

## Repository of Examples for the Political Science Research Competency Guidelines

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### Standard One: Know and Plan

#### Performance Indicator:

1. Defines and articulates the need for information

#### Outcomes:

- a) Identifies an area of interest or class topic and explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic.
- b) Recognizes that a 30-page research paper, a policy memo, or an essay-type "response paper" will require different types of information. **F/L**  
*Examples:*
  - A project on changes in welfare reform will require use of government documents as primary sources
  - A project considering the role of public opinion in Eastern Europe towards the European Union will require survey data and use of a statistical package to manipulate that data.
- c) Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus. **F/L**  
*Examples:*
  - Instead of focusing on the role of the prime minister in Europe as a whole, the student decides to focus his/her research on a comparison of executive roles in Great Britain and Germany.
  - A student doing research on US Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina and other floods would include exploration of questions about relation of individual to state; what is the state's responsibility to its citizens? E.g.; do people who "choose" to live in flood-prone areas "deserve" federal aid when levees break?
  - A student doing research on US Federally-mandated "abstinence-only" sex education programs would seek information about moral standards in political arrangements and the belief that there is a moral order or imperative - which, if only it were followed through political arrangements, will result in a better life for all citizens.
- d) Identifies key concepts and terms that describe information need. **F/L**
- e) Develops a thesis statement or research question. Articulates appropriate theory on which to structure an answer and form investigative questions. **F**  
*Examples:*
  - Articulates research question to read "limitations on tobacco advertising reduced teen tobacco use."
  - Cites regulatory theory for protecting public health

- Considers investigating rates of teen smoking before and after advertising ban, information about the industry's teen marketing strategy, and the effects of regulating other industries to protect public health
  - Articulates research question, cites theories that help to explain the phenomenon in question and looks for supportive evidence.
- f) Chooses among different methodologies and explains their relative merits; Creates and carries out a formal research design. **F**
- Examples:*
- Justifies choice to examine Aristotle's theory of virtue by reasoning outward from close exegesis of the *Nicomachean Ethics* rather than downward from the secondary literature.
  - Develops a research design for an empirical investigation of voting behavior in Finland. States the data, variables, and methods to be employed.

**Performance Indicator:**

2. Identifies a variety of types and formats of potential sources for information.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Knows how information is formally and informally produced, organized and disseminated. **F/L**
- Examples:*
- Medical "statistics" gathered by a purportedly healthful food product may not be unbiased.
  - Understands that reports produced by certain public policy groups and think tanks may be ideologically biased.
- b) Identifies the purpose and audience of potential resources. **L**
- Examples:*
- Knows that using Alternative Press Index or Ethnic NewsWatch in addition to standard news indexes will provide a much more diverse picture of issues than just searching LexisNexis Academic.
  - Knows that using actual congressional hearings and reports in addition to secondary analyses will present a fuller picture of the issue or topic under consideration.
- c) Recognizes that knowledge is largely organized into disciplines that influence the way information is accessed. **F/L**
- Examples:*
- Knows that scholarly analyses of the establishment of an International Trade Organization may lead a political science student to search the JSTOR archive for journal articles in history, economics, and political science as well as to consult databases that focus on specific disciplines.
  - A student doing research on health care policy in the US would use Philosopher's Index to find scholarly literature on ways of managing distribution of scarce resources; possibly using the patient's role (individual responsibility / behavior) in their health status to allocate care. E.g. is a person who smoked for 30 years less deserving to be treated for emphysema than one who acquired it through work exposure?
- d) Identifies the value and differences of potential resources in a variety of formats (e.g., multimedia, database, website, data set, audio/visual, book). **L**

- e) Differentiates between primary and secondary sources, recognizing how their use and importance can vary across disciplines. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Identifies interdisciplinary aspects of public opinion polling and campaign/election analysis, and appropriately matches resources for the greater understanding of data received.

