment A)

Responses must be written in appropriate academic language, with correct grammar, mechanics, and spelling. References in the written exam may be general, referring to specific authors or theorists without the requirement of specific citations. A passing grade requires an average of 3 (70%) on all questions.

Outcomes Assessment Plan

Score 5 (90-100)

A score of 5 presents a succinctly and in-depth response based on an understanding and integration of subject matter aligned to practice. A typical response in this category:

- Demonstrates a comprehensive ability to compare and contrast theories, principles, knowledge, and other relevant content applicable to the question.
- Applies an in-depth understanding of subject matter as aligned to practice.
- Provides an integrated personal synthesis in response to the question.
- Provides a logical and reasonable rationale.

Score 4 (80-89)

A score of 4 demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of subject matter and application of the information. A typical response in this category:

- Demonstrates a clear understanding of theories, principles, knowledge, and other relevant content applicable to the question.
- Applies appropriate theory to practice.
- Provides a clear and specific answer to the question.
- Provides a logical and/or reasonable rationale.

Score 3 (70-79)

A score of 3 demonstrates an average understanding of subject matter but limited application of the underlying information. A typical response in this category:

- Demonstrates an acceptable understanding of theories, principles, knowledge and other relevant content applicable to the question.
- Applies limited theory to practice.
- Provides an answer that is generally correct and germane.

Score 2 (69 and below)

A score of 2 demonstrates a minimum understanding of subject matter and inappropriate or no application. A typical response in this category:

- Demonstrates general understanding of the theories, principles, knowledge and other relevant content applicable to the question.
- Applies minimal theory to practice.
- Provides a very general and/or uneven answer to the question.
- Provides an uneven rationale.

Score 1

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A score of 1 may demonstrate some competence in responding to the question but is clearly limited or flawed and not acceptable for consideration. Applications are missing. A typical response in this category:

- Demonstrates a weak understanding of the theories, principles, knowledge and other relevant content applicable to the question.
- Applies no theory to practice.
- Provides vague or inappropriate answers.
- Provides a weak, inappropriate, or illogical rationale or does not provide rationale when requested.

Score 0

- No response is provided to question.

(Attachment B)

Survey of Graduating Students

Public Affairs/Political Science

New Mexico Highlands University

Please help us to evaluate and improve the Public Affairs Program by responding to the following questions. All responses will remain anonymous. **Note: PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SHEET.**

1. Name _____ ID N° _____.

2. Program Evaluation (please use reverse side if necessary)

2.1. Considering what you learned while in the Public Affairs program at Highlands, what has been most useful or helpful to you?

2.2. To what extend did your experience in the Public Affairs Program assist you in:

	Poorly			Extremely Well	
Understanding the literature of the discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Critical analysis of written arguments	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciating cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Writing clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Developing the skills necessary for research	1	2	3	4	5

2.3. Is there something you wish you had learned while at Highlands that was included in your Master's program?

2.4. How would you rate the Public Affairs Program in terms of:

Poor Fair Excellent

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Quality of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5
Variety of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5
Availability of courses offered	1	2	3	4	5
Accessibility and approachability of faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Education and qualification of faculty	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of academic advising	1	2	3	4	5

2.5. Did you participate in any civic engagement activity, project-based research, or internship/practicum during your graduate studies? Yes or No

2.6. What recommendations would you make concerning the Public Affairs Program at Highlands?

2.7. Looking back, are you pleased you chose to pursue a Master's in Public Affairs?

Please explain.

2.8. In your opinion what is the academic quality of:

	Poor		Fair		Excellent
The Public Affairs Program overall:	1	2	3	4	5
Your specific area of concentration:	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

Please return this questionnaire to Dr. Rodriguez in Douglas Hall N° 248. Thank you very much for your assistance.

* Please answer these questions only if they are relevant to your experience in the program and concentration.