

Mills College
Public Policy Program Assessment:
Procedures for Development of Assessment Tools, Use of Tools, and Processes for Improvement

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SPECIFICATION OF PROGRAM'S STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

The planning documents for the undergraduate and graduate programs included sets of core “skills, competencies and perspectives” that the faculty envisioned as appropriate outcomes for these programs. When the Carol Chetkovich assumed the role of program director in Summer 2005, she worked in consultation with the program’s founding director Emery Roe, Public Policy Steering Committee Chair Paul Schulman, and the entire steering committee to refine the formulation of program outcomes as part of the initial stages of the program’s assessment plans. These plans mapped the initial lists of student learning outcomes (SLOs) onto the existing (and in the case of the graduate program, proposed) curriculum, and identified potential course-based assessment tools and criteria. The SLOs for both the undergraduate and graduate programs have been modified slightly to reflect refinements in program aims and design. In addition, recent work on the assessment plan—including the development of detailed rubrics for assessment of capstone products—has resulted in some further refinement—including grouping of the SLOs and revised specifications. This refinement also resulted from our thinking about the two programs (graduate and undergraduate) in relation to each other—relevant for those students who do the graduate program as a 4+1 BA/MPP.

We anticipate that as we work with our assessment tools, we will revise both the tools and the specification of SLOs in an iterative process. For example, when we discussed the results of a learning-outcome student survey at the completion of our first graduate program year, we learned that one of the outcomes was not well understood by at least some students and we have edited it for clarification. In addition, the discussion of certain proposed outcomes in the practical context of the students’ experience with the program raised questions about the importance or desirability of some SLOs (as well as indicating places where program improvement is needed). Although we do not anticipate a radical revision of our SLOs, we do foresee an iterative process in which SLOs may sometimes be modified as a result of assessment (and other program efforts).

DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT PLAN, RUBRICS AND OTHER TOOLS

The assessment plan is being revised to include both course-based or “embedded” assessment tools (such as exams, exercises and papers) and procedures for more global

assessment.¹ The latter category will include rubrics for assessing capstone products, exit surveys of graduating students (accompanied by discussions at least initially), and follow-up surveys of alumni/ae after five, ten, and fifteen years (assuming contact can be maintained).

Capstone Rubrics

The first drafts of the rubrics to be used in assessing the capstone products—the senior thesis for undergraduates and the master’s policy report (MPR) for graduate students—were developed by Professor Carol Chetkovich in consultation with the other full-time faculty member in the program, Professor Mark Henderson. The rubrics list all the student learning outcomes, and for each of these we have specified one or more criteria to be used in assessing whether the capstone product gave evidence the outcome had been met. In addition, the rubric contains a scale in which the assessor can indicate the degree to which each criterion is met (ranging in the MPR rubric from level 1, “novice” to level 5, “mastery”). For each criterion, there is a brief description of for each level on the scale of what it means to meet the criterion at that level of competence. In general, the specification of the criteria was drawn from the detailed SLO description, informed to some degree by the course-specific outcomes identified by instructors.

In the spring and summer of 2008 we pretested these rubrics before applying them for the first time. For the pretest, Professors Chetkovich and Henderson each read the same senior thesis and the same master’s paper with the respective rubrics. Because we began this process before the current academic year ended, we used a senior thesis from the program’s previous graduating cohort (2007) and a master’s thesis from the Goldman School. After the pretest readings, we met to discuss the rubrics and their application. As a result of that discussion, we arrived at clearer shared understandings of the criteria and standards and we also made some minor revisions in the rubrics. The first full application of the rubrics also produced ideas for refinement, and showed us how the rubrics would need to be supplemented with other forms of assessment for grading purposes (see attachments for final versions of the rubrics). In the future, we plan to distribute the assessment forms—with qualitative standards but no numerical scores—to the students at the outset of their projects. And we have added a space for other notes to be made on the rubric form by the instructor, to take account of paper qualities that are relevant to grading but not to the rubric. In addition, we will provide students with a checklist of important paper components that we will look for in grading (but again, are not contained within the assessment rubrics).²

¹In terms of the course-based assessments, the criteria for success are based on what individual instructors have indicated they aim to achieve in their courses, as these relate to our program outcomes.

²An obvious example would be the need for an executive summary that can be read as a stand-alone document, not an introduction to the paper. This is a critical element of a good policy analysis, but it doesn’t relate directly to the student learning outcomes that form the basis of the rubrics.

Other Forms of Global Assessment

Graduating Student Survey. Beginning with our first cohort of MPP students graduating in Spring 2008, we are administering a brief questionnaire to the students at the end of their training (see attachments). It identifies the SLOs for the program (giving detailed descriptions) and asks the students to indicate the degree to which they believe they met this outcome in the foundation curriculum and (separately) the advanced curriculum. The scale ranges from 1=minimally to 5=fully. The instrument also asks students if there were other skill/knowledge areas that they were hoping to develop; if so, they are asked to list these and again to indicate the degree to which they were developed in the program's two curricular levels. Finally, students may give general comments in answer to open-ended questions about the program. Results are discussed in a meeting with the students.