- f) Realizes that information may need to be constructed with raw data from primary sources. **F**

*Examples:*

- Analyzes records of hearings to determine how many times & in what year representatives of an interest group testified before Congress to create a dataset.

**Performance Indicator:**

3. Considers the costs and benefits of acquiring the needed information.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Determines the availability of needed information and makes decisions on broadening the information seeking process beyond local resources. **L**
- b) Defines a realistic overall plan and timeline to acquire the needed information. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Reserves space in GIS lab to use mapping software if demographic displays require it.
- Allows time to use ILL materials when they arrive.

- c) Considers the feasibility of acquiring a new language or skill in order to gather needed information and to understand its context. **F**

*Examples:*

- Weighs Spanish fluency when considering whether to use government information accessible from the Mexican government website.
- Determines whether time allows or project requires learning to use a statistical package (such as SPSS or Stata) to be able to effectively use ICPSR and other data.

**Performance Indicator:**

4. Reevaluates the nature and extent of the information needed.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Reviews the initial information needed to clarify, revise, or refine the research question, thesis, or theory. **F**

*Examples:*

- Develops the ability to engage – through brief papers or memos - in professional, analytical political argument that succinctly expresses one's opinion, but is constantly evolving and being refined by additional data and analysis.

- b) Describes criteria used to make information decisions and choices. **F**

*Example:*

- Understands concepts of public policy assignments and can articulate personal informational needs in order to effectively produce concise political analysis.

## Standard Two: Access

### Performance Indicator:

1. Selects the most appropriate information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information.

### Outcomes:

- a) Identifies appropriate investigative methods. **F**

*Examples:*

- Determines whether to rely on published scholarship, primary data, case studies or another method of researching the use of capital punishment in Japan, Germany, and the US.
- Identifies major sources for statistical data, including aggregated data and coded files, as necessary for the research project.

- b) Investigates scope, content, and organization of information retrieval systems.

*Examples:*

- Correctly identifies a public policy issue and uses information retrieval systems to analyze how public opinion has changed over time.

- c) Selects efficient and effective approaches for accessing the information needed from the investigative method.

*Examples:*

- Uses speeches from Vital Speeches of the Day as a source for qualitative research data on rhetoric in presidential politics.
- Uses appropriate statistical software to produce analytical data on public policy research or research design.

- d) Selects efficient and effective approaches for accessing the information needed from subscription databases, free online search engines, indexes, etc. **L**

*Examples:*

- Uses the American Statistics Index to look up sources of government statistics on fire suppression in national forests.
- Selects *WorldCat* to identify books not held in campus library.

- e) Identifies major sources for statistical data, including aggregated data and coded files, as necessary for the research project. **L**

*Examples:*

- Possesses the ability to plan ahead and prepare for a comprehensive statistical database analysis project that requires a proposal, implementation phase, and final report with presentation.
- Uses STATA for analysis, ICSPR or SPSS for the purposes of producing/analyzing statistical data.

- f) Determines if government reports or other government sources are necessary, and chooses appropriate sources to find them. **L**

*Examples:*

- Determines that the best information about United States morbidity and mortality rates is from the US government searches in FirstGov.gov to find the information
- Looks in the International Statistics Index to determine what sources include detailed crime data for the world.

- g) Recognizes the difference between commercial and official sources, and chooses the source most appropriate for the research inquiry. **L**

**Performance Indicator:**

2. Constructs and implements effectively-designed search strategies.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Develops a research plan. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Uses encyclopedias to start gathering basic resources and terminology.

- b) Identifies keywords, synonyms and related terms for the information need and selects controlled vocabulary specific to the discipline or information retrieval source. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- When using “race” as a research variable, student knows to also search “Latino” or “Asian” as synonym if appropriate for the project.
- When searching for articles on devolution in the United Kingdom, student also knows to employ alternate terms such as “England,” “Britain,” and “United Kingdom.”

- c) Constructs a search strategy using appropriate commands for Internet search engines. **L**

*Examples:*

- When searching for articles on a particular topic, student uses “AND” and “OR” to connect terms and uses appropriate truncation and wildcard symbols.

