

SECTION 2: TAKING AND COMPLETING COURSEWORK

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY FORM.....	2
27 HOUR RULE	2
USING MPA COURSEWORK IN A PHD PROGRAM	3
TRANSFER CREDIT COURSE WORK.....	3
PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING TRANSFER CREDIT APPROVAL	3
MILITARY AND/OR CPM COURSE WORK	4
CONCENTRATIONS WITHIN THE MPA DEGREE	4
BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	5
PUBLIC POLICY	5
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT	5
HEALTH POLICY	5
ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP.....	5
EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION	6
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	6
NON-PROFIT MANAGEMENT.....	7
MPA DEGREE COMPLETION WORKSHEET	8
DEGREE COMPLETION DEADLINES.....	9
TIME LIMITATIONS FOR DEGREE COMPLETION	10
INCOMPLETE ("I") GRADE.....	10
PSC 5950/COMPREHENSIVE EXAM/PROSPECTUS TIME LIMITATIONS	10
RESEARCH PAPER	10
FIVE-YEAR RULE.....	10
READMISSION TO THE MPA PROGRAM	11
LOOKING AHEAD TO THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAM/ PROSPECTUS REQUIREMENT	11
ABOUT THE MPA RESEARCH PAPER	12
SELECTING AN EXAM CYCLE.....	12
PSC 5950, RESEARCH PROBLEMS PAPER ENROLLMENT.....	12
RESEARCH PAPER EXPECTATIONS	12
RESEARCH CRITERIA AND STANDARDS	13
EPISTEMOLOGICAL CRITERIA	13
METHODOLOGICAL CRITERIA	13
FORMAL-LOGICAL CRITERIA	14
IDENTIFYING THE TYPE OF RESEARCH PAPER IN YOUR PROSPECTUS.....	14
POLICY ANALYSIS	14
PROGRAM EVALUATION	14
ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYSIS	15
IDENTIFICATION OF INTEREST FORM	17
DIRECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR.....	20

Section 2 of the *MPA Student Guide* provides details that you may find helpful as you take and complete the coursework to satisfy degree requirements. This section ends with an introduction to the final degree requirement, PSC 5950 Research Paper.

Admission to Candidacy Form

The Admission to Candidacy form is an official Graduate College document used to assure that you complete all the MPA degree requirements. In addition to providing details when you taken the required, area and elective courses and the grades you received, it also allows you to report coursework that satisfies the concentration requirements. We suggest that you print the Admission to Candidacy form when you start taking classes to use as a planning guide. The form is found at this website: <http://gradweb.ou.edu/Current/Forms/masters/PA-Summer07.doc>. Once you have identified all the classes you will take and the semester in which you will take these classes, you are ready to submit the Admission to Candidacy form for degree processing.

The Graduate College maintains strict deadlines for submission of the Admission to Candidacy Form. You must make sure you meet these deadlines for the semester you plan to complete your comprehensive exam/prospectus requirement. The deadlines are found at this webpage under <http://gradweb.ou.edu/Current/Masters/NonThesisPacket.doc> for filing deadlines and are included in this section of the Student Guide under the heading Degree Completion Deadlines.

Send the completed Admission to Candidacy Form to the MPA Program Office in Norman. Once approved by the MPA Program Director, we submit it to the Graduate College. Please contact the MPA office in Norman if you have further questions about the form. When completing the form, follow these guidelines.

1. List ALL 36 credit hours of degree coursework on the Admission to Candidacy Form, even if some classes have not yet been completed. You can abbreviate course titles to fit within the allotted space. Enter course grades from completed courses. If you have not yet taken a course, just leave the grade area blank. The Graduate College will fill in the blank grades when those courses are completed.
2. Do not list courses with permanent grades of "I", "W", "U" or courses with grades below "C" on the form. These courses do not count toward the 36 credit hour degree requirement.
3. Submit your Admission to Candidacy Form to the MPA Program Office well in advance of the Graduate College deadlines to avoid graduate delays. If you miss a deadline, you must contact the MPA Office.

27 Hour Rule

You should have completed 27 out of the 36 hours of coursework required for the MPA degree before seeking permission to enroll in the final degree requirement, PSC 5950 Research Problems. For a full-time student, this means you will have two regular courses left before

enrolling PSC 5950. For a part-time student, you will need to wait for enrollment until your last semester. As we will describe below, you can begin working on your research paper before you enroll in PSC 5950. In fact, the safest way to complete the degree is to have the prospectus approved before enrolling in PSC 5950.