We plan to continue conducting this survey, and to develop one for graduating seniors in the undergraduate program. We expect to continue holding follow-up meetings as well, at least in the near term. (It is difficult to make these happen in a timely fashion, before students depart at the end of spring semester, so we may have to discontinue these eventually. But at this stage in program development and structured assessment, it is extremely helpful to have the qualitative data from discussion in addition to the questionnaire responses.)

Alumni/ae surveys. We plan to develop a follow-up survey instrument to gather data periodically from alumni/ae, on how well their education has prepared them for employment, civic activities and other aspects of their lives to which education is relevant.

Employer surveys. Professional associations in our field—especially NASPAA, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration—are working on outcome-based assessment techniques (including employer surveys). We continue to monitor the development and availability of such techniques, and we may adopt additional procedures if they seem appropriate.

APPLICATION OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

In 2008 we began use of the capstone rubrics and the student survey on learning outcomes. In both cases the process entailed extensive discussion in order to understand raw results and identify possible courses of action.

Assessment by Capstone Rubric

We conducted our first capstone assessment by applying the rubrics to this year's undergraduate theses and master's papers. We read and scored each paper for all criteria on the relevant rubric, and we also made written note of general observations we had about particular aspects of the quality of the work. We each completed a summary form (sample attached) on

which we recorded the median score, range, and percent not-applicable for each criterion, along with our most important observations. Then we met to review our results, identify the most critical findings, and discuss possible actions to address these areas. Where we had arrived at substantially different scores, we discussed our reasons. In many (but not all) cases, the person who had worked with the students throughout their projects gave slightly higher scores in part because he had the benefit of additional knowledge of what had gone into the research and writing. We did not attempt to resolve all differences to arrive at a single score for each paper/criterion, but we took our differences into account in interpreting the results.

Understanding Rubric Results and Identifying Plans for Improvement.

Because this was our first rubric-based assessment and the number of papers was small for both programs, we discussed the findings for each criterion at some length, rather than simply comparing the scores to a pre-set benchmark. We did, however, pay closest attention to those criteria for which the median score was below 3 for either reader. As we reviewed our scores, we made a list of critical findings—the areas our assessments had identified as most in need of improvement, and in some cases, areas in which performance was exceptionally strong and we wanted to note efforts that were working particularly well. Throughout this review, we also recorded ideas for action as these occurred to us. After completing our review, we went back over the full list of critical findings and discussed possible actions to address concerns for which we had not already identified proposals. Some findings represented “stand-alone” problems that needed to be addressed on their own, but in several instances, a number of findings were all related to what we identified as a general weakness in the students’ training (conceptualization and execution of the research process). The findings and related proposals for action were recorded in a summary document (sample form attached).

Assessment by Student Survey

Students returned their completed survey forms (without names) to a box in the graduate program office. Following tabulation of the results of the survey, we had a meeting with the students to explore the responses and gain a better understanding of their view of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. As explained, the assessment process entailed a survey followed by a discussion in which we (Carol Chetkovich and Mark Henderson) presented the total (small-number) survey results back to the students and asked for their elaboration and interpretation. We took extensive notes during that conversation and then met to review what we had learned from the students, *and* to make note of possible interventions that could address some of the program’s short-comings (some of which had arisen in the course of the discussion with the students). A written summary has been prepared of the outcome-related assessment comments and relevant actions. By way of illustration, we were concerned to see the rather low scores the students assigned to the analytic-skills outcomes in the foundation curriculum. When we explored this result with them, it became clear that a problem was that the disciplinary analytic courses (including but not limited to economics and statistics) did not seem sufficiently connected to public policy applications. In reflecting on this result, we have decided that we

need to take some action to help the students connect their learning in non-policy courses to the field of public policy. One way we may do this is to develop a program handbook for students that frames the required courses in a way that guides students in thinking about the course materials' relevance to public policy. We may also try to work with course instructors to ensure that when possible, students can write policy-relevant papers in these classes, to ensure a stronger integration of material. (Some of these ideas are reflected in the attached sample form summarizing the student survey/discussion and instructors' follow-up meeting.)

The assessment files now include the following documentation of assessment results and related plans for improvement:

- summary forms for rubric-based assessments by each reader (both programs)
- critical findings and plans for improvement arising out of rubric-based assessments (both programs)
- raw data from the student survey on learning outcomes (graduate program only)
- summary results of the student meeting on the survey and ideas for action relating to areas of need (graduate program only)

USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Assessment results that provide useful feedback relevant to specific courses will be communicated to individual instructors, along with suggestions and/or support from the public policy program director. (Results relating to courses taught by the program reviews, Professors Chetkovich and Henderson, are already being integrated into course design.) In addition, the program faculty will use assessment results to inform curricular design and to develop program elaborations and activities that support our educational goals. In particular, in an interdisciplinary program in which courses are taught by faculty members in different departments, assessment results help us see where integration is succeeding and/or lacking. In our initial assessment effort with graduating MPP students we have already identified some activities that could enhance the development and integration of different disciplinary skills or perspectives. Examples of specific proposed actions associated with particular findings may be seen in some of our attached, excerpted forms (see "Critical Findings and Proposed Actions" for the two programs). An additional form summarizes the status of proposed actions along with the names of individuals responsible (see the excerpted "Undergraduate Program Improvements").