- d) Implements the search strategy in various information retrieval systems using different user interfaces and search engines, with different command languages, protocols, and search parameters. **L**

- e) Understands that databases, search engines, and indexes may range from covering a multidisciplinary area to a very specific aspect of political science, and chooses the most appropriate resource for the information need. **L**

- f) Understands that aggregate data sources may range from covering a multi-subject or multi-geographic area to a very specific subject or locality and chooses the most appropriate resource. **F/L**

**Performance Indicator:**

3. Retrieves information online or in person using a variety of methods.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Uses various search systems to retrieve information in a variety of formats. **L**

- b) Uses various classification schemes and other systems to locate information resources within the library or to identify specific sites for physical exploration. **L**

- c) Uses specialized online or in person services available at the institution to retrieve information needed. **L**

- d) Uses surveys, letters, interviews, data and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Finds aggregate data from the Census Bureau to show growth in the state's Latino population in the last 20 years.
- Retrieves political participation datasets from the ICPSR.

- e) Saves information retrieved.

- f) Determines what information can be found locally.

**Performance Indicator:**

4. Refines the search strategy if necessary.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Assess the quantity, quality, and relevance of the search results to determine whether alternative information retrieval systems or investigative methods should be utilized. **F/L**
- b) Identifies gaps in the information retrieved, determines if search strategy needs revising. **F/L**
- c) Repeats the search using revised strategy as necessary. **F/L**

**Performance Indicator:**

5. Extracts, records, and manages the information and its sources.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Saves information retrieved and creates a system for organizing research. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Makes notes on note cards and organizes them according to the order in which the information will be presented.
- Creates word document that outlines different arguments and research acquired to support them.
- Develops a notebook of collected information, divided by the paper's outline.

- b) Recognizes that sources must be cited and formatted according to a style manual and differentiates between the types of sources cited. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Understands government documents without a personal author should cite sponsoring agency of the document as the author.
- Recognizes that data sources must be cited, and date of access provided if accessed online.

- c) Records all relevant citation information for future reference. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Develops a research plan for the purpose of building a bibliography, literature review, paper and presentation in political analysis.

**Standard Three: Evaluate**

**Performance Indicator:**

1. Summarizes the main ideas to be extracted from the information gathered.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Reads the text and selects main ideas. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Interprets election and/or voting statistics and relates data to contemporary congressional district demographic information.
- Establishes main themes of partisan website.
- Identifies principal points of law in a legal opinion.

- b) Restates textual concepts in own words and selects data accurately. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Places partisan web site in political spectrum; takes information presented, checks source; compares and interprets.

- c) Identifies verbatim material that can be then appropriately quoted. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Correctly quotes and cites government documents, speeches, congressional testimony, etc. to prepare memoranda, position papers, etc.

**Performance Indicator:**

2. Articulates and applies initial criteria for evaluating the information and its sources.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Examines and compares information from various sources in order to evaluate reliability, validity, accuracy, authority, timeliness, and point of view or bias. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Compares claim from a partisan source regarding proposed Federal policy on drinking water standards by checking Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations.

- b) Analyzes the structure and logic of supporting arguments or methods. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- A political science/political theory student doing research on US poverty programs would weigh commentary from various radio talk-show programs and analyze the theoretical tenets involved; would include research in Philosophy and Religion resources on role of State – whether the State should be the protector (“cradle to grave” welfare) or play a more minimal role to get a more scholarly take on the subject. Would use all resource to interpret how theory is played out in the real world.

- c) Recognizes prejudice, deception, or manipulation.

*Examples:*

- Evaluates the language used to describe people of color to determine if the author is trying to inflame the prejudice of the readers.
- Effectively evaluates campaign or election materials for political bias, and can appropriately distinguish between factual statements and deceptive ploys.

