



UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Master of Arts in Urban and Public Affairs

AY 2020-2021
Assessment Report
MA in Urban and Public Affairs

I. Program Details

A. Program and Contact Information

This report concerns the graduate program MA in Urban and Public Affairs. The report is coordinated by Sarah Burgess, Faculty Director of UPA (sburgess@usfca.edu)

B. Mission Statement

The Master of Arts in Urban & Public Affairs prepares students for employment in various policy-related fields by educating them in fundamental concepts of public policy, urban history and planning, community organizing and advocacy, and community-engaged research, while developing a policy specialization through an independent capstone project. The program serves the broader Bay Area community by engaging students with community in multiple ways, in service of the common good.

(No changes were made to this statement.)

C. PLOs

At the end of the program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a theoretical, practical, and ethical understanding of community change, through practices including public policy advocacy, campaigns, and/or political/community organizing;
2. Critically analyze problems in urban and regional policy and politics using a variety of research methods;
3. Demonstrate the capacity for effective oral and written communication;
4. Evaluate and develop urban and regional policy, while learning to situate models of social change within historical and regional contexts;
5. Contribute to informed public discourse around contemporary political and urban policy issues through addressing issues in public policy, advocacy, community organizing, politics, and public service.

No changes were made to these PLOs.

D. Curricular Map

The curricular map is attached at the end of this document. No changes have been made. It reflects the most accurate and up-to-date map of our current course offerings.

II. Assessment

A. Response to Last Year's Report

Last year, we chose to submit the alternative reflections format as our assessment project, outlining the ways that we responded to remote learning during the academic year. No recommendations were made to change the mission statement, PLOs, or curricular map. We were commended on our “efforts in salvaging the internship and capstone presentation experience” as well as for our “creativity and perseverance shown in adapting these challenging aspects [internship and community engagement]”.

The faculty appreciated the recognition of our work during the pandemic. Because there were no recommendations for specific changes made in the feedback report, we carried on with our assessment plans for this year.

B. 2020-2021 Assessment

a. Methodology

This year marks the first time that we are undertaking a different assessment protocol. Pre-pandemic, a single assignment from one class was used to assess all five PLOs. This year, our goal is to begin a more detailed assessment of each PLO, one at a time.

This year, we selected the following PLO 5 to address: Contribute to informed public discourse around contemporary political and urban policy through addressing issues in public policy, advocacy, community.

We created a rubric that charted the PLO from 1 (insufficient) to 5 (exceptional).

Because last year was an exceptional year—not just because of the pandemic but because we were without the program’s one full-time faculty member and another of our long-time adjuncts—we decided to focus our assessment on the students’ final capstone projects, specifically their conclusions and policy recommendations. We chose to focus on a single assignment this year to bolster our confidence in our ability to assess the PLO, rather than the effects of COVID. Our thinking was that the capstone project best represented student learning as it had been developed over the course of three semesters, was a document that the students had revised several times, and offered us a view into the culminating project of the entire program.

For our work product then, we used the 13 capstone projects that were completed by July 1. We anonymized the student papers by cutting and pasting their conclusions and recommendation sections and labelling each student paper with a number.

Two members of the program—the two who have service hours to give the program—then rated each of the 13 conclusions of the capstone projects according to the rubric.

b. Rubrics

The following rubric (next page) was used in an effort to operationalize both what it means to *contribute* and what kinds of *public discourses* students were expected to engage with.