A major challenge will be the cost of implementing certain changes. Although some improvements can be made fairly readily, others will require significant expenditures of time and/or the cooperation of faculty members in other departments. We plan a phased implementation process in which we will undertake the most straightforward (most easily adopted) changes immediately, and work toward more difficult and costly improvements as more time and resources become available.

Rubrics

Senior Thesis
 Rubric for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	poor quality 1	marginal 2	acceptable 3	very good 4	exceptional 5	
A1. Ability/inclination to put policy analysis in context						
Criterion 1: Policy problem and background statement reflect awareness of relevant context(s) (historical, social, institutional, cross-national, etc.) necessary for understanding the problem.	little to no attention to context	uneven attention to context	basic coverage of contextual factors	solid coverage of contextual factors	in-depth understanding of context(s)	
Criterion 2: Problem is suitable to techniques of policy analysis.	totally inappropriate problem	problem might be suitable but not as framed	problem and framing suitable for policy analysis in limited way	problem and framing very suitable for policy analysis	problem/ framing offers opportunity for creative solutions	
Criterion 3: Analysis and recommendations take into account multiple perspectives as relevant (including but not limited to differences by race, gender, class, etc.).	no attention to relevant social positions	limited or uninformed attention to diverse social positions	accounts for most but not all relevant social differences	adequately accounts for all relevant social differences	consideration of relevant social positions deeply informs analysis	
Criterion 4: Assessment of alternatives includes attention to constraints of context (including e.g., organizational capacity, social-cultural realities, biases in human decision-making).	no recognition of contextual constraints	limited recognition of contextual constraints	takes account of contextual constraints in general way	adequately accounts for contextual constraints	sophisticated consideration of contextual constraints and solutions	
A2. Understanding dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, culture and class as relevant to policy						
Criterion 1: Policy problem and background statement reflect awareness of issue's interaction with race, ethnicity, gender, class, and culture.	no evidence of such awareness	limited or uninformed awareness	evidence of basic awareness	adequate awareness of interaction	evidence of sophisticated understanding	
Criterion 2: Analysis and recommendations take into account differences in perspectives and impact along these dimensions, <u>as relevant</u> .	no accounting for relevant differences	limited or uninformed accounting for differences	takes some account of relevant differences	adequately takes into account relevant differences	unusually thoughtful accounting for differences	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	poor quality 1	marginal 2	acceptable 3	very good 4	exceptional 5	
A3. Familiarity with the policy-making process						
Criterion 1: Relevant political institutions (and relationships among them) are taken into account as these are relevant to the policy problem, analysis of alternatives, and recommendations, and information about relevant political institutions is accurate.	no attention to relevant political institutions	limited/incorrect treatment of relevant political institutions	gives basic consideration to relevant political institutions	fully accounts for relevant political institutions	political-institutional analysis deeply informs paper	
Criterion 2: Recommendations are appropriate to the decision-making context (level of government, type of actor) for which the thesis is written.	no evidence of understanding decisionmaker context	minimal/ misguided attention to decisionmaker context	generally correct consideration of decisionmaker context	solid understanding of decisionmaker context	sophisticated alignment of recommendations with decisionmaker context	
A4. Ability to engage in ethical reasoning						
Criterion 1: Ethical concerns are correctly identified and relevant ethical criteria are included in the assessment of alternatives.	ignores ethical concerns	limited/misguided treatment of ethical issues	identifies some ethical issues, treats in general way	adequately addresses all relevant ethical issues	exceptionally thoughtful integration of ethical concerns	
Criterion 2: Ethical reasoning is clear, logical and complete (taking account of multiple perspectives), and empirical claims are substantiated; normative arguments are represented as such.	no ethical reasoning	weak and/or unbalanced, ethical reasoning	generally sound but incomplete ethical reasoning	ethical reasoning is thorough and balanced	sophisticated ethical reasoning	
A5. Understanding legal institutions and reasoning						
Criterion 1: Treatment of any relevant legal issues reflects an understanding of US legal institutions and legal analysis; legality is included (as appropriate) among criteria for assessing alternatives.	no attention to relevant legal institutions/ concerns	uneven or misinformed attention to legal concerns	basic attention to legal concerns/ institutions	adequately addresses all relevant legal concerns	sophisticated consideration of legal concerns	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	poor quality 1	marginal 2	acceptable 3	very good 4	exceptional 5	
