**Master of Public Administration**

**PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES + METHODS + RESULTS + ACTION PLANS + EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT**

**MPA (2012-2013):**

**Evidence of Improvement:**

For outcome 1 (communicate effectively in writing) the external reviewer registered evidence of improvement in the way headings and subheadings were used to structure the paper and the connections between the headings and the subsequent text. There was also improvement in the student’s grammar, punctuation and writing style. They found significant improvement in all aspects of paragraph quality (use of key terms, thesis statement, soundness of argument and evidence in body of the paragraphs). The external reviewers found evidence of improvement in the use of scholarly sources for three dimensions (use of quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources). Although there was evidence of improvement the benchmarks were not met for grammar, punctuation, style, purpose statements, transitions between heading and text, and soundness of citations. The faculty reviewers found improvement in all aspects of the students writing (purpose statements, the way headings and subheadings were used to structure the paper and the connections between the headings and the subsequent text, grammar, punctuation and writing style, use of key terms, thesis statement, soundness of argument and evidence in body of the paragraphs use of quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources). While there was evidence of improvement, the students failed to achieve the benchmark quality on every aspect of writing except the use of quotations. For outcome 2 (comprehension of public policy, program formation, institutional and legal framework) the external reviewers found that the students showed improvement in their comprehension the public policy problem, policy implications and institutional framework. While the faculty did not find evidence of improvement student comprehension the public policy problem, policy implications and institutional framework were over the benchmark standards. For outcome 3 (oral presentation) the faculty reviewers found improvement in the professional delivery of the presentation and the evidence of content mastery. While the external reviewers did not find improvement in oral presentations, all of the criteria were well above the benchmarks. For outcome 4 (demonstrate the ability to see patterns and classify information, concepts and theories in public policy and administration) the faculty reviewers found evidence of improvement. For outcome 5 (the ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and management) the external reviewers and faculty found evidence of improvement.

**Action Plan for MPA Program (2013 – 2014):**

The MPA Program faculty were pleased with the improvement in writing as evidenced in the external reviewer and faculty assessment of Applied Research Projects. Unfortunately, student work is still consistently below the benchmarks. We attribute much of the improvement to the success of the 2012 action plan (use the rubric explicitly in writing assignment grading and feedback in POSI 5321, 5334 and 5335). We have made plans to work extensively with the Texas State Writing Center. We will meet with the director and show her the rubric as well as other related materials. She has agreed to have a few of her staff trained to work with our graduate students and explicitly use the rubric to improve their writing. Given the importance of the basic grammar, punctuation, style and the paragraph in written communication and the low scores the student papers received on grammar from both the faculty and external reviewers and in paragraphing among the faculty, we will want to ask the Writing Lab to emphasize these aspects of writing. Faculty in POSI 5321, 5334 and 5335 will continue to use the writing rubric and provide student consistent feedback on their writing quality. This January the MPA Program revised its mission statement. We will also review our learning outcomes to ensure they are consistent with the new mission statement “The Master of Public Administration Program’s Mission is to cultivate practical, research-oriented students for careers as reflective practitioners guided by democratic values, integrity and service.” We may need to change the outcomes to take into account the public service values component (democratic values, integrity and service) of the new mission statement.

**Outcome 1:**

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively in writing.

**Method 1 (**writing)

**External Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral exam where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The oral committee members receive the Applied Research Project one week before the exam. The oral exam is held the 14th or 15th week of regular classes. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The papers are generally 60 to 100 pages. An assessment grid is filled out while the public administration practitioner reads the paper and is submitted at the close of the oral exam. The public administration practitioner reviewer will use an evaluation rubric to assess quality of the paper’s structure, grammar and punctuation, paragraphs and use of scholarly references. Structure quality is measured through four items: purpose, headings & subheadings, connections between headings & subheadings and transitions between headings and subheadings. Grammar and punctuation quality is measured through three items: grammar, punctuation and capitalization and style. Paragraph quality is measured through five items: key terms, thesis, body of paragraph, coherence and cohesion. The use of scholarly reference quality is measured through four items: citations, quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources. The grid uses a 1 to 10 quality scale where 10 equals top quality and 1 equals unacceptable quality. Our target is that 80% of the papers will be rated as 8 or above in each of the individual items. In addition, 80 percent of the papers will score between 32 and 40 for paper structure quality (4 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 4 = 32 and 10 \* 4 = 40) and ; 80 percent of the papers will score between 24 and 30 for grammar and punctuation quality (3 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 3 = 24 and 10 \* 3 = 30); 80 percent of the papers will score between 40 and 50 for paragraph quality ( 5 items with scores between 8 and 10: 5 \* 8 = 40 and 5 \* 10 = 50) and; 80 percent of the papers will score between 32 and 40 for use of scholarly references quality (4 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 4 = 32 and 10 \* 4 = 40).