Using MPA coursework in a PhD Program

MPA courses that meet in the compressed formats or online do not normally satisfy degree requirements for students in our PhD program. If you anticipate entering the PhD program at some point in the future, it is best to complete the MPA degree in its entirety. Then you do not have to be concerned with the 5-year rule for overage coursework, and all 36 hours of coursework – irrespective of the format in which the class is taken - will be applied to the PhD degree requirements.

Transfer Credit Course Work

The Graduate College allows 9 transfer credit hours from another school under three scenarios:

1. You may have some graduate work completed at another school prior to coming to our program;
2. You may wish to take some graduate work from another school which is operating at your site while simultaneously taking graduate course work from OU; and/or
3. You may move to a non-OU location before you complete your MPA coursework and need to take graduate courses at local school to finish the MPA degree requirements.

While all graduate credit is listed on your student record, it does not automatically count towards your MPA degree. Transfer work from other schools or electives from other OU departments will be accepted for elective credit if the content of the course(s) has some reasonable relationship to the fields of public administration or public policy and meets the MPA program standards. For example, we usually will not accept business college courses that are purely for the private, profit-oriented sector such as investment or marketing courses.

Since we do not accept courses not related to our degree, contact us before you take any courses from another school or other OU department to be sure it will be accepted for transfer credit. Please do not rely on hearsay as to what courses we will accept. Since consideration is given on a case-by-case basis according to the student's specific program development needs, courses approved in the past for one student will not automatically be approved in the future for a different student. For the Advanced Programs students, certain non-OU courses have been pre-approved. Your Site Manager has a list of these courses. You may take these classes without prior approval for use as elective credits.

Procedure for Requesting Transfer Credit Approval

We do not automatically review transcripts from other schools for potential transfer credit. If you completed graduate course work at another school prior to your admission to our program, and have submitted a copy of the transcripts with your application package, you will need to follow these steps to request transfer credit approval:

1. Contact the MPA Program Administrator, asking that the transcripts be reviewed; and
2. Submit copies of your course syllabus or a copy of the course description from the other school's general catalog.
3. The MPA Program Director makes the final decision concerning transfer credit approval. Once we have approved a transfer course, then you may not take an OU course that covers the same subject matter.

Military and/or CPM Course Work

If you completed military or Certified Public Manager (CPM) course work but did not include this in your original admission materials, have official copies of your transcripts sent to:

ADVANCED PROGRAMS STUDENTS ONLY

Continuing Education Admissions & Records
1700 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73072

MAIN CAMPUS/TULSA STUDENTS ONLY

Admissions and Records
1000 Asp Avenue
Norman, OK 73019

When you submit the Military or CPM transcripts, also:

1. Contact the MPA Program Administrator, asking that the transcripts be reviewed; and
2. Submit copies of your course syllabus or a copy of the course description from the other school's general catalog.

Concentrations within the MPA Degree

If you take nine credit hours in any of the approved concentration and at least three of these have the PSC prefix, you will have earned a concentration. All of the courses needed to complete a concentration may not be available at every location and may require travel by students wishing to take applicable courses.

The MPA office will conduct a review of your coursework at time of degree completion. If you complete a concentration, you will automatically receive letters acknowledging your accomplishment from the Dean of the Graduate College and from the MPA Program Director.



Student Sound Off: "I was able to do concentrations very easily by asking for the two-year planning schedule to see when classes were offered and what concentration they applied to." Terry - Alaska

Budgeting and Financial Management

ECON 4353 - Public Finance (For graduate credit, additional work is required.)
PSC 5183 - Public Budgeting and Finance
PSC/RCPL 5353 - State and Local Public Finance
PSC 5363 - Public Financial Management

Public Policy

PSC 5043 – Public Policy Implementation
PSC 5143 – Program Evaluation
PSC 5223 - Public Policy Analysis
PSC 5233 - Health Policy
PSC 5323 – Problems in Public Policy
PSC 5333 – Environmental Policy
PSC 5343 - Public Policy and Inequality
PSC 5373 - Education Policy
PSC 6393 - Regulatory Policy

Public Management

PSC 5133 - Strategic Planning and Performance Management
PSC 5183 - Public Budgeting and Finance
PSC 5193 - Comparative Administration
PSC 5243 - Managing Public Programs
PSC 5253 - Human Resource Administration
PSC 5363 - Public Financial Management