B1. Knowledge of basic quantitative methods						
Criterion 1: Problem framing, policy analysis and recommendations reflect an appreciation for economic factors (including especially the effect of incentive structures on behavior); relevant economic theory/concepts are employed appropriately; and economics terminology is used correctly.	no attention to economics	limited or incorrect consideration of economics	basic consideration of economic issues	sound consideration of economic issues/implications	sophisticated economic analysis	
Criterion 2: Quantitative data are provided where relevant, and analyzed correctly with basic statistical techniques.	no effort to provide quantitative data	very limited and/or incorrect use of quantitative data	correct but insufficient use of quantitative	solid effort to include quantitative data and correct analysis	exceptional effort to gather quantitative data; sophisticated analysis	
Criterion 3: Relevant economic criteria (including efficiency) are included in assessment of alternatives.	no economic criteria	very limited or unclear use of economic criteria	very basic (but not incorrect) use of economic criteria	thorough and correct use of economic criteria	sophisticated definition/use of economic criteria	
B2. Ability to apply analytic techniques in different areas and to investigate an area in depth.						
Criterion 1: The problem/question is clearly specified and its importance is explained and substantiated with evidence (including some quantitative data).	problem unclear and rationale inadequate	problem and/or rationale need work	basic problem statement clear; rationale could be stronger	clear problem statement; rationale persuasive	exceptionally thoughtful problem statement and rationale	
Criterion 2: The research design and data-gathering were suitable for addressing this problem.	research not suited to problem	research ill-suited to problem	research basically suited to problem	research fully appropriate to problem	appropriate and sophisticated research	
Criterion 3: Appropriate and <u>specific</u> criteria for assessing alternatives are identified and applied (including generally: effectiveness, efficiency, feasibility, equity, relevant procedural or value-based criteria, etc.).	no attention to criteria	criteria inadequate and/or inappropriate	basically appropriate criteria; some lack of specificity	solid set of good criteria, appropriate specificity	exceptionally thoughtful designation/specification of criteria	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	poor quality 1	marginal 2	acceptable 3	very good 4	exceptional 5	
Criterion 4: The most reliable and relevant data available were used, and all evidence is weighted according to its quality.	little to no reliable data	some use of unreliable or irrelevant data	reasonable data generally appropriately used	thorough and correct use of appropriate data	expert use of highest-quality data	
Criterion 5: Relevant findings from other studies inform the analysis.	no attention to other studies	very limited reference to other studies	some attention to other studies; needs more	good inclusion of other study findings	sophisticated inclusion of other study findings	
Criterion 6: Recommendations are based on reliable data and conscientious application of relevant criteria; consideration is given to implementation concerns relating to recommendations.	recommendations either unfounded or nonexistent	recommendations not clearly related to analysis or well thought-out	recommendations related to analysis; some attention to implementation still needed	recommendations flow from analysis; implementation considerations are sound	recommendations highly persuasive and implementation thoroughly analyzed	
Criterion 7: Limitations of data and/or analysis are recognized and addressed as feasible.	no attention to data/analysis limitations	inadequate attention to limitations	acknowledgment of limitations	makes clear implications of limitations	addresses limitations as well as possible	
C1. Communication skills						
Criterion 1: Writing is clear, grammatically and syntactically correct, and concise.	prose is often hard to understand; contains frequent errors	prose sometimes hard to understand; wordy; some errors; style inappropriate	prose is understandable but contains some errors; style is wordy and/or inappropriate	prose is very clear and concise; few errors; style is appropriate	prose is clear, concise and compelling; free of errors; a pleasure to read	
Criterion 2: Paper is clearly organized; sections flow logically.	no clear organization	organization somewhat haphazard and hard to follow	sections generally flow, but some weak transitions or confusion	structure logical and easy to follow	structure is logical and compelling	
Criterion 3: Complex and policy-specific facts and ideas are intelligible for a lay reader.	avoidance of technical complexities	over-use of jargon and/or avoidance of complexities	occasional use of unnecessary jargon; unclear explanations	no use of jargon; clear explanations of complexities	exceptionally clear, even with very technical topics	