**Results 1**: (writing)

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate student Applied Research Projects were assessed using a rubric. They were assessed in order to measure the quality of the writing in the Applied Research Project. The rubric incorporated items on how well the students structured their Applied Research Project (purpose, headings and subheadings, connections between headings and text and transitions between headings), the quality of the student’s grammar, punctuation and style, the student’s ability to write a quality paragraph (use of key terms, thesis statement, well-argued body of the paragraph, cohesion and coherence across paragraphs), and the student’s ability to use scholarly references (citations, quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources). The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The papers were assessed both on individual items in the rubric (e.g., thesis statement) and on the four categories which aggregated the items conceptually (structure, grammar/punctuation, paragraph and use of scholarly references).

The external reviewers found that 76.9 percent of the papers met or exceeded standard on the clarity and logic of the purpose of statement and 84.6 percent of the papers met or exceeded the standards dealing with how well the logical connection between the purpose and structure were related. The external reviewers found that 82.1 percent of the papers used headings and subheadings that effectively structured the paper. The external reviewers found that 71.8 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because the connections between the text and subheadings were clear and the text, which introduced the section, was effective for most of the paper. For the category “structure” the faculty found that 89.7 percent met or exceeded standards for the quality of the structure of their paper. The papers reached the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above for the individual item’s connection between heading and text. Overall the papers met the composite benchmark score of 32 or above for 80% of the papers on the “structure” component.

The external reviewers found that 66.7 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards for grammar, 76.9 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards for punctuation and capitalization and 79.5 percent of the ARPs met or exceeded standards for writing style (conciseness, variety in sentence structure and vocabulary, avoided overuse of the passive voice and avoided excessively long sentences and paragraphs most of the time). For the category, grammar and punctuation the external reviewers found that 82.1 percent of the students met or exceeded standards. On all counts, for the category “grammar and punctuation” the papers failed to reach the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above on an individual item. However, for the category as a whole students’ met the benchmark achieving a composite score of 24 or above.

The external reviewers found that 82.1 percent of the student paper met or exceeded standards in whether important key terms were carefully defined in a timely fashion using appropriate literature. The external reviewers found that 89.7 percent of the papers met or exceeded the standard that most paragraphs had an identifiable thesis statement. The external reviewers also found that 92.3 percent of the paper met or exceeded standards in that the most of the paragraphs supported the claims of the thesis using appropriately documented arguments, evidence and/or examples. The external reviewers found that 84.6 percent of the papers met or exceeded paragraph cohesion standards. The external reviewers found that 84.6 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards for paragraph coherence or the connections between paragraphs were logically linked together and connected to the section purpose most of the time. For the category paragraphs the external reviewers found that 89.7 of the papers met or exceeded standards. The external reviewers found that the applied research projects met the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers receiving a score of 8 or above for all aspects of paragraph quality. The composite score for paragraphs for the external reviewers also reached the benchmark.

The external reviewers found that 79.5 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards with respect to appropriately citing scholarly references. The external reviewers found that 87.2 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because they used quotations at an appropriate level. The external reviewers found that 84.6 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because they used scholarly reference to develop definitions, support/develop logical arguments and provide evidence to support claims most of the time. The external reviewers also found that 82.1 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards with respect to the quality of the sources used in the paper. For the category use of scholarly references 87.2 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards. The benchmarks were met for use of quotations, integration of sources and the quality of sources and the category as a whole (80 percent of the papers achieving a composite score of 32 or above). The students did not reach the benchmark of 80% above the standard for use of citations.