- d) Recognizes the cultural, physical, or other context within which the information was created and understands the impact of context on interpreting the information. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Constructs basic and/or advanced campaign materials that portray the student's ability to navigate political, racial, socio-economic, and cultural bias.

**Performance Indicator:**

3. Synthesizes main ideas to construct new concepts.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence. **F/L**
- b) Extends initial synthesis, when possible, at a higher level of abstraction to construct new hypotheses that may require additional information. **F/L**
- c) Utilizes computer and other technologies for studying the interaction of ideas and other phenomena. **F/L**
- c) Recognizes interrelationships among concepts and combines them into potentially useful primary statements with supporting evidence. **F/L**

*Examples:*

- Uses a variety of legal resources, including indexes to law review journals, United States Copyright Office, National Information Standards Organization (NISO), etc, to identify and synthesize emerging themes related to intellectual property.
- d) Extends initial synthesis, when possible, at a higher level of abstraction to construct new hypotheses that may require additional information. **F/L**
- Examples:*
- Uses Philosopher's Index, PsycInfo, or Sociological Abstracts to explore concepts related to cognition and knowledge and to further understand and articulate intellectual property themes.
  - Uses Sociological and Anthropological literature Indexes to explore the concepts of knowledge or information in varied cultural contexts; recognizing that in some societies, ownership of "intellectual property" is not recognized as an individual right, but a communal one.

**Performance Indicator:**

4. Compares new knowledge with prior knowledge to determine the value added, contradictions, or other unique characteristics of the information.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Determines whether information satisfies the research or other information need. **F/L**
- b) Uses consciously selected criteria to determine whether the information contradicts or verifies information used from other sources. **F/L**
- c) Tests theories with discipline-appropriate techniques. **F**
- d) Determines probable accuracy by questioning the source of the data, the limitations of the information gathering tools or strategies, and the reasonableness of the conclusions. **F/L**



- e) Integrates new information with previous information or knowledge. **F/L**
- f) Selects information that provides evidence for the topic. **F/L**

**Performance Indicator:**

5. Determines whether the new knowledge has an impact on the individual's value system and takes steps to reconcile differences.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Investigates differing viewpoints encountered in the literature. **F/L**  
*Example:*
  - Seeks out additional scholarship to determine whether abstinence-only sex education delays teen sexual activity.
- b) Determines whether to incorporate or reject viewpoints encountered. **F/L**  
*Example:*
  - Shifts opinion on the best way to generate revenue through taxation.

**Performance Indicator:**

6. Validates understanding and interpretation of the information through discourse with other individuals, subject-area experts, and/or practitioners.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Participates in classroom and other discussions. **F**
- b) Participates in class-sponsored electronic communication forums designed to encourage discourse on the topic. **F/L**
- c) Seeks expert opinion through a variety of mechanisms. **F/L**  
*Example:*
  - Solicits expert opinion locally, nationally, or internationally through interviews, email, and political science electronic mailing lists.
- d) Investigates differing viewpoints encountered in the literature. **F/L**  
*Examples:*
  - Uses resources such as Alternative Press Index, Religion Index, Philosopher's Index, GenderWatch to explore outside of popular, mainstream media issues such as Defense of Marriage amendments and gay marriage / civil unions laws.

**Performance Indicator:**

7. Determines whether the initial query should be revised.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Determines if original information need has been satisfied or if more information is needed. **F/L**  
*Examples:*
  - In the event that far too many references to a topic are returned from academic resources; e.g. "Patriot Act"; the information literate PoliSci student will determine that the original "information need" is too large in scope and may choose to limit to one aspect of the Act, e.g., its immigration provisions which allow past,

protected free-speech activities to be considered in determining penalties in current charges.