Additional notes on thesis quality: _____

Masters Policy Report
 Rubric for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	Novice 1	Minimal competence 2	Developing Competence 3	Proficiency 4	Mastery 5	
A1. Understanding policy contexts						
Criterion 1: Analysis takes into account relevant aspects of the problem’s context—including history and social structures.	generally fails to take context into account	identifies some aspects, ignores and/or misinterprets some	meets criterion on basic level but lacks detail on context(s)	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
Criterion 2: Student’s policy recommendations clearly rely on multiple, explicit and appropriate evaluative criteria (and alternatives are identified).	evaluation criteria are absent and/or inappropriate	important criteria are missing, inadequately defined and/or misused	identifies most/all criteria on basic level but with some weaknesses (inadequate definition, incorrect use)	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
A2. Cross-cultural awareness and competence						
Criterion 1: Student’s thesis engages perspectives of multiple stakeholders	ignores critical stakeholder perspective(s)	identifies some perspectives, misses or misrepresents others	takes account of multiple perspectives, but with some weaknesses (e.g., insufficient detail)	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
Criterion 2: Analysis take into account structural systems of inequality and varying impact of policy on differently situated social/demographic groups	ignores issues of inequality, differential impact	identifies some issues but fails to incorporate into analysis	takes account of relevant differences but with some missing points	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	Novice 1	Minimal competence 2	Developing Competence 3	Proficiency 4	Mastery 5	
A3. Political efficacy						
Criterion 1: Student's recommendations are politically realistic--take into account constraints & resources of political decision-makers, and client is satisfied with them on this dimension	recommendations are very unrealistic	some evidence of concern for feasibility but inadequate	attention to feasibility in some areas and not others	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
Criterion 2: Policy analysis demonstrates awareness of difference between advocate and analyst roles	no evidence of awareness	weak evidence of awareness	some awareness but some problem of role confusion	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
A4. Democratic and Ethical Practice						
Criterion 1: Thesis acknowledges ethical and/or normative issues as relevant to problem definition, analysis and recommendations; ethical reasoning is sound (uses valid premises and conclusions are logically related to the premises) and takes alternative perspectives into account.	largely ignores ethical/normative concerns	identifies some ethical concerns but misses some and/or gives them inadequate treatment	attends to important ethical concerns but treatment is less than complete	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
Criterion 2: As relevant, thesis analysis reflects understanding of obligations of public officials to serve public interest; need for public input/involvement as appropriate.	no evidence of attention to these concerns (though relevant)	reflects only most basic level of understanding	some attention to concern for public interest/involvement but incomplete	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
B1. Analytic skills relevant to problem-identification, problem-solving, and decision-making						
Criterion 1: Student's work (in problem-identification, analysis and recommendations) uses data; synthesizes and interprets quantitative and qualitative information; relies on multiple methods as appropriate; displays data in appropriate forms. Notes: _____ _____ _____	minimal use of data and/or analysis	data and/or analysis are inappropriate for the problem	reasonable data and/or analysis but incomplete or incorrect elements	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	Novice 1	Minimal competence 2	Developing Competence 3	Proficiency 4	Mastery 5	
Criterion 2: Thesis produces policy and management recommendations supported by analysis and considered practical by client, who also reports that student's work is useful.	recommenda- tions not supported or practical	recommenda- tions only weakly supported	recommenda- tions draw on analysis but not persuasively	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
B2. Analytic applications across policy areas and in-depth.						
Criterion 1: Thesis reflects in-depth understanding of the policy area.	evidences only cursory understanding of the policy area	reflects understanding of some but not all relevant aspects of the policy area	reflects a basic level of understanding (as might be gained from a limited literature review or brief informant interviews)	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding (what might be expected of someone very familiar with the field)	
Criterion 2: Application of policy analytic methods (including economic and cost/benefit analysis) to specific problem is appropriate and correct, and produces useful understanding.	fails to apply appropriate methods or does so incorrectly; adds little to under-standing	appropriate methods are applied but incorrectly or superficially	application of methods is basically correct but insufficient to produce very useful results	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	Novice 1	Minimal competence 2	Developing Competence 3	Proficiency 4	Mastery 5	
C1. Professional communication skills						
Criterion 1: Student's written work is clear, concise, free of jargon, substantive, and readable.	text often difficult to understand; frequent errors in grammar, syntax, or spelling; organization of material hard to follow	prose generally comprehensible but some lack of clarity in wording/ organization; repetitious or very wordy; some errors; style inappropriate	prose is comprehensible and paper coherent, but some errors; is repetitious and/or wordy; style slightly inappropriate	prose is consistently comprehensible and paper clearly organized; little repetition/ wordiness; few errors; appropriate style	paper is a pleasure to read: prose is clear, concise, free of errors; structure of paper makes sense; argument is persuasive in clarity and logic	
Criterion 2: Student conveys complex problem and analysis in concise, straightforward language that enables an intelligent lay reader to comprehend the analysis	analysis is very difficult to understand; assumes too much technical knowledge, uses jargon, incompletely explains unfamiliar concepts	uneven attempt to convey technical information in clear fashion; some over-use of jargon/ assumption of reader knowledge	analysis is generally clear to lay reader but some technical concepts or problem-specific material incompletely explained	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
Criterion 3: Oral presentations include these qualities (above) but also demonstrate confidence, poise, and imperturbability.	presentation uninformative and/or hard to follow; presenter style unprofessional	presentation covers bare minimum of information; hard to follow in places; and/or style inappropriate	presentation covers basics in appropriate style; some lack of clarity, confusion, inattention to important substance	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards					(N/A)
	Novice 1	Minimal competence 2	Developing Competence 3	Proficiency 4	Mastery 5	
C2. Interpersonal and teamwork skills						
Criterion 1: Student is able to interact effectively with those in the client organization and other informants and interested parties; the thesis is written in a way that reflects sensitivity to these interests	interpersonal difficulties are apparent; student is insensitive in thesis-related interactions	some difficulties in interactions and/or inadequate attention to needs of client/others	student is generally sensitive to thesis-related interactions; slight but not major problems	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
C3. Organizational efficacy						
Criterion 1: Student's policy recommendations are organizationally feasible (analysis takes into account organizational constraints & resources)	no evidence of attention to organizational concerns	minimal attention to organizational concerns	some attention to organizational concerns but important issues inadequately unaddressed	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	
C4. Analysis and management of financial resources						
Criterion 1: As relevant, student's policy analysis projects full benefits and costs of competing policy options; recommendations reflect understanding of fiscal realities.	no attention to relevant fiscal concerns or benefit-cost analysis	minimal attention to fiscal concerns; incorrect benefit-cost analysis	basic attention to fiscal issues and benefit-cost analysis, but with some errors or omissions	solidly meets criterion	meets criterion in a way that reflects deep understanding	

Additional notes on report quality: _____

Graduating MPP Student Survey Questionnaire

Instructions: The MPP Program has 10 intended student learning outcomes (SLOs), described in detail below. In the questionnaire that follows the SLO descriptions, we will ask that you indicate the extent to which you think the outcome was met (i.e., you developed the skill/knowledge described). Because the MPP Program relies on foundation courses as well as the advanced curriculum, we will ask you to answer a question for each learning outcome as it pertains to each portion of the program. There is also space for additional comments if you wish to make them.

