

Capstone Paper and Portfolio
PADP 6990
2019/2020 Academic Year

In the final semester of the MPA program, students are required to write a capstone paper that reflects upon their mastery of MPA program competencies, assemble a portfolio of work from core classes in the program to illustrate mastery of these competencies, and complete an online exit survey. This document provides instructions and conveys the department's expectations for these three requirements. Students should begin this process by reviewing the five core competencies of the MPA program in the attached appendix.

Portfolio

The portfolio of student work is required for two reasons. First, the program wants to assess what students consider to be their best work from core MPA classes in each of the five core competency areas. Second, by assembling evidence of mastery in each area, students are organizing a set of work that can be discussed with prospective employers during job interviews. The portfolio illustrates the work contributions the student is prepared to make to an organization. As you assemble your best work from the MPA program, consider both goals.

Use the list of competencies below to select the items to include in your portfolio. The items can be written class papers, the product of an applied project, or other material completed for classes. Include at least three items in your portfolio. One product from work or internship may be included. Students may use a portfolio item to illustrate and discuss more than one program competency. The student should select items to demonstrate mastery of the five MPA program competencies listed below. In addition, students must include a current resume.

1. *To Lead and Manage in Public Governance*
2. *Understanding the Public Policy Process*
3. *Analyzing/Synthesizing to Solve Problems and Make Decisions*
4. *The Public Service Perspective*
5. *Communicating with a Diverse Workforce and Citizenry*

Capstone Paper

The capstone paper is a critical reflection essay describing the student's professional development in the MPA program. The student can think of this paper as an integral part of the portfolio that provides context to the individual documents while more broadly discussing the student's development in the MPA program.

The paper should be organized as a formal essay. The document must be typed, double spaced, use a standard 12-point font (such as Times New Roman or Calibri), and be professionally organized with appropriate section headings. Students must cite relevant literature from across the MPA curriculum to illustrate their ability to integrate concepts from the field to explain their mastery of the five core competencies. The document should be about 15 pages in length with additional pages allowed for references cited.

The capstone paper should be organized in three parts:

1. **Professional Goals and Public Service Values:** Students should begin the paper with a statement of professional goals in public service. This section of the paper should reflect upon how the MPA program has prepared the student to achieve their goals. This section of the paper should

also identify the most important public service values that guide the student in public service. This should take about one to two pages.

2. Career or Internship Reflection: During the program, the student developed public service experience in an internship or through their continued work in a career field related to public service. In the second section of the paper, the students will describe how the student has found opportunities to develop MPA program competencies in their work. This section should provide specific examples of how material in MPA classes has aided the student in the internship or work experience. This should take about one to two pages.
3. Program Competency Reflection: In the final section of the paper, the student will discuss their professional growth in each of the five program competencies. For each program competency, the student should explain how content from the MPA program fostered their development of the competency. The student should describe how course work contributed to this competency and cite specific concepts and knowledge from the field to illustrate. This section should also explain how the document in the portfolio included for this competency provides an illustration of the student's mastery of the competency. This section of the paper should be about five to eight pages in length.

Exit Survey

Students must also complete the exit survey to provide feedback about the MPA program. Responses to the survey help program faculty and staff make adjustments to the curriculum and services provided by the Department. Your feedback is critical to the ongoing improvement of the Department and our ongoing assessment efforts. The survey collects the student name and email to confirm completion. The data is not analyzed until the completion of the semester, and student-identifying information will not be attached to the reported results.

Evaluation and Credit

The student portfolio and capstone paper will be reviewed by the MPA Director and one other Department faculty member. The evaluators will rank order their assessment of the student's demonstration of mastery for the five program competencies. Students who assemble all required materials for submission will receive a pass for the one credit hour course. Students who do not assemble the required material during the semester in which they are enrolled in the capstone class will fail. Students who fail the exercise will have one opportunity to retake PADP 6990.

Appendix 1: MPA Program Competencies

Competency 1: To Lead and Manage in Public Governance

Students will learn the implications of the unique political and legal environment in the public sector and its human management implications. They will be able to understand the importance and dynamics of working in groups or teams to make collaborative decisions, incorporate diverse viewpoints, and create a cohesive and professional product. Furthermore, students will be equipped to identify leadership and management demands across sectors, particularly in the public and nonprofit sectors, including their similarities and differences as well as unique intergovernmental and inter-organizational challenges.

Competency 2: To Participate in the Public Policy Process

Students in the Master of Public Administration program at The University of Georgia will understand the public policy process at the federal, state, and local levels, including formulating, implementing, and evaluating policy. They will develop the ability to interpret and persuasively communicate information regarding policy alternatives through memoranda and presentations. Additionally, students will analyze policy alternatives using quantitative and qualitative tools to evaluate decisions and explain potential ramifications for diverse constituencies. They will learn to manage financial resources and develop a comprehensive budget proposal to achieve organizational goals.

Competency 3: To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions

Students in the Master of Public Administration program at The University of Georgia will utilize various methods and analytical tools to analyze and interpret data to provide effective reasoning for decision-making and policy creation. Students will learn to effectively and concisely inform the public and other stakeholders of decisions and initiatives through the presentation of data and research findings. Furthermore, they will produce policy papers involving the synthesis of information, evaluation, and analysis of critical questions or problems currently facing the field of public administration and policy.

Competency 4: To articulate and apply a public service perspective

Students in the Master of Public Administration program at The University of Georgia will understand and appreciate the intellectual history of American public administration, competing ideological frameworks, and major issues or controversies that have emerged over time. They will learn to apply the profession's code of ethics to decisions and value conflicts unique to the public sector, ensuring practices remain accountable and transparent. Moreover, students will demonstrate an appreciation of the complex legal/political/fiscal environment of public management.

Competency 5: Communicating with a Diverse Workforce and Citizenry

Students will exhibit knowledge of principles and practices associated with effective public personnel management. Such skills will include the ability to recognize, consider, and respect differing points of view in administrative and policy decisions. Students will execute specific strategies to enhance equity within and representativeness of the public workforce to ensure all people within a government's jurisdiction are well served. Finally, students will demonstrate an appreciation for diversity and will be able to work productively in teams by displaying composure, professionalism, and effective communication skills.