Assessment of MPA Policy Analysis II Papers

Fall 2021
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A total of nineteen papers were available for analysis representing 100% of the artifacts produced for PADM 7363 (Public Policy Analysis II). All five faculty members were randomly assigned policy analysis papers completed for PADM 7363 in Fall 2020 using the rubric shown in Appendix A. Each item in the rubric is matched with a UALR MPA program learning outcome. In turn, learning outcomes are linked to MPA program learning goals and NASPAA universal competencies. Faculty raters scored each paper on a four-point scale according to the extent to which the paper demonstrated mastery of the corresponding skill as: 0 (skill not evident), 1 (partially evident), 2 (skill clearly evident), or n/a (not applicable). Students were scored on the various rubric criteria based on the three criteria: 1) Holistic criteria; 2) Analytic criteria; & 3) Policy recommendations and Design and both raw scores and means were tabulated by faculty raters.

The frequency distribution and the mean score for each learning criteria were calculated. The mean score was calculated this year instead of simply a median score in order to better capture the range of student learning criteria outcomes. The holistic criteria represent Learning Outcomes: 1.5, 1.6, 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and represented the area with the highest mean score for the students with a 1.57 on a 0-2 scale. The criteria on analytic methods represents learning outcomes: 2.9, 1.9, 2.12, 4.4, & 2.11 and the average score for students across the learning outcomes was a 1.51 on a 0-2 scale. The criteria on policy recommendations and design represents learning outcomes: 1.5, 1.6, 1.9, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, & 2.4 and was the lowest mean score of 1.41 on a 0-2 scale. Overall, the median scores were higher in this year's assessment than in previous year's assessments. The mean scores demonstrate a '**satisfactory**' to '**superior**' overall performance across the rubric items with students on average producing scores where all of the rubric items are present. **Superior** is noted as 40% or more of student papers were rated as 2 (skill clearly evident)

across faculty members reviewing the paper. **Satisfactory** denotation represented rubric items for which aggregate student performance did not meet the **slightly deficient** (30% or more of student papers rated as 0 (not evident) on the item by at least one faculty member reviewing the paper) or **deficient** (20% or more of student papers were rated as 0 (skill not evident) on the item by at least one faculty member reviewing the paper) outcomes.

The previous assessment noted the need to expand the methodological and analytical skills taught in the public policy analysis courses. The addition of qualitative methods and the introduction of small group learning, and peer review assisted in the overall score improvements across the learning criteria. Similarly, elective courses focused on technical writing were utilized by some students that served as a compliment to the technical writing emphasized in the public policy analysis course.

#	Holistic Criteria Raw Score (pts)	Analytic Criteria Raw Score (pts)	Policy Recommendations/ Design Raw Score Pts	Holistic Criteria Mean	Analytic Criteria Mean	Policy Design Mean	Total Raw Score (Points)	Total Mean
1	11	18	12	1.57	2.00	1.71	41.00	1.78
2	13	18	14	1.86	2.00	2.00	45.00	1.96
3	13	18	14	1.86	2.00	2.00	45.00	1.96
4	14	18	14	2.00	2.00	2.00	46.00	2.00
5	12	10	7	1.71	1.11	1.00	29.00	1.26
6	11	7	9	1.57	0.78	1.29	27.00	1.17
7	12	10	8	1.71	1.11	1.14	30.00	1.30
8	7	15	6	1.00	1.67	0.86	28.00	1.22
9	12	11	7	1.71	1.22	1.00	30.00	1.30
10	14	18	14	2.00	2.00	2.00	46.00	2.00
11	14	18	14	2.00	2.00	2.00	46.00	2.00
12	11	13	9	1.57	1.44	1.29	33.00	1.43
13	7	10	7	1.00	1.11	1.00	24.00	1.04
14	8	11	3	1.14	1.22	0.43	22.00	0.96
15	11	10	8	1.57	1.11	1.14	29.00	1.26
16	11	17	13	1.57	1.89	1.86	41.00	1.78
17	8	5	8.5	1.14	1.25	1.21	21.50	0.93
18	6	6	5	0.86	0.86	0.71	17.00	0.81
19	13.5	15.5	14	1.93	1.94	2.00	43.00	1.95

Discussion:

Overall, the MPA program is meeting its objectives with respect to research and analytic skills. The evidence suggests that student research skills continue to improve over the course of the assessment cycles. MPA faculty previously noted the need to continue emphasizing and integrating methods across the curriculum to maintain this momentum. It is noteworthy that previously Public Policy Analysis I and II course content focused entirely on quantitative methods of analysis. This is the first time Qualitative methodology has been integrated into the rubric and course instruction for this assessment. The positive learning outcomes are also noteworthy since this cohort switched from traditional in-person instruction to emergency remote learning protocols

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional emphasis on technical writing, policy design, policy recommendations should be better incorporated into the second semester of the instruction to further develop the learning outcomes