MPP STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

A. Political, Ethical and Legal Reasoning

A1. Understanding policy contexts. The student will understand that many contextual factors are critical in analyzing policy issues. She will be able to identify which factors are relevant to an issue at hand, and use her understanding of the context to inform her analysis of the policy. Examples of potentially important contexts include the following: economic systems, law, social structures and conditions of inequality, globalization, institutions, history, science, and technology.

A2. Cross-cultural awareness and competence. The student will be sensitive to the relevance of social identity categories and other differences—including race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, nationality, language, and culture—to public policy analysis, decision-making, and implementation. S/he will also be able to work effectively with and to draw on the perspectives and frameworks of individuals and communities of differing backgrounds, social classes, experiences, and values. Understand the relationship between policy, social structures of inequality, and identity dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity, culture and class, and the role of the individual in relation to these larger forces.

A3. Political efficacy. The student will have knowledge of both electoral politics and formal policy-making processes in the United States (including administrative, legislative and judicial procedures) and exposure to international political processes. S/he will be able to assess the political ramifications of alternative policy choices, and to work with individuals, institutions, partnerships and networks for policy-making, implementation, and redesign. S/he will also be able to engage effectively in political action as necessary and appropriate to effect policy change.

A4. Democratic and ethical practice. The student will be aware that in a democratic society, the authority to define the public interest rests with the polity, not the policy professional. The student will also understand that questions of value are central to both public policy decisions and the actions of public policy professionals, whether they be acting in public, nonprofit, private, or multi-sector settings. As a public servant or private professional engaged in civic activity, she will be familiar with different methods of public deliberation and participation, and be prepared to engage in public dialogue, multi-stakeholder conflict resolution, public education on complex issues, and collective problem-solving. When facing a policy and/or management

choice over which there is significant disagreement, s/he will be able to engage in reasoned dialogue with others to clarify competing values and obligations relevant to the choice, and to give a clear account of the justification for her own action.

B. Policy Analysis Techniques and Applications

B1. Analytic skills relevant to problem-identification, problem-solving, and decision-making.

The student will be able to recognize and describe a policy problem (including making estimates of magnitude), gather the best available data needed to inform an analysis, and apply relevant frameworks and analytic techniques--such as economic theory, benefit-cost analysis, statistical tests, quantitative models and simulations, and geographical information systems--to identify and assess the potential impact of alternative policy options. The student will be prepared to approach problems both critically (looking for perspectives that have been ignored) and holistically (applying a variety of analytic frameworks).

B2. Analytic applications across policy areas and in-depth. Ability to transfer into any policy area, understand the critical issues and apply appropriate analytic methods and to develop substantive expertise in a single policy area within a reasonably short time.

C. Professional Skills

C1. Professional communication skills. The student will be able to communicate complex ideas and arguments in a clear, compelling manner to a variety of audiences, from policy-makers and public managers to community groups. S/he will be skilled in both oral and written communication, including techniques relevant to teamwork and cross-cultural practice.

C2. Interpersonal and teamwork skills. The student will understand interpersonal and group processes, be aware of the potential benefits and pitfalls of teamwork, and be able to work effectively with others. The student will also be reflective about her/his own capacity, role and behavior, both independently and in a group context.

C3. Organizational efficacy. The student will be cognizant of the structure, systems, and culture of an organization in or with which s/he is working, and understand how these factors influence individual behavior and organizational performance. Such knowledge will include an understanding of the similarities and differences among organizations in different sectors (public, nonprofit, and private). The student will be able to use this knowledge along with her/his interpersonal and teamwork skills to act effectively within and across organizations, as well as to manage organizations or larger networks of capacity.

C4. Analysis and management of financial resources. The student will be familiar with public sector finance and budgeting practices. She will also be prepared to analyze and work with program budgets, to forecast policy and program costs, and to identify appropriate potential sources of financial support.

Question 1. For each student learning outcome, please indicate the extent to which you think you attained the outcome (i.e., you developed the given skill/knowledge area) within the foundation courses and/or the advanced/MPP curriculum (7 core courses plus 2 electives). Because some learning outcomes are primarily applicable to one level of the curriculum and not the other, there is a “not applicable” option for each item. (For example, SLO C4: “Analysis and management of financial resources” is an outcome relevant to the advanced curriculum, not the foundation courses.) If you wish to elaborate your responses, please do so on the next page.

I attained this learning outcome . . .

