

**Educational Effectiveness Assessment:  
Policies and Plans**

of

**THE INSTITUTE OF WORLD POLITICS**  
*A Graduate School of Statecraft and National Security Affairs*

**Rev. 4/2021**

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## **Introduction**

The Dean of Academics and his Academic team at The Institute of World Politics (IWP) produce an annual report on educational outcomes, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Institute's Assessment Committee (comprising the President, the Dean of Academics, the Vice President of Student Affairs, the Academic Director, the Assistant for Academic Affairs, at least one Full-Time Faculty member, and one Adjunct Faculty member). Our goal is to ensure the effectiveness of the education the Institute provides to its students (both in-person and online) by assessing our institutional performance, as well as our students' performance, at the course level, program level, and institutional level. We use various measures, both direct and indirect, for evaluation.

As part of this assessment, we ask the faculty for their feedback on all the indicators of our assessment plan. We also share with them a summary of results from our oral comprehensive examination evaluations. The faculty also take part in a more extensive review of our courses and overall programs throughout our three-year curriculum review process directed by the Dean of Academics. Meanwhile, our faculty regularly conduct assessment throughout the semester and make adjustments to their syllabi as needed based on their individual students' feedback and performance.

The results of this assessment report are then scrutinized to determine if IWP should consider any changes in order to maintain and improve the educational achievements of IWP students. This, in turn, informs any adjustments that need to be made to our strategic operations, resources, and budget. An assessment summary is submitted to the Executive Vice President and Board of Trustees for review. As part of an ongoing cycle, relevant assessment findings also contribute to the next curriculum review.

Listed below are the various measures of student achievement that are in alignment with our learning outcomes at the course, program, and institutional levels. Comparisons between in-person students and online students will be made, when appropriate, for every measure. We also incorporate survey results and benchmarks for student success throughout each report.

<b>Evaluation Categories</b>	<b>Student Performance</b>	<b>Institutional Performance</b>
<b>Course Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Course assessments of Student Learning Outcome (SLO) achievement</li> <li>*Grading Rigor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Student course evaluations</li> <li>*Faculty Self-Evaluations &amp; Evaluation Interviews with the Dean</li> </ul>
<b>Program Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*MA and Doctoral Comprehensive examinations based on rubrics and in alignment with Program Learning Outcomes</li> <li>* Honors Theses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Trending Topics for New Programs and Centers at Competing Schools</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Rubric-based grades for MA Capstone Course in alignment with Institutional Learning Outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Job placement and advancement</li> <li>*Alumni relations</li> <li>*Student Learning Support Services</li> </ul>

# I. EVALUATING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

## A. COURSE LEVEL

### Assessment Measures

#### 1. Course Assessments of SLO Achievement

Course assessments, conducted by the faculty at the end of every semester, serve as a direct measure of student achievement at the Institute of World Politics (IWP). Every course has Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) aligned with relevant Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) that connect to specific assignments, exams/quizzes, research papers/projects, and/or oral reports and are graded based on rubrics shared in advance with students. While feedback and opportunities for improvement occur as part of an ongoing assessment throughout the semester, benchmarks are set in each course by professors to evaluate their students' achievement and ensure outcomes are being met. These assessments provide an opportunity for professors to utilize results and look reflectively at their methods and approach for successful student learning.

#### 2. Grading Rigor

Course grades, based on rubrics and in alignment with learning outcomes, serve as *objective* indicators in student performance outcomes or competencies. Course grades are early indicators of what might be expected from future student performance. In this respect, course grades demonstrate:

- a) capacity to absorb material and analyze it;
- b) capacity of students to think and express themselves;
- c) capacity of students to move beyond elementary aspects of the field of study to higher levels; and
- d) capacity of students to study *independently*—to learn beyond the range of particular syllabi or instructional guides.

While course grades serve as a primary measure of student performance, there are inherent problems involved in the grading process. *Grade inflation* is a phenomenon that has afflicted higher education for some time. We understand the national dimensions of this problem, its history, and the importance it currently has in the American academy.