Health Policy

PSC 5223 - Public Policy Analysis
Or PSC 5043 - Public Policy Implementation
PSC 5233 - Health Policy
HAP 5453 - U.S. Health Care Systems
HAP 5203 - Health Economics
HAP 5483 - Health Care Law and Ethics

Organizational Leadership

PSC 5103 - Organizations: Design, Structure and Process
PSC 6143 - Public Organizational Behavior

PSC 6173 - Leading Public Organizations
PSC 6173 - Organizational Change and Development
PSC 6173 - Organizational Culture and Ethics
LSTD 5623 - Theories of Management and Leadership
LSTD 5633 - Cultures of Organizations
LSTD 5643- The Individual and Leadership
LSTD 5654 - Ethics and Leadership
LSTD 5663 - Perspectives on Leadership
LSTD 5673 - Special Problems in Leadership
PSY 5783 - General Seminar in Organizational and Industrial Psychology
SWK 5333 - Human Diversity and Societal Oppression
COMM 5373 - Communication and Leadership
ODYN 5113 - The Psychology of Leadership
ODYN 5253 - Organizational Development

Educational Administration

PSC 5710 - Problems in Public Administration
PSC 5323 - Problems in Public Policy
PSC 5343 - Public Policy and Inequality
PSC 5373 - Education Policy
PSC 5173 - Bureaucracy and Politics
PSC 6123 Seminar in American Politics and Bureaucracy
EDAH 5253 - Institutional Research in Higher Education
EDAH 5263 - Planning in Higher Education
EDAH 5373 - Assessment in Adult and Higher Education
EDAH 5940 - Statewide Coordination and Governance
EDAH 6023 - Higher Education Finance
EACS 6023 - Applied Quant Research Methods in Ed Admin.
EACS 6123 - Administrative and Organizational Theory
EACS 6223 - Policy Planning and Development
EACS 6243 - Education and the Law
EACS 6253 - Financing Education
EACS 6263 - Education and Community Relations
EACS 6323 - Politics in Educational Administration

International Relations

PSC 5123 - The Making of American Foreign Policy
PSC 5193 - Comparative Administration
PSC 5513 - International Relations Theory
PSC 5550 - Problems in International Relations
PSC 5563 - International Political Economics
PSC 5600 - Problems in Comparative Politics
PSC 5633 - Comparative Public Policy Analysis
PSC 5643 - Politics of Western Europe
PSC 5683 - Politics of Latin America
PSC 6603 - Comparative Political Analysis

Non-Profit Management

- PSC 5033 - Foundations of Nonprofit Management
- PSC 5063 - Nonprofits & the Public Sector Relations
- PSC 5133 - Strategic Planning and Performance Management
- PSC 5253 - Human Resource Administration
- PSC 5363 - Public Financial Management
- PSC 6173 - Leading Public Organizations
- PSC 6173 - Organizational Change & Development
- HR 5373 - Grant Writing

MPA Degree Completion Worksheet

As you near the end of your coursework and begin preparing for the research paper, you should check to make sure you have met all the requirements. This worksheet should give you a quick review of your progress toward degree completion. If you cannot answer "YES" to all the questions, graduation may be delayed. If you have any questions about this worksheet, please contact the MPA Program Administrator. *This form is for your personal use and not for submission to any office.*

- | | YES | NO | QUESTION |
|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 1. | ___ | ___ | Have you completed PSC 5183 Public Budgeting & Finance, PSC 5143 Program Evaluation, <u>and</u> PSC 5913 Introduction to the Analysis of Political & Administrative Data |
| 2. | ___ | ___ | Have you completed one course in each of the four core areas? |
| 3. | ___ | ___ | If you are using transfer credit to offset some of your elective requirements, have you applied for and received notification that these courses are applicable to your MPA program? [See, Section 2, Procedure for Requesting Transfer Credit Approval] |
| 4. | ___ | ___ | Have you completed 27 hours of coursework? |
| 5. | ___ | ___ | Have you submitted your Identification of Interest Form to the MPA Program Office? |
| 6. | ___ | ___ | Have you completed all of the degree requirements as described on the Admission to Candidacy Form and submitted this form to the MPA Program Office? |
| 7. | ___ | ___ | Have you enrolled in three credit hours of PSC 5950, Research Problems, a minimum of six weeks prior to your planned comprehensive exam/prospectus semester? |
| 8. | ___ | ___ | Are all of your MPA credit hours within the Five-Year Rule limitation? [See Section 1, Five-Year Rule] |
| 9. | ___ | ___ | Have you submitted a draft of your prospectus to your faculty advisor by the appropriate deadline?
<div style="text-align: center; margin-left: 40px;"> Fall Semester: September 1
 Spring Semester: February 1
 Summer Semester: May 15 </div> |
| 10. | ___ | ___ | Has your prospectus been approved by your faculty advisor before the last day of classes in the semester in which you enrolled in PSC 5950? |