- In a discussion about the construction of the “separation barrier” in the occupied West Bank, the information literate International Law student will consult Index to Legal Periodicals, Lexis-Nexis, and other sources for precedents and similar cases to clarify issues and advance possible solutions.
- Uses a legal abbreviations dictionary to determine titles of International Law reporters and sources such as R.I.A.A. (U.N. Reports of International Arbitral Awards), then searches online catalog to determine availability of complete opinion.
- Information literate PoliSci student would look for international news sources to search for keywords such as toxic and cosmetic to find information about the new proposal of the EU (REACH) that would restrict the kinds of substances allowed in cosmetics sold in EU.
- An information literate student seeking employment or funded internships would consult directories of grant-making organizations; policy sciences research directories; and NGO and IGO directories to obtain contact and other information.

#### **Standard Four: Use**

##### **Performance Indicator:**

1. Applies new and prior information to the planning and creation of a particular product or presentation.

##### **Outcomes:**

- a) Plans and organizes the content of the project in a manner that supports its purposes and format and adapts it as appropriate for individual or group work. **F**  
*Examples:*
  - Organizes an outline for a paper on the National Rifle Association and includes sections on its origins, purpose and influence in government.
- b) Articulates knowledge and skills transferred from prior experiences and research to planning and creating the project and integrates and synthesizes the new and prior information. **F**  
*Examples:*
  - Relates research on state poverty and the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program to an overall hypothesis that minorities are disproportionately affected by changes in welfare laws.
- c) Manipulates analog and digital text, images, media and data as needed.  
*Examples:*
  - Incorporates interviews conducted with a police officer during a ride-along for a presentation on the effects of politics on local policing operations.
  - Adds relevant images to a Powerpoint presentation.
- d) Understands the civic and political environment and identifies issues of personal importance so as to actively engage in the political process, as an individual or as part of a group. **L/F**  
*Examples:*
  - Volunteers to staff a polling place on election day.
  - Applies to serve on a city commission.

##### **Performance Indicator**

2. Revises the development process for the product or presentation.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Designs a realistic timeline and research and creation process for the production of the project, modifying it as necessary and maintains a journal or log of activities related to the information seeking, evaluating and communicating process.
- b) Reflects on and incorporates lessons from past successes, failures, and alternative strategies, while keeping in mind the audience and purpose of the project.

**Performance Indicator**

3. Communicates the product or presentation effectively to others.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Chooses a communication medium, format and vocabulary that best supports the purposes of the project and its intended audience. **F**
- b) Understands how to communicate ideas visually using charts, graphs, and images and orally through the use of rhetorical and presentation skills. **F**

**Standard Five: Ethics**

**Performance Indicator:**

1. Understands many of the ethical, socio-economic, legal and political issues surrounding information and information technology.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Identifies and discusses issues related to privacy and security in both print and electronic environments. **F/L**
- b) Identifies and discusses issues related to free vs. fee-based access to information. **L**  
*Examples:*
  - Identifies and discusses issues related to access to government information as crucial to an informed citizenry in a democracy (e.g., Federal Depository Library Program)
- c) Identifies and discusses issues related to censorship and freedom of speech. **F/L**
- d) Develops policy recommendations after analyzing and thinking critically about the issues. **F**
- e) Demonstrates understanding of intellectual property, copyright, and fair use of copyrighted material. **F/L**

**Performance Indicator:**

2. Follows laws, regulations, institutional policies, and etiquette related to access and use of information resources.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Participates in electronic discussions following accepted practices. **F/L**
- b) Legally and ethically uses approved passwords and other forms of ID for access to information resources. **L**
- c) Complies with institutional policies on access to information resources and preserves integrity of information resources, equipment, systems and facilities. **F/L**
- d) Legally obtains, stores, and disseminates text, data, images, or sounds. **F/L**
- e) Demonstrates an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, and does not misrepresent work attributable to others. **F/L**
- f) Demonstrates an understanding of legal requirements and institutional policies related to human subjects' research. **F/L**

**Performance Indicator:**

- 3. Acknowledges use of information sources in communication product or performance.

**Outcomes:**

- a) Uses an appropriate political science citation method to consistently, accurately, and ethically cite sources. **F/L**
- b) Posts permission granted notices as needed for copyrighted material. **L**