Over the years, IWP faculty and staff have discussed this problem in regular meetings and have established certain policies to ensure academic rigor, in an effort to reduce or eliminate any grade inflation:

- a) In individual courses, professors are required (with some exceptions) to administer “in-class” examinations, especially final exams, with a view toward promoting student capacity for quick recollection, application, and analysis of knowledge, i.e., to “think on one’s feet.” This is in contrast to take-home exams which often offer students the opportunity to conceal inadequacies in writing ability and knowledge. This approach is designed to reduce grade inflation.
- b) In the case of Incomplete grades, all required work must be completed no later than six months following the end of the current semester (the shorter summer session is not considered a full semester) if the student is to receive full credit. After six months, the “I” grade becomes a failing grade (this grade may be changed to a passing grade after the student completes the required work).
- c) Ongoing communication by the academic leadership with the faculty makes clear the Institute’s desire for academic rigor. The faculty are assured they are supported in their grading decisions and if any students have an issue with their grades, there is an appeal process. Furthermore, faculty are encouraged to avoid grade inflation out of guilt if any students are underperforming; it is up to those students if they continue to fail courses or if they decide to get help, such as through our remedial writing course.

The Institute monitors and assesses Incomplete grades, along with failing grades and withdrawals. As needed, findings from these results contribute to changes in policies and procedures.

All of these findings can play a role in faculty evaluations as well. The Dean of Academics works with both faculty and students in ongoing assessment throughout the year to address any obstacles for student achievement.

## **B. PROGRAM LEVEL**

### **Assessment Measures**

#### **1. Comprehensive Examinations**

When connected to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), comprehensive examinations are the terminal performance measurements for students at the program level. With the use of rubrics, a minimum of two faculty panelists objectively assess student achievement of: PLOs; both *oral* and *writing* communication skills; information literacy resulting in substantive knowledge; and critical thinking that includes the

capacity to engage in impromptu analysis and respond to probing questions. The comprehensive exams also test knowledge of *factual* content of their fields of study. The academic leadership has developed a basic list of events, concepts, and geo-strategic terms as part of the inventory that all graduates should master in order to operate successfully as practitioners in the national security arena.

By definition and purpose, comprehensives complement course grades as indicators of the learning process and as assessments of non-academic performance and development (such as character). Both the content and results of comprehensive exams are assessed to determine the level of student success in each of our programs. This analysis has the following components:

- a) Faculty review a summary of the rubric-based scores and feedback for each PLO component to look for strengths and weaknesses. If any gaps in knowledge or competencies are found, they will review relevant courses/assignments connected to each PLO (per the curriculum map) to determine what adjustments can be made to improve student achievement for that component.
- b) The Exit survey our graduates take asks if the comprehensive exams were a true test of their knowledge and related sufficiently to issues that comported with the student's expectations.

## **2. Honors Theses**

An Honors Thesis course option is available to select students, with sufficiently high-grade point averages (at least a 3.80 GPA), who are interested in pursuing a specialized area of study. It is normally taken in a student's final semester and a faculty member is selected by the student to supervise the thesis. The Academic Dean appoints a faculty review board to evaluate the thesis based on rubrics. Findings from these evaluations will further contribute to our assessment of student achievement in our programs.

## **C. INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

### **Assessment Measures**

#### **1. Capstone Course**

As of Spring 2021, all Master's degree students will take our Capstone Course in their final year of study, which allows for the opportunity to integrate what they have learned and apply it strategically. This Capstone is graded based on rubrics and in

alignment with our learning outcomes, which serve as a direct measure of our students' achievements.

## **II. EVALUATING INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE**

### **A. COURSE LEVEL**

#### **Assessment Measures**

##### **1. Student Course Evaluations**

At the conclusion of each semester, students anonymously complete an online course evaluation form of both their course and their professor. The evaluations are administered and collected by a third-party proxy, not by the professor. The detailed form encourages students to rate honestly and critically the quality of both the instructor and the material used in the course, as well as the usefulness of any guest lecturers. Finally, students are asked to suggest ways to improve the course and are given the opportunity to provide additional comments about either the course or the professor. The Vice President for Student Affairs shares a summary of these results with the professor and also provides these results to the academic leadership for assessment. These forms provide our professors with an evaluation directly from their students that they would not otherwise receive.

These evaluations assist the Academic Affairs department as well in conducting assessment at the course level. They also allow us to track the progress being made in addressing previous suggestions and complaints made by former students in the same course. Data are collected quantitatively through a ratings scale and by gathering written material in the "Comments" section of the forms.

Suggestions for course improvement made by students continue to yield substantial results. These findings are also used by the Dean of Academics in his evaluation interviews with the faculty.