Degree Completion Deadlines

There are several guidelines that you need to remember as you move through the research paper process. The entire process is described in the remainder of this section and in sections 3 & 4.

<u>Comprehensive Exam/ Prospectus Semester</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	
Identification of Interest Form	May 1	September 1	December 1	
Admission to Candidacy Form	March 1	September 1	February 1	
Draft Comprehensive Exam/Prospectus Submitted to Faculty Advisor	September 1	February 1	May 15	<p><u>To verify the date of the Final Day of Class, go to</u> http://www.ou.edu/admrec/calendar.html</p>
Revised Comprehensive Exam/Prospectus Submitted to Faculty Advisor	Final Day of Class in December	Final Day of Class in May	Final Day of Class in July	
<p>To graduate on schedule, the <u>Research Paper</u> must be <u>received</u> in the MPA Program Office by the Final Day of Classes the following year. For example, if you complete your Comprehensive Exam/Prospectus by the Final Day of Class in May 2009, then your Research Paper is due by the Final Day of Class in May 2010.</p>				

Time Limitations for Degree Completion

There are four different time limitations that can impact degree completion:

1. Incomplete ("I") Grade
2. PSC 5950 Enrollment/Prospectus Time Limits
3. Research Paper
4. Five-Year Rule

Incomplete ("I") Grade

If you take an Incomplete ("I") grade in any course, the University allows up to one year from the end of the semester in which the course was taken to finish the work. While the University allows a maximum of one year to complete the course, individual professors and the MPA program director can impose earlier time limits. You are responsible for verifying and meeting deadlines imposed in the syllabus and/or by the professor. MPA program professors are not obligated to accept course work beyond those deadlines. If you fail to complete course work by the professor-appointed deadline, the "I" becomes permanent on your transcript, or the professor may have changed the grade to a "U." Either way, you will not receive credit for that course and may have to re-enroll and pay tuition again if it is required for degree completion.

For truly extenuating circumstances, extensions beyond the one-year deadline might be granted, but at most only for a few weeks, and is also at the discretion of your professor. Our best advice is to not take any Incomplete grades unless it is absolutely necessary and then finish the work as soon as possible.

PSC 5950/Comprehensive Exam/Prospectus Time Limitations

Once your comprehensive exam/prospectus has been approved, the Graduate College allows two years to graduate. If you are unable to complete the degree requirements within two years, you will have to re-enroll in PSC 5950, prepare a second comprehensive exam/prospectus and file the appropriate forms with the Graduate College.

Research Paper

After you have completed your comprehensive exam/prospectus, you have one year to complete the research paper without further enrollment, provided you have completed all other degree requirements. If you are unable to complete the research paper within one year you may have to enroll in additional credit hours. It is best to consult with the MPA Program Administrator to discuss your options based upon your situation. If this situation arises, be aware of the two-year time limitation on the comprehensive exam/prospectus mentioned above.

Five-Year Rule

The University considers graduate course credit to be valid for five years after the course is completed. The five years begins at the end of the semester in which you took the course work.

For example, if you took classes in our program in the fall of 2007, then you would have until early December 2012 before that credit would become overage and could not be included in degree completion.

Extensions on time limits are rarely granted, but if you have unusual circumstances requiring an exception from the established deadlines, you must personally contact the MPA Program Administrator at the Norman campus to discuss your situation and to try to resolve the problem. The MPA Program Director will review petitions for a waiver of the time limit and make recommendations to the graduate college dean. No other person (Site Managers, professors, or other university staff) can approve time limit extensions.

Readmission to the MPA program

Students who have not taken classes for three consecutive semesters are considered inactive. To re-enter the MPA program, they must re-apply for admission to OU. There is no re-application charge for College of Continuing Education students, but Main and Tulsa campus students must once again pay the OU application fee.