**Method 2** (Outcome 1 - writing)

**Faculty Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral exam where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The graduate faculty committee members receive the Applied Research Project one week before the exam. The oral exam is held the 14th or 15th week of regular classes. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The papers are generally 60 to 100 pages. An assessment grid is filled out while the faculty read the paper and submitted at the close of the oral exam. The faculty reviewers will use an evaluation rubric to assess quality of the paper’s structure, grammar and punctuation, paragraphs and use of scholarly references. Structure quality is measured through four items: purpose, headings & subheadings, connections between headings & subheadings and transitions between headings and subheadings. Grammar and punctuation quality is measured through three items: grammar, punctuation and capitalization and style. Paragraph quality is measured through five items: key terms, thesis, body of paragraph, coherence and cohesion. The use of scholarly reference quality is measured through four items: citations, quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources. The grid uses a 1 to 10 quality scale where 10 equals top quality and 1 equals unacceptable quality. Our target is that 80% of the papers will be rated as 8 or above in each of the individual items. In addition, 80 percent of the papers will score between 32 and 40 for paper structure quality (4 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 4 = 32 and 10 \* 4 = 40) and ; 80 percent of the papers will score between 24 and 30 for grammar and punctuation quality (3 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 3 = 24 and 10 \* 3 = 30); 80 percent of the papers will score between 40 and 50 for paragraph quality ( 5 items with scores between 8 and 10: 5 \* 8 = 40 and 5 \* 10 = 50) and; 80 percent of the papers will score between 32 and 40 for use of scholarly references quality (4 items with scores between 8 and 10: 8 \* 4 = 32 and 10 \* 4 = 40).

**Result 2: (**writing)

In academic year 2011-2012, 40 graduate student Applied Research Projects were assessed using a rubric. They were assessed in order to measure the quality of the writing in the Applied Research Project. The rubric incorporated items on how well the students structured their Applied Research Project (purpose, headings and subheadings, connections between headings and text and transitions between headings), the quality of the student’s grammar, punctuation and style, the student’s ability to write a quality paragraph (use of key terms, thesis statement, well-argued body of the paragraph, cohesion and coherence across paragraphs), and the student’s ability to use scholarly references (citations, quotations, integration of sources and quality of sources). The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The papers were assessed both on individual items in the rubric (e.g., thesis statement) and on the four categories which aggregated the items conceptually (structure, grammar/punctuation, paragraph and use of scholarly references).

The faculty reviewers found that 71.3 percent of the papers met or exceeded standard on the clarity and logic of the purpose of statement and how well the logical connection between the purpose and structure were related. The faculty found that 71.3 percent of the papers used headings and subheadings that effectively structured the paper. The faculty found that 71.3 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because the connections between the text and subheadings were clear and the text, which introduced the section was effective for most of the paper. The faculty found that 68.8 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because the headings and subheadings effectively transitioned the text from one subject to another in a way that reinforces the paper’s purpose. For the category, structure the faculty found that 76.3 percent met or exceeded standards for the quality of the structure of their paper. On all counts, for the category “structure” the papers failed to reach the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above on an individual items or 80 percent of the papers achieving a composite score of 40 or above.

The faculty reviewers found that 63.1 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards for grammar, 65 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards for punctuation and capitalization and 56.3 percent of the ARPs met or exceeded standards for writing style (conciseness, variety in sentence structure and vocabulary, avoided overuse of the passive voice and avoided excessively long sentences and paragraphs most of the time). For the category, grammar and punctuation the faculty found that 68.8 percent of the students met or exceeded standards. On all counts, for the grammar and punctuation component, the papers failed to reach the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above on an individual item or 80 percent of the papers achieving a composite score of 24 or above.

The faculty reviewers found that 71.3 percent of the student paper met or exceeded standards in whether important key terms were carefully defined in a timely fashion using appropriate literature. The faculty found that 71.3 percent of the papers met or exceeded the standard that most paragraphs had an identifiable thesis statement. The faculty reviewers also found that 67.5 percent of the paper met or exceeded standards in that the most of the paragraphs supported the claims of the thesis using appropriately documented arguments, evidence and/or examples. The faculty reviewers found that 66.3 percent of the papers met or exceeded paragraph cohesion standards. The faculty reviewers found that 65 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards for paragraph coherence or the connections between paragraphs were logically linked together and connected to the section purpose most of the time. For the category paragraphs the faculty found that 77.5 of the papers met or exceeded standards. On all counts for paragraph quality the papers failed to reach the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above on all individual items or 80 percent of the papers achieving a composite score of 40 or above.