PLO 5 . Rubric

PLO	1 Insufficient	2 Introductory	3 Developing	4 Mastery	5 Exceptional
<p>PLO 5. Contribute to informed public discourse around contemporary political and urban policy issues through addressing issues in public policy, advocacy, community.</p>	<p>Students engage in summary of their findings <i>without articulating the significance of their project</i></p> <p><u>OR</u></p> <p>- Students repeat the problem <i>without explaining how their research contributes to the discussion</i></p>	<p>Students do the following:</p> <p>Offer a cursory explanation of why the issue is important, <i>without explaining how their specific research develops the conversation that is taking place</i></p>	<p>Students either:</p> <p>Address how their data contributes to the <i>scholarship</i> addressing a contemporary issue of public policy or advocacy</p> <p><u>OR</u></p> <p>- Address how their data contributes to the <i>community</i> for whom or about whom the policy is made</p>	<p>Students do the following <i>with nuance</i>:</p> <p>Address how their study contributes to the scholarship addressing a contemporary issue of public policy or advocacy</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Address how their study contributes to the community for whom or about whom the policy is made</p>	<p>Students do the following <i>with exceptional skill</i>:</p> <p>Address how their study contributes to the scholarship addressing a contemporary issue of public policy or advocacy</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Address how their study contributes to the community for whom or about whom the policy is made</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Address how their study contributes to the field of Urban and Public Affairs</p>

c. Findings

Student	Reader 1	Reader 2	Average Score
1	3	3	3
2	4	4	4
3	2	3	2.5
4	4	2	3
5	5	5	5
6	4	4	4
7	4	3	3.5
8	3	3	3
9	4	5	4.5
10	3	3	3
11	4	3	3.5
12	4	4	4
13	4	4	4

d. Discussion of Findings

These findings yielded a number of observations and discussions:

- 6 of the 13 samples (46.1%) scored in the range of 4-5, indicating a mastery or exceptional mastery of the PLO. Only 1 sample (7.7%) fell into an introductory level. The remaining samples (6/13 or 46.1%) fell within the developing level of skill.

- The committee was struck by the fact that only 6/13 students reached the level of mastery as the set of Capstone Projects were some of the strongest theses we had in quite some time. We felt the numbers did not accurately reflect the level of mastery students were showing in their thesis projects. We considered several reasons for why the numbers weren't meeting our expectations:
 - The Capstone Project Guidelines were revised for this cohort. It was the first time that we asked students to include in their conclusion—and in their writing more generally—an explanation for how their projects added to the field of Urban and Public Affairs more generally. We understand that the inclusion of “address how their study contributes to the field of Urban and Public Affairs”, even with this option as an “or” with the other criteria, prevented some from scoring the sample as a 5. It is also clear that this requirement for the capstone was unevenly taught across the two sections of capstone.
 - It also became clear that we need a clearer differentiation in the rubric between how their study addresses the scholarship and how it contributes to the field of urban and public affairs.
 - We had a discussion about whether the work product we chose—conclusions and recommendation section—was the best way to evaluate this PLO. In many ways, the conclusions and recommendation section might be better suited to PLO 4 that addresses the ability of students to evaluate and develop policy. While one might imagine that students should discuss their contributions to public discourses in the conclusions of their project, many do this in other sections of the project, including the introduction, the literature review and the data section. It might, therefore, be helpful to pull from various sections of their capstone projects, rather than simply offer up the conclusion. It might also be helpful to pull from other classes to assess this PLO when in non-COVID times.
 - It is hard to test the reliability of the numbers with only two faculty doing the work of assessment.

e. Future improvements

- Procedural Improvements
 - In the future, it is going to be important to find faculty members on the UPA Advisory Board who can participate on the assessment committee so that the reliability of the data can be tested.
 - We change the assessment schedule, so that each Spring semester we will develop and/or revise the PLO rubric for the year and collect the work products to be assessed. Then, at the beginning of Fall semester, we will test the rubric together on several examples. This will enable us to make changes to the rubric or select different work products to guarantee that the data more accurately reflects student learning.

- Content Improvements
 - The next time we assess PLO 5, we plan to clarify the rubric to more clearly delineate the difference between contributing to the scholarship and contributing to the field.
 - We also plan to draw on several work products from across the curriculum the next time we assess PLO5, as well as choose to assess the entire Capstone Project, rather than only the conclusion and policy recommendations section.
 - We need to more clearly communicate to Capstone writers how and where they might include an explanation of how their research contributes to the discussions within the field of urban and public affairs.