Student Learning Outcomes	in the foundation courses . . .						in the advanced/MPP curriculum (core+electives). . .					
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	1	2	3	4	5	n/a
A1. Understanding policy contexts												
A2. Cross-cultural awareness and competence												
A3. Political efficacy												
A4. Democratic and ethical practice												
B1. Analytic skills relevant to problem-identification, problem-solving, and decision-making.												
B2. Analytic applications across policy areas and in-depth												
C1. Professional communication skills												
C2. Interpersonal and teamwork skills												
C3. Organizational efficacy												
C4. Analysis and management of financial resources												

Additional comments in response to Question 1. _____

Question 2. Were there skill/knowledge areas other than those listed in Question 1 that you were hoping to develop? If so, please identify them:

- (1) _____
- (2) _____
- (3) _____
- (4) _____

Question 3. Referring to the skill/knowledge areas you listed in Question 2, to what degree did you develop these in the program?

I developed this skill/knowledge area . . .

	in the foundation courses . . .					in the advanced/MPP curriculum . . .				
	minimally		moderately		fully	minimally		moderately		
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Skill/knowledge area (1)										
Skill/knowledge area (2)										
Skill/knowledge area (3)										
Skill/knowledge area (4)										

Question 4. If you would like to offer any additional comments about your experience in the program, please do so here:

Excerpted
Summary of Rubric-Based
Reading of Master's Policy
Reports

Masters Policy Report

Rubric for Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

of theses: 7

Date: 6/19/08

Student Learning Outcome and Criteria	Standards: 1=novice; 2=minimal competence; 3=developing competence; 4=proficiency; 5=mastery			Comments
	median	range	n/a (%)	
A1. Understanding policy contexts				
Criterion 1: Analysis takes into account relevant aspects of the problem’s context—including history and social structures.	4	4-4	14%	
Criterion 2: Student’s policy recommendations clearly rely on multiple, explicit and appropriate evaluative criteria.	2	1-4	0%	criteria often only <i>implicit</i>
A2. Cross-cultural awareness and competence				
Criterion 1: Student’s thesis engages perspectives of multiple stakeholders	3.5	2.5-4	0%	need more attention to other sides; in org studies, need staff perspective
B2. Analytic applications across policy areas and in-depth.				
Criterion 1: Thesis reflects in-depth understanding of the policy area.	4	3.5-5	0%	
Criterion 2: Application of policy analytic methods to specific problem is appropriate and correct, and produces useful understanding.	3.5	2.5-4	0%	some constrained by data limitations; NEED TO REVISE RUBRIC TO ADD “including economic and cost/benefit analysis” after “analytic methods”; problem-framing may need more economic analysis in framing; greater depth/detail needed in some
C1. Professional communication skills				
Criterion 1: Student’s written work is clear, concise, free of jargon, substantive, and readable.	4	3.5-4.5	0%	generally very clear writing; Ex Sum should summarize Q, research, conclusions (with #s), not say “the report will . . .”; also may need definitions of technical terms; attend to formatting problems

Excerpted
Critical Findings and
Proposed Actions
(Undergrad and MPP
Programs)

Critical Findings	Diagnosis of Problems and Proposed Actions
<p>1. Insufficiently defined or overly broad problem/question</p>	<p><u>Students need stronger grounding in conceptualization of research process.</u> <u>Problem goes beyond this class/our program</u> (if this is their first research class, and it's also their capstone, it will be hard for them to do well)</p> <p>A. For PPOL 191, create hand-outs on logic of research and presentation (checklist) for policy papers (similar to MPP materials); emphasize need for focused research question/problem; identify data needs; research and analysis plans; criteria; focused recommendations</p> <p>B. Need collaboration across the College faculty to work on research skills</p>
<p>2. Inadequate performance on quantitative analysis</p>	<p>C. In PPOL 100, develop and emphasize toolkit; revisit toolkit in PPOL 191</p> <p>D. Program handbook (see action items relating to MPP student survey) will help integration of methods classes</p>
<p>3. Executive summaries are not stand-alone documents; too thin</p>	<p>See A above; checklist should include qualities of executive summary</p> <p>E. Create style-sheet handout; include comments on ES</p>
<p>4. Writing generally clear</p>	<p>F. Work with Writing Center helped; need closer collaboration and making sure students have something to show Center early enough</p>

Critical Findings	Diagnosis of Problems and Proposed Actions
<p>1. Project problem definition and analysis are often constrained by data limitations</p>	<p><u>Students need more grounding in policy research process.</u></p> <p>A. For PPOL 231, create hand-outs on logic of research and logic of presentation (w/checklist) for policy analysis; include problem definition, data needs; analytic plans; client considerations; evaluative criteria; alternatives – always consider status quo; recommendations; implementation; conclusion. Revisit regularly.</p> <p>B. In PPOL 231, encourage students to seek out sources of secondary data sets (e.g., Census; agency data); discourage reliance on student-conducted surveys</p>
<p>2. Cost data on alternatives/recommendations are absent</p>	<p>C. Add cost estimates to toolkit to be used in PPOL 100, PPOL 191, and PPOL 230-231</p>
<p>3. Often not clear to whom recommendations are addressed; need to shape for target audience and target’s capacity</p>	<p>See A above.</p>
<p>4. Insufficient attention to organizational feasibility issues (not just cost) in recommendations</p>	<p>D. Have students complete <u>client profile</u> early on, to ensure attention to client capacity issues</p>
<p>5. Writing is generally very clear, though there are some problems with format, style, and inclusion of unnecessary appendices</p>	<p>E. Keep up the emphasis in PPOL 230-231 on writing</p> <p>F. Develop style sheet with citation format, notes about clean and concise style (don’t need to say “according to a report by . . .”)</p> <p>G. Add “final proofing/format review” to paper checklist</p>
<p>6. Oral presentations much improved over the year; some could be more polished and some could make better use of visuals</p>	<p>H. In PPOL 230-231, more practice w/video-taping from fall on; also more role-playing where fellow students interrupt with questions</p>

