

# Program Assessment Plan

## American University

### Academic Program: SPA: SPA Public Administration Doctoral Program - PhD

**Academic Program: SPA: SPA Public Administration Doctoral Program - PhD**

**Contact Person for David Pitts**

**Assessment:**

**Program Mission:** Our mission is to produce the next generation of leading scholars in public administration and public policy. We aim for our graduates to produce original research that is methodologically sound, socially relevant, and makes important contributions to knowledge and theory.

**Unit Website Address:** <http://www.american.edu/spa/dpap/degrees/PhD-in-Public-Administration.cfm>

**Unit's Primary Department:** Public Admin/Policy

**COLA Reader -1:** Chana Barron

**COLA Reader -2:** Betsy Cohn

**Learning Outcome: Key Theories**

Doctoral graduates will be able to articulate key theories and controversies in their field(s).

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 12/08/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Passing performance on culminating comprehensive examinations. <b>Measure Type:</b> Quiz/ Exam	Significant percentage of candidates are able to pass comprehensive examinations in their field(s) of study.	The Director of the SPA Ph.D. programs and all faculty who teach in the program meet every June to review each doctoral student's progress and accomplishments and consider revisions to the doctoral courses and overall program based on the indicated measures and feedback from students.	Yes

**Learning Outcome: Research Methods**

Doctoral graduates will be able to conduct a range of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 12/08/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Students demonstrate mastery of research methods by passing both Conduct of Inquiry I and II during the first year, as well as the first-year qualifying paper/examination. <b>Measure Type:</b> Quiz/ Exam	All students will pass both Conduct of Inquiry I/II and the first-year qualifying paper/exam.	Student grades are monitored by the departmental coordinators and academic advisor as they come in (Conduct of Inquiry I: end of December; Conduct of Inquiry II: middle of May). Marginal grades are flagged and discussed as necessary by the relevant faculty.  Qualifying papers are all defended during the month of May, and students are notified immediately if they pass the defense. For fields requiring a qualifying exam, students are	Yes

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
		<p>notified as soon as possible after taking the test.</p> <p>Both of these targets - passing the Conduct of Inquiry I-II courses and the first-year qualifier - are also assessed at the annual review of Ph.D. student progress, held during the summer.</p>	

**Learning Outcome: Research Questions**

Doctoral graduates will be able to formulate sound research questions and study approaches.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 12/08/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<p>Students will successfully write and defend a proposal for their dissertation.</p> <p><b>Measure Type:</b> Written Assignment</p>	<p>Students will successfully defend a dissertation proposal within six months of passing the second of their two written comprehensive exams.</p>	<p>All faculty who teach in the three programs meet with the SPA Director of Ph.D. Programs and three departmental coordinators to assess student progress each June. This group discusses each student's progress holistically, evaluating whether he or she is making sufficient progress toward completion of the degree. The departmental coordinators work with the director to formulate a letter for each student that outlines the key conclusions from this meeting. For students who are deemed to be making adequate progress, the letter is designed to give feedback to help them continue to make progress and ultimately graduate. For students who are deemed to be making inadequate progress, the letter identifies explicitly the targets that the student must reach by the next review cycle in order to continue in the program.</p>	Yes

**Learning Outcome: Writing Skills**

Doctoral graduates will be able to write academically sound and influential papers.

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 12/08/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Successful dissertation research and defense. <b>Measure Type:</b> Final Paper/ Final Project	No target identified.	The Director of the SPA Ph.D. programs and all faculty who teach in the program meet every June to review each doctoral student's progress and accomplishments and consider revisions to the doctoral courses and overall program based on the indicated measures and feedback from students.	Yes
Course papers and research projects. <b>Measure Type:</b> Written Assignment	No target identified.	The Director of the SPA Ph.D. programs and all faculty who teach in the program meet every June to review each doctoral student's progress and accomplishments and consider revisions to the doctoral courses and overall program based on the indicated measures and feedback from students.	Yes
Track papers published or presented at conferences by student and recent alums. Network with graduates and colleagues at academic conferences and workshops to track contributions and advancement in the field. <b>Measure Type:</b> Other	No target identified.	The Director of the SPA Ph.D. programs and all faculty who teach in the program meet every June to review each doctoral student's progress and accomplishments and consider revisions to the doctoral courses and overall program based on the indicated measures and feedback from students.	Yes

### Learning Outcome: Teaching Skills

Doctoral graduates will be able to teach college level courses in their subject matter area(s).

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 12/08/2010

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

### Learning Outcome: Research Methodology

Students should understand social science research methods in order to (a) engage in scholarly debate about the benefits and drawbacks of opposing methodologies, and (b) use appropriate methods in completing their own research.

**Outcome Year:** 2012-2013

**Start Date:** 07/01/2012

**End Date:** 06/30/2013

**Outcome Status:** Active Learning Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Grades earned in four required research methods courses All students are required to take four courses in research methodology, including GOVT 612, Conduct of Inquiry I; GOVT 613, Conduct of Inquiry II; and two elective courses that cover methods relevant to the student's individual interests. The grades earned in these courses typically reflect student performance on written exams and research papers.	All students will earn a B or higher in all four required research methods courses	Annual	Yes

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
<b>Measure Type:</b> Performance			
First-year qualifier paper At the end of the first year of study, all students must 'qualify' to continue in the program by successfully defending an original research paper before a committee of three faculty. The purpose of the qualifier is to identify whether students are making adequate progress toward becoming top-notch researchers in their area of interest. The paper can be on any topic that is relevant to the student's program of study, but it must be at a level suitable for presentation at a professional conference.	All students will pass the first-year qualifier paper defense.	Annual	Yes
<b>Measure Type:</b> Presentation			

**Learning Outcome: Satisfactory Progress**

Students will make timely progress for each milestone in the program: courses, qualifying exams, comprehensives, dissertation proposal defense, dissertation defense, and, if applicable, performance as a GA, and presentation of papers at conferences and refereed publications

**Outcome Year:** 2010-2011

**Start Date:** 10/01/2010

**End Date:** 10/24/2011

**Outcome Status:** Active Program Outcome

Assessment Plan			
Assessment Measure	Target	Schedule/Cycle	Active
Students who enter with an MA are expected to complete all milestones up to proposal defense by (or before) the end of the third year of residence, and the dissertation during the fourth year.			Yes
Students who enter without an MA are expected to complete all milestones up to proposal defense by (or before) the end of the fourth year of residence, and the dissertation during the fifth year.			