Readmitted students will not be able to use courses taken more than five years before readmission to meet degree requirements. You will also be subject to the MPA degree requirements in effect at the time of readmission.

Looking Ahead to the Comprehensive Exam/ Prospectus Requirement

Without a doubt, the research paper is the most difficult step in the MPA program. You will be expected to conduct a project that is probably larger than anything you have done before. When you reach this stage of the MPA program, your studies will have equipped you with all the skills you need to accomplish this final task.

The Graduate College requires that all graduate students successfully pass a comprehensive exam. Students are allowed only two attempts to pass this requirement. The MPA program uses PSC 5950 Research Problems to satisfy the Comprehensive Exam requirement. When you enroll in this class, you will need to complete your prospectus prior to the end of the semester to satisfy the Graduate College's comprehensive exam requirement.

The Graduate College requires that all master's students be enrolled in at least two credit hours during the semester in which they complete the Comprehensive Exam/Research Prospectus requirement. This rule applies also during the semester of any subsequent retake. The Graduate College will not waive the two credit hour rule.

Students should familiarize themselves with the research paper process so that, as they take classes, they will recognize various aspects of the courses that will help them prepare for their research. While it is premature to formulate a specific research topic when beginning the MPA program, an awareness of the research requirement and an open mind during class discussions should help students generate ideas for a research project. We encourage students to discuss those ideas with professors as they develop them in their coursework.

About the MPA Research Paper

To complete the MPA program, you must prepare a research paper based upon the research plan proposed in your comprehensive exam/prospectus. The MPA curriculum is designed to prepare you for this step in the program. Many students find the filing requirements and forms to be quite complex; further they must be completed on schedule and sent to the appropriate personnel. To save yourself time and anxiety in meeting these requirements, read the following carefully.

When referring to the final degree requirement, the terms comprehensive exam and prospectus are used interchangeably to refer to the document prepared by the student and approved by their faculty advisor. Commonly referred to as the prospectus, the document proposes a research project that will demonstrate your ability to understand and apply relevant theories and concepts in public administration and/or public policy to a current topic or issue.

PSC 5950 requires an enrollment of three credit hours. When you complete the comprehensive exam/prospectus you will receive an Incomplete for your enrollment in PSC 5950. This will give you one full calendar year from the end of that semester to complete the research paper.

Selecting an Exam Cycle

Choose the cycle for Comprehensive Exam/Research Prospectus and Research Paper completion that best fits your goals for completing the MPA program. Be sure to file your paperwork no later than the stated deadlines. Please note that you can submit your draft comprehensive exam/prospectus to our office and most paperwork **earlier** than these deadlines.

PSC 5950, Research Problems Paper Enrollment

At the end of each semester, Advanced Programs students may now enroll in PSC 5950 for the following semester. Please check with your Site Manager to make sure you enroll at the appropriate time. Students in the Advanced Programs delivery system must submit tuition payment and enrollment cards either to their local Site Manager or directly to Advanced Programs. Please do not send tuition fees or Special Permission cards directly to our office, as this will unnecessarily delay the processing of your enrollment.

Main Campus and Tulsa students must have Special Permission to enroll in this course and must enroll during the normal enrollment period for their campus. The Academic Counselor for your campus can assist you with this process.

Although you may submit drafts of your research paper directly to your faculty advisor for comment and suggestion at any time, the **final draft** of the paper must be submitted no later than one year following the end of your initial enrollment in PSC 5950. Failure to follow this requirement may delay your graduation and/or necessitate re-enrollment in PSC 5950 to complete the MPA degree program.

Research Paper Expectations

Without a doubt, the research paper is the most difficult step in the MPA program. You will be expected to conduct a piece of research that probably is more substantive in terms of content and size than anything you have done before. When you reach this stage of the process, you are equipped with all the skills you need to accomplish this final task. In this section, you will find guidelines to help you write your final research paper. We also encourage you to look beyond the MPA Student Guide to other guides for writing research papers or theses.

Research Criteria and Standards

Here are some general guidelines concerning the academic standards for the MPA research paper, guidelines on organization and format, and a description of the required sections for each of the three types of research papers. Remember that all types of papers have some similarities in terms of organization. Each paper should provide an introduction that justifies research of a particular issue, a literature review, a discussion of the research design, presentation of data and analysis, and conclusions, but the ultimate format may vary according to type of paper.