III. Future Plans for Assessment

Plans for AY 2021-2022

Spring 2022

For the AY 2021-2022, we will assess PLO3: Students will demonstrate the capacity for effective oral and written communication.

In Spring 2022, the assessment committee will develop a rubric for PLO 3 that clearly allows for the quantification of oral and written communication.

We will also collect work product. Each instructor teaching a core course will be asked to collect a written assignment from three randomly assigned students (the number refers to their number on the alphabetized class roster). Additionally, we will collect the videos of 7 random students performing their prospectus presentation as well as their final capstone presentation so that we might assess their oral communication both in the assignment and over the course of a year.

Courses being assessed for written communication in AY 2021-2022

<i>Course</i>	<i>Professor</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Students on Roster from whom to Collect Assignments</i>
UPA 630: Urban Power Seminar	Brahinsky	Analytical Brief	1, 6, 11
UPA 650: Community-engaged Public Policy Research	Brahinsky	TBD	3, 8, 13
UPA 651: Rhetoric for the Common Good	Burgess	Final Prospectus	4, 9, 14
UPA 652: Masters Capstone Project	Burgess & Redmond	Capstone	Burgess: 2, 5, 7 Redmond: 3, 4, 8

Videos being assessed for oral communication in AY 2021-2022

<i>Course</i>	<i>Professor</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Students on Roster from whom to Collect Assignments</i>
UPA 651: Rhetoric for the Common Good	Burgess	Prospectus Presentations	1, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15
UPA 652: Capstone Seminar	Burgess & Redmond	Capstone Presentations	Same students as above

Future Plans

AY 2022-2023: Assessment of PLO 1

AY 2023-2024: Assessment of PLO 4

AY 2024-2025: Assessment of PLO 2

AY 2025-2026: Year of Reflection

Master of Arts in Urban & Public Affairs// Curricular Map (Rev. Nov. 2020). Program Learning Outcomes X Courses/ Requirements	PLO1: Demonstrate a theoretical, practical, and ethical understanding of community change, through practices including public policy advocacy, campaigns, and/ or political/ community organizing.	PLO2: Critically analyze problems in urban and regional policy and politics using a variety of research methods.	PLO3: Demonstrate the capacity for effective oral and written communication.	PLO4: Evaluate and develop urban and regional policy, while learning to situate models of social change within historical and regional contexts.	PLO5: Contribute to informed public discourse around contemporary political and urban policy issues through addressing issues in public policy, advocacy, community organizing, politics, and public service.
Requirements					
UPA 630 Urban Power Seminar	I	I	I	I	I
UPA 633 UPA Colloquium	I		I	I	I
UPA 634 UPA Colloquium II	D		D	D	D
UPA 650: Community-Engaged Public Policy Research		I	D	D	I
UPA Internship (no course number)	D	D	D	D	D
UPA 651: Rhetoric for the Common Good	D		D/M		
UPA 652: Masters Capstone Project	M	M	M	M	M
Practical Politics Workshops (no course number)	D			D	D
Electives					
UPA 660: The Politics of Public Policy	D			D	
UPA 661: Urban & Regional Planning	D	D		D	
UPA 662: Urban Public Finance				D	D
UPA 663: Globalization, Social Justice & the City	D		D		
UPA 664: Cities, Law & Inequality		D		D	
UPA 665: Urban Racial Politics		D		D	
UPA 666: Applied Democratic Theory	D		D		
UPA 667: Housing, Community & Public Policy	D				D
668: The Economics of Social Justice	D				D
669: Urban Field Class		D	D		D
UPA 670...: Policy Theme Seminars					
UPA 671 Education Reform	D			D	
UPA 672 The Immigrant City	D	D			D
UPA 673 Urban Food Policy		D		D	
UPA 674 Non-Profits and Public Policy	D				D
UPA 680...: Practical Politics Theme Seminars					
681 Labor & Community Organizing	D		D		D
682 Campaigns & Political Mobilization	D		D		D
683 Grassroots Movement-Building	D		D		D