The faculty reviewers found that 76.3 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards with respect to appropriately citing scholarly references. The faculty reviewers found that 81.3 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because they used quotations at an appropriate level. The faculty reviewers found that 73.8 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards because the used scholarly reference to develop definitions, support/develop logical arguments and provide evidence to support claims most of the time. The faculty reviewers also found that 76.3 percent of the student papers met or exceeded standards with respect to the quality of the sources used in the paper. For the category “use of scholarly references” 80 percent of the papers met or exceeded standards. On all individual counts the papers failed to reach the benchmark of 80 percent of the papers achieving a score of 8 or above on an individual items. However, in the overall assessment of the use of scholarly references category 80 percent of the papers achieving a composite score of 32 or above was met.

**Outcome 2**

Students will demonstrate comprehension of public policy and program formation as well as the institutional and legal framework of public policy and management.

**Method 1 (Public Policy & Management)**

**External Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. This method involves assessment by an external reviewer. The oral exam committee is composed of two graduate faculty and a public administration practitioner. The committee members review the paper in the week preceding the oral exam examination. At the completion of the oral exam the external reviewer is asked to evaluate the student’s comprehension of public policy and program formation as well as the institutional and legal framework of public policy and management using an evaluation rubric. The reviewers will rate the student’s demonstration of this outcome in their Applied Research Projects as exceeds standards, meets standards, or does not meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the Applied Research Projects will meet or exceed standards in each of the areas included in this Outcome.

**Result 1: (Public Policy & Management)**

In academic year 2012 - 2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure their comprehension of policy/program formation and political/legal institutions and processes. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The external reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 100% (53.8% strongly agreed / 46.2% agreed) that the students comprehended program formation. The external reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 100% (56.4% strongly agreed / 43.6% agreed) that the students comprehended policy implications. The external reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 94.9% (51.3% strongly agreed / 43.6% agreed) that the students’ comprehended institutional framework. The external reviewer panels strongly agree or strongly agree that 79.5 % (41% strongly agreed / 38.5% agreed) that the students comprehended legal framework of the policy problem. The results of the external reviewer assessment meet the benchmarks for policy formation, policy implications, and institutional framework. The papers did not reach the benchmark for comprehension of the legal framework.

**Method 2 (Public Policy & Management)**

**Faculty Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. At the completion of the oral exam the faculty reviewers are asked to evaluate the student’s comprehension of public policy and program formation as well as the institutional and legal framework of public policy and management using an evaluation rubric. The rubric uses exceeds standards, meets standards, or does not meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the students will demonstrate this comprehension at the meets or exceeds standards levels.

**Result 2: (Public Policy & Management)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure their comprehension of policy/program formation and political/legal institutions and processes. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The faculty reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 84.6 % (35.9% strongly agreed/48.7% agreed) of the students comprehended program formation. The faculty reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 84.6 % (41.0% strongly agreed/43.6% agreed) of the students comprehended policy implementation. The faculty reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 80.8% (32.1% strongly agreed/48.7% agreed) of the students comprehended institutional framework. The faculty reviewer panels strongly agree or agree that 61.5% (28.2% strongly agreed/33.3% agreed) of the students comprehended the legal framework. The results of the external reviewer assessment meant the benchmarks on all counts.

**Outcome 3:**

Students will demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively orally.

**Method 1 (Oral Communication)**

**External Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. This method involves assessment by an external reviewer. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. The oral exam committee is composed of two graduate faculty and a public administration practitioner. The committee members review the paper in the week preceding the oral exam examination. The students present their study and are questioned about their research papers over the course of the oral examination. After the oral exam is complete the outside reader will use an evaluation rubric to assess the student’s ability to communicate clearly (organization and professional delivery and content mastery). The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the students will demonstrate this ability at the meets or exceeds standards levels.

**Result 1: (Oral Communication)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to communicate clearly (organization, professional delivery) and demonstrate mastery of content orally. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The external reviewer panel found that 89.8% of the oral presentations met or exceeded standards with respect to presentation organizational clarity, 94.9% of the presentations met or exceeded standards for professional delivery, 94.8% of the presentations met or exceeded standards for mastery of content. The results exceeded the target.