##### **2. Faculty Self-Evaluations & Evaluation Interviews with the Dean**

Each professor completes a Self-Evaluation Form that asks for his or her self-perception on a number of criteria including: an appraisal of the student-completed course/instructor evaluation forms that indicates what improvements, if any, will be made based on these evaluations; course organization; classroom management; development of

course materials; fairness and consistency in grading; the possibility of grade inflation; communication with students, including your availability to them; effectiveness of teaching; and familiarity with new research and literature.

The Dean of Academics then reviews and analyzes the faculty self-evaluations and student course evaluations, which is followed by an interview with each faculty member. Based on this information, prior-year evaluations, course assessments, and his or her own perceptions, the Dean will summarize the related information and make a recommendation to the Institute's President concerning the professor's reappointment or termination. In the case of Full-Time faculty, the Dean may also recommend changes to salary level; Adjunct salaries are typically preset based on seniority. The quality and effectiveness of the professor's teaching are the two primary criteria for reappointment. Upon review of the recommendation by the President, the Dean of Academics will meet individually with Full-Time faculty members to discuss the evaluation and salary review, identify any development needs, and set new goals or objectives for the coming year. The Dean may also meet with Adjunct faculty members as needed.

A summary of key findings is conveyed and assessed as part of this report to ensure our faculty are meeting student needs at the course level. It is used to determine if any significant adjustments are needed.

## **B. PROGRAM LEVEL**

### **Assessment Measures**

#### **Trending Topics for New Programs and Centers at Competing Schools**

In previous assessments, detailed matrices for a cost-value analysis and curriculum comparison of our competitors were completed and evaluated for this report. In 2019, we decided to make a few changes in order to make the comparison more useful and efficient. First, we have narrowed down the previous, lengthy list of competing programs to our top four competitors and their relevant programs. In the case of cost value analysis, IWP has grown to the extent that more relevant departments, such as recruitment and communications, are now tracking these trends, so we no longer need to track this data in our educational assessment. We also decided to narrow down the scope of our curriculum comparison in order to collect more useful and relevant data. Thus, we will focus on trending topics for new programs and centers, rather than on curricular requirements since these change infrequently. In this manner, the Institute is able to assess the quality and uniqueness of its course and program offerings, as well as determine if any programs or centers should be added or removed. These findings are then incorporated into our curriculum review process.

The Institute continues to assess our students' real and perceived educational needs in order to adjust its offerings to achieve the educational outcomes both it and its students desire. The Recruitment office tracks these 'demand signals' that have led potential students away from IWP to one of our competitors. These findings are incorporated into our curriculum review process as well.

## **C. INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL**

### **Assessment Measures**

#### **1. Job placement and advancement**

When students apply for admission, they are asked to write a personal career goals statement in light of IWP standards and objectives. Evaluation of this statement by the Admissions Committee is part of assessment that occurs in the admissions process. If there are any notable trends in career goals or academic interests the Admissions Committee will pass on that information to the Dean of Academics for consideration. These statements aid IWP faculty and staff in understanding what our students expect of us.

At the Institute, we offer a full range of unique career services to ensure our students' success. IWP's Office of Career Services gathers quantitative and qualitative data to assess educational outcomes as they pertain to student career paths, hiring of our students and alumni, and employer satisfaction. It then utilizes the following methods to gather data and track our students and alumni professionally: (1) periodic surveys, (2) e-mail communication, and (3) direct communication with students and alumni through consultations, emails, phone calls and text messages, 4) promoting the use of our website, which allows students to update personal and professional information on-line.

Our alumni put their education into practice in their workplaces, and their successes at work are often largely due to their IWP education. We track our IWP alumni who serve in strategically crucial positions throughout the national security and international affairs communities. IWP regularly collects success stories and testimonials from our students and alumni, as they are constantly being recognized for their achievements in the workplace. Alumni also furnish feedback to the assessment process via annual surveys which relate their professional success to their educational preparation at the Institute.

We utilize Career Services' tangible results (number of students assisted and the impact of that assistance) along with its qualitative data, such as job promotions and the difference that an IWP education has made to improving the students' professional

capabilities. A key data point is our students' job placement rate for attainment of careers relevant to their IWP education within one year of graduation. Beginning in 2020, we will review and compare the previous three years of job placement rates to confirm that we are continuing to succeed in this achievement.