Epistemological criteria

Epistemology is the “science of knowing”. Epistemological demands are objectivity, validity, and reliability. To meet these demands, you will need to approach your study without bias. Looking at various approaches with which a topic has been studied and giving serious consideration to various options will help you avoid focusing prematurely on one option. Your findings offer the greatest validity when you are able to convince the reader that what you observed was viewed without prejudice. The reliability of the study will depend on how successful you have been in your selection of primary and secondary source material and how well you have developed your theoretical framework and conducted your research and analysis. Conclusions are reliable when more or less the same conclusions are reached when another person in a different setting conducts the research. When your research paper is completed, a reader should be able to analyze the same topic and achieve similar results.

Methodological criteria

There are two main groups of research methods in the social sciences. The *empirical-analytical* group approaches the study of social sciences in a manner to how the natural sciences are studied. This type of research focuses on objective knowledge, research questions that can be answered yes or no, operational definitions of variables to be measured. The empirical-analytical group uses deductive reasoning that uses existing theory as a foundation for hypotheses that need to be tested. This approach is focused on explanation.

The second group of methods, the *interpretative* group, is focused on understanding. This research method allows you to recognize your connection to the subject under study. Because the *interpretative* group focuses more on subjective knowledge, it requires careful interpretation of variables. This approach is focused on understanding phenomena.

Formal-logical criteria

This criterion on your research requires you to logically construct your line of reasoning, carefully present your evidence, and show consistency of logic as you draw conclusions based on the evidence rather than assumption. It is vital that you conduct your research without pre-conceived bias. You must draw conclusions based on facts drawn from data, not from opinion.

Identifying the type of research paper in your prospectus

The prospectus describes the research project you wish to conduct. All research topics can be explored from multiple perspectives. Generally, research projects fall into one of three types: a policy analysis, a program evaluation, or an administrative analysis. Each is described next.

Policy Analysis

If your topic seeks a best way to solve a public problem, then you are probably proposing a policy analysis. A policy analysis is intended to inform policy makers and those affected by the issue. Therefore, the policy analysis research paper should provide a balanced and comprehensive assessment of a proposed policy action and its potential consequences. It should educate the reader about the nature of the issue, its background and current status, and the different alternatives policymakers might pursue to resolve the issue in a satisfactory manner. When you write a policy analysis paper, think of yourself as a staff person advising a policymaker facing a problem that must be resolved in the near future.

Policy analyses compare a number of alternate approaches to solving a problem. In this type of paper, you review reliable research about each alternative and determine which alternative offers the best solution to the problem. It is important to narrow the scope of the problem in such a way that you can measure potential costs and benefits, or strengths and weaknesses, of the alternatives you analyzed. You may recommend the alternative that is cost-effective, simple to implement, quick to show results, and so on. Establishing these criteria in the prospectus will help you analyze the data you gather make your recommendation.

A policy analysis is not an evaluation of an existing agency program. Although program evaluations and policy analyses share many of the same tools and methodologies, they answer fundamentally different questions. Policy analyses seek to determine whether there is a government alternative for solving a generally recognized social problem that best suits the needs of the affected public. In contrast, a program evaluation seeks to determine the success or failure of an existing public program.

Program Evaluation

If your research topic focuses on the operation and effects of a public program, you may wish to do a program evaluation research paper. Program evaluations document and assess the activities, outcomes, and costs of public programs. The results can improve the program and inform decisions about future operations. An evaluation is probably the best approach if you are interested in questions such as: Is the program is being implemented as intended or designed? Is

the program having the desired effect? Is the program cost-effective? Students preparing a program evaluation paper must pay particular attention to the methodologies and techniques associated with the design, implementation, and reporting of evaluation studies.

For the MPA research paper, you are not expected to conduct a complete and comprehensive evaluation of a public program. If you are considering research on a large and complex program, you may wish to consider focusing the evaluation on a particular service of the program or narrowing the evaluation to emphasize primarily process or impact issues.

You must have access to the data necessary to evaluate the program. If special authorization is needed to access records or interview program participants, be sure to include this authorization with your prospectus submission.

Administrative Analysis

If your research topic assesses an administrative program and seeks to make recommendations to improve that program or its operations, you might wish to conduct an administrative analysis. There are two subtypes:

1. A general administrative analysis analyzes an organization from a variety of aspects such as planning, budget, personnel, structure, communication, decision-making, etc. or,
2. A case study is an in-depth analysis of one of these aspects for an organization.