Excerpted
Summary of MPP Debrief
and
Instructors' Plan for Action

Summary of MPP Assessment Meeting
 May 14, 2008

MPP Students completed a questionnaire regarding the extent to which they had attained the student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the foundation and advanced curricula (along with other, open-ended questions). In the meeting on May 14, their responses were explored and other program issues were discussed. This is a summary of the information obtained at that meeting, along with action items identified by Carol Chetkovich and Mark Henderson for the program faculty and staff.

Student Comments on SLOs in FOUNDATION CURRICULUM	Possible Solutions/Action Needed
<p>SLO A1: Understanding policy contexts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • students didn't understand the wording of the SLO • in some context areas students felt preparation was either insufficient or not adequately linked to policy; these included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • law • globalization • history • science/IT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revise wording of SLO A1 to clarify (see notes) • Need to <u>prompt students to enter the context courses thinking about policy, and to reflect on those classes in a policy-relevant way.</u> Two possible avenues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPOL 100 and 191: conscious effort to connect w/material from context courses ==> need to <u>collect syllabi</u> from context courses to inform teaching and exercises in PPOL 100/191 • <u>create public policy handouts</u> for each context course: how to think about, and ideas for focusing on policy-relevant topic for any open assignments (work w/instructors)
<p>SLO B1: Analytic skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analytics in foundation siloed – not integrated • more <u>application</u> needed–e.g., in PPOL 100; may need more in PPOL 191 also • stats course covers very basic material – need to do more with it (e.g., in PPOL 100, 191); recommend social stats exercise from a grad course at SFSU • econ courses: don't really get into full connection to policy issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFSU course w/social stats exercise – may wish to use in PPOL 100 • as for context courses: <u>handouts/ program handbook</u> should include how to think about <u>applications</u> of what they'll be learning in stats & econ–e.g., descriptions of particular policy questions for which econ and/or stats are relevant, and show the connection (look for examples in textbooks like MPA or stats for public admin) • add to <u>handbook</u>: encourage students to take econometrics as relevant to job expectations • <u>assignment for orientation</u>: students must come with job descriptions of positions they might like to pursue; figure out what they need

continued (MPP Curriculum and Other Issues)

Student Comments on SLOs in <i>MPP CURRICULUM</i>	Possible Solutions/Action Needed
<p>SLO A2: Cross-cultural awareness and competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> got some experience in organizations class (PPOL 220) with cases and role-play etc. got some w/visitors – M. Leigh great example; need more exposure to visitors working with diverse communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC & MH should <u>bring in practitioners who are working with diverse communities</u> see also notes about developing project-oriented community connection in PPOL 227
<p>SLO A4: Democratic and ethical practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> got in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPOL 220 (orgs) PPOL 227 (local) Core I want more speakers wrestling with these issues (e.g., M. Leigh, J. Levin in Core I) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bring in visitors working on these issues – CC should bring in someone working on citizen engagement; also organizers
<p>SLO B1: Analytic skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> get mostly in Core I add additional analytic techniques – present Toolkit in Core I other analytic courses: some topics more clearly relevant/useful than others; want more real-world connection (see separate notes on specifics) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit for Core I (may be relevant to PPOL 100 also?) more GIS in PPOL 227 think about summer prep options that we could tell students about (e.g., summer courses, workshops, textbooks, on-line courses, etc.) program faculty to meet on analytics syllabi, discuss student feedback, work on connecting to policy questions and theses next year

Other Issues	Possible Solution/Action Needed
<p>Library resources: need access to additional journals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> students found they needed articles in planning and policy journals that were not available at Mills (general fields but no specific titles mentioned) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> program <u>should pick up the cost of a UCB library card</u> for any student wishing to obtain one while working on her MPP; get details and <u>mention this in orientation</u>

Excerpted
Undergraduate Program
Improvements

Critical Findings	Proposed Actions	Status	Follow-up completed
1. Insufficiently defined or overly broad problem/question	<p>A. For PPOL 191, create hand-outs on logic of research and presentation (checklist) for policy papers (similar to MPP materials); emphasize need for focused research question/problem; identify data needs; research and analysis plans; criteria; focused recommendations</p> <p>B. Need collaboration across the College faculty to work on research skills</p>	<p>1A: Research handouts have been created; MH will use in MPP Core I in fall '09, revise as needed for PPOL 100/191 in spring and following year's Core I</p> <p>1B: CC will note possible need for college-wide work on research skills in proposal to Provost's office</p>	
2. Some insufficient attention to organizational capacity	C. In PPOL 191, complete "client" profile at beginning of semester	2C: MH will prepare in fall semester; CC will comment	
3. Some papers lack recommendations	See A above		
4. Not always clear to whom recommendations are addressed	See A and C above		