**Method 2 (Oral Communication)**

**Faculty Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. After the oral exam is complete each faculty member will use an evaluation rubric to assess the student’s ability to communicate clearly (organization and professional delivery and content mastery). The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards, and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the students will demonstrate this ability at the meets or exceeds standards levels.

**Result 2: (Oral Communication)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to communicate clearly (organization, professional delivery) and demonstrate mastery of content orally. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the masters program. The faculty panel found that 98.7% of the oral presentations met or exceeded standards with respect to presentation organizational clarity, 98.7% of the presentations met or exceeded standards for professional delivery and 96.1% of the presentations met or exceeded standards for mastery of content. The student’s oral presentation skills exceeded the benchmark on every criterion.

**Outcome 4**: **(Analysis)**

Students will demonstrate the ability to identify patterns and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration.

**Method 1 (Analysis)**

**External Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. At the completion of the oral exam each public administration practitioner reviewer is asked to evaluate the student’s ability to identify patterns in the paper and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration. The evaluation instrument does this by asking about the student’s ability to combine the research purpose, conceptual framework, methodology and results sections in a way that achieves a unified whole. The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards, and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that the public administration practitioner will rate the students’ ability as either meets or exceeds expectations in 80 % of the papers.

**Result 1: (Analysis)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to see patterns and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The external reviewers found 92.3% of the students met or exceeded standards with respect to their ability to see patterns and classify information and concepts in public administration and policy. This is well above the target of 80% of the papers meeting or exceeding standards.

**Method 2** **(Analysis)**

**Faculty Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. At the completion of the oral exam each faculty reviewer is asked to evaluate the student’s ability to identify patterns in the paper and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration. The evaluation instrument does this by asking about the student’s ability to combine the research purpose, conceptual framework, methodology and results sections in a way that achieves a unified whole. The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards, and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that the faculty will rate the students’ ability as either meets or exceeds expectations in 80 % of the papers.

**Result 2:** **(Analysis)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to see patterns and classify information, concepts, and theories in public policy and administration. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The faculty panels found 88.8% of the students met or exceeded standards with respect to their ability to see patterns and classify information and concepts in public administration and policy. This is well above the target of 80% of the papers meeting or exceeding standards.

**Outcome 5: (Evaluation)**

Students will demonstrate the ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management.

**Method 1: (Evaluation)**

**External Reviewer** This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. At the completion of the oral exam each public administration practitioner reviewer is asked to evaluate the student’s ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management. The evaluation instrument does this by asking about the students’ ability to use the literature review and results chapters to demonstrate their ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management. The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards, and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the papers either exceed or meet standards.

**Result 1: (Evaluation)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the literature review and results chapters of the Applied Research Project. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The external reviewers panel found 92.3% of the students met or exceed standards with respect to their ability to see and use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the literature, and 92.3 % met or exceeded expectation to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the results chapter. This is well above the target of 80% of the papers meeting or exceeding standards.

**Method 2: (Evaluation)**

**Faculty Review**: This method uses both the capstone paper of the Master of Public Administration Program (Applied Research Project) and the oral examination where the paper is defended. The oral exam committee is composed of two faculty and a public administration practitioner. The Applied Research Project is completed over a semester and is an empirical research project dealing with a significant public administration or public policy problem. The paper is generally 60 to 100 pages. It is defended in the 14th or 15th week of the semester. At the completion of the oral exam each faculty reviewer is asked to evaluate the student’s ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management. The evaluation instrument does this by asking about the student’s ability to use the literature review and results chapters to demonstrate their ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in public policy and public management. The grid uses exceeds standards, meets standards, needs some improvement to meet standards, and needs substantial improvement to meet standards. Our target is that 80% of the papers either exceed or meet standards.

**Result 2:** **(Evaluation)**

In academic year 2012-2013, 40 graduate students defended their Applied Research Project in an oral examination. They were assessed in order to measure the student’s ability to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the literature review and results chapters of the Applied Research Project. The Applied Research Project is the capstone project and is completed at the end of the master’s program. The faculty panel found 91.3% of the students met or exceed standards with respect to their ability to see use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the literature, and 92.3 % met or exceeded expectation to use reasoned arguments to judge evidence in the results chapter. This is well above the target of 80% of the papers meeting or exceeding standards. The faculty assessment shows that the student’s ability to evaluate evidence is stronger in the literature reviews than the results chapter. Faculty should spend more time helping students to develop the skill of the interpreting and summarizing e