## **2. Alumni Relations**

Our alumni embody the ultimate outcomes of the IWP education – and they truly fulfill the IWP mission, which is to develop leaders with a sound understanding of international realities and the ethical conduct of statecraft, based on knowledge and appreciation of the founding principles of the American political economy and the Western moral tradition. All new graduates of the Institute are encouraged to become members of the Alumni Association, which was first launched during the 2005-06 academic year. IWP makes a consistent effort to keep our alumni employment data up to date by reaching out individually to alumni and by checking their online resumes and biographies. We also have available on our website a form where alumni can update their contact and employment data. This, in turn, enables the Institute to know where our education is being used – and our level of success in student achievement (see Job Placement rates above).

We encourage graduates to fill out the annual Student Survey as well, which includes the MA Exit Survey so that they can provide specific thoughts on their IWP education and its usefulness at the end of their educational experience. The survey asks students if they achieved our Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and yields both quantitative (a ranking system) and qualitative (short answers) results. These results are assessed and may lead to suggestions for improvement in a given program, course, or service.

Many of our alumni appreciate their IWP education so much that they remain involved with the school by volunteering in a variety of ways, including welcoming students at orientation, mentoring students through our speed mentoring sessions, speaking with prospective students at open houses, congratulating students who have been admitted to IWP programs, speaking as a part of IWP's extra-curricular guest lecture program, and in many other ways. Tracking our alumni enables us to create targeted programs whereby our alumni mentor our students via our Alumni Networking Partner Program. Students who are seeking career advice or professional contacts in a particular organization or field can opt into the program and be connected with an alumnus/a networking partner.

Because we regularly stay in touch with our alumni, they find it easy to provide informal feedback on IWP's programs after they enter the working world. For instance, alumni have noted in the past that simulations will help students gain some 'real world' skills that they need in the national security/intelligence community, and alumni have even organized simulations for our students. Such insights help provide feedback about where the IWP education and the overall IWP experience can improve student learning.

### 3. Student Learning Support Services

In addition to the administrative side's student support services, the Institute provides a variety of support in the academic realm to help our students achieve learning outcomes at all levels:

- a) Remedial Writing Course & Library Support: IWP 643 Introduction to Graduate Writing is a seminar intended to introduce students to the art of research and writing. Its objective is to familiarize students with information: its acquisition, analysis, and communication. This course will be reviewed as part of our course assessment and evaluations. All incoming MA students must take the writing diagnostic exam. Students may be required to take the seminar if the results of their writing diagnostic exam are unsatisfactory. Meanwhile, the library offers scheduled orientation sessions each semester to ensure students are familiar with all the resources we have to offer. Individual or small-group research instruction is also available at any time throughout the semester. Further training on all aspects of information literacy skills – from using our print collections, to making best use of our electronic resources, to using the internet – is available throughout the year as well.
- b) Retention & Advising: Our students consult with our Academic Advising and Success Specialist (AASS) for advice on core curriculum and other courses needed for their programs. Prior to registering for a given semester's coursework, students can contact the AASS or the Vice President for Student Affairs to ensure the proper selection and sequencing of courses. Students are also encouraged to utilize the Degree Audit function in Empower. Additionally, students can seek academic and professional advice from faculty members and alumni. Furthermore, the Registrar and Dean of Academics have begun reaching out to students who receive Incomplete grades to ensure they understand our Incomplete policy and to determine if other steps are needed. Meanwhile, our doctoral students are assigned an advisor when they are first accepted and have this advisor throughout their studies.
- c) Extracurricular activities:
  - IWP Student Lecture Series: With the goal of providing IWP students with the opportunity to present their research to the greater IWP community and general public, this initiative seeks to provide an environment in which IWP students engage with and respond to one another's work, following which the floor is opened to discussion.
  - Crisis Simulations & War Gaming: IWP has hosted several crisis simulations for our students to support their student learning experience. We will track the number of students who participate and review post-event survey data.
  - IWP Events: IWP hosts lectures, conferences, and seminars on a plethora of topics. Such events provide opportunities for government officials, scholars, business executives, and journalists – both domestic and foreign

– to discuss important national security and statecraft issues with Institute faculty and students.

Our success in these areas can be measured indirectly by assessing student survey feedback. Our Academic Advising and Success Specialist as well as the Communications and Events Coordinators also provide insight as to what students have had to say about these services. We can utilize this feedback to determine if any adjustments need to be made to our academic support services.