The administrative analysis paper demonstrates your grasp of how key administrative concepts are applied to the real functioning of an organization. The administrative analysis is evaluated on the extent to which public administration concepts, theories, and research findings are utilized in the analysis. The best way to conceive of this paper is to cast yourself in the role of a management consultant who has been hired to study, assess, and make recommendations to improve the operation of an organization or an administrative unit within that organization.

The organization you are analyzing should be faced with an interesting administrative problem or situation that the leaders of the organization wish to diagnose, analyze and resolve. There need not be a “crisis”; but there must be a lesson that can be learned in the analysis. Most administrative analysis papers require interviews with key organization actors. Interviewees’ identities may be held confidential in the research paper so that identification of the participants is not possible and sensitive information is not reported publicly.



Student Sound Off: “I struggled trying to figure out what kind of paper I was doing. In a 5-minute phone call with [a Norman campus faculty member], we worked out my research design. Completing the Identification of Interest was easy after that call.” Mary – Hawaii

The three types of research papers are not all-inclusive. You may propose an acceptable research plan that does not fit into one of the three major categories. Do not try to make your research

topic "fit" into a category. Turn in your Identification of Interest form and your faculty advisor will help you to determine the type of research paper. Discussions with your faculty advisor can also narrow down your research topic. Once you have selected your research topic, you are ready to fill out the Identification of Interest Form found at this website:

www.ou.edu/cas/psc/pa/InterestForm.htm

Identification of Interest Form

Found at www.ou.edu/cas/psc/pa/InterestForm.htm

Name:	Email:
Phone:	Additional Contact Information
Planned comprehensive exam/prospectus semester and year:	Desired Faculty Advisor:

1. Research Questions or Hypotheses: Provide a question your research will answer or test.

2. Why this topic is important: Describe how this topic is relevant to the study and practice of public administration and public policy.

3. Theoretical Literature: Identify classes where you learned theories useful to analyze your topic, and list a few textbooks and journal articles from these classes that you will consult to start your theoretical literature review.

MPA Class Title and Theoretical Literature References

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

4. Substantive literature: Provide a brief list of books and journal articles from scholarly and professional sources on the specific topic you will analyze in your paper.

--

5. Research Design: Describe what methods you will use to gather data for your analysis. For surveys and interviews include the kinds of questions you will ask, whom you will contact, and the criteria you will use to select potential participants. For agency records or existing data, give explicit details about the sources of the data and the information you will gather from each source.

--

Additional Comments

--

When you have completed the Identification of Interest form, submit it electronically, or, if necessary, by mail to the MPA Program Office. You will receive a response from your faculty advisor within 14 days that will tell you how to begin writing your prospectus.



Student Sound Off: "Talk with professors who teach your classes to see if they would be interested in serving as your faculty advisor for the research paper. If they can't be the advisor, they can suggest someone else you should contact." Gary - Ft. Sill

Only main campus MPA faculty members are allowed to serve as faculty advisors. If you want to have a specific professor as your faculty advisor, make your request on the Identification of Interest Form. If you do not indicate a preference, or if the requested professor is unavailable, we will assign a faculty advisor based on your research topic.

Directions from the Director

Want to complete coursework with fewer hassles? Here's a few suggestions I have based on student problems I have had to resolve as Director. Of course, I'm just a phone call or email away if you run into a snag. Aimee Franklin, Director of Programs in Public Administration

- You can always submit the Admission to Candidacy form early. Submitting late causes more problems than submitting early.
- Completing a concentration gives you a letter you can use to alert an employer to your specialized knowledge gained in the MPA degree.
- Always keep the 5-year limit in the back of your mind if you are a part-time student.
- Finish the work on your Incompletes before the next class begins. Otherwise new work barges in and you may get a permanent Incomplete after a year and not be able to use these credits for degree requirements.
- Going to classes provides an excellent opportunity to talk to the professor and other student about potential research papers.
- Attend the research tutorial held each semester and view the .ppt slideshow available on the MPA website at www.ou.edu/cas/psc/pa
- When you have a general research topic, use class assignments as opportunities to jump start your literature reviews for the final degree requirement, PSC 5950.
- There are 3 types of research papers. Any topic can be crafted into any of these 3 types of papers depending on the questions you wish to answer. Talk to a faculty advisor before you complete the Identification of Interest form.
- The Identification of Interest form is a skeleton of the prospectus document. The main purpose is to start the one to one interaction with your faculty advisor.