



New Mexico State University

Master of Public Administration Program

MPA Internship Guidelines
GOVT 510

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Introduction

Definition and Purpose

The internship is an experiential learning activity which removes the student from the traditional classroom role of the “passive-receiver” of information, and places the student into the more active role of “participant-observer” in the work setting. The MPA internship experience at New Mexico State University is designed with respect to several goals and should provide opportunities to:

1. Instill and foster a sense of professionalism.
2. Gain first-hand information and a greater understanding of a public or third-sector organization in terms of function, operation and impact.
3. Enhance existing job-related skills and decision-making abilities, while developing new competencies.
4. Observe and participate in the application of knowledge in functional situations.
5. Practice using methodological skills and techniques related to data collection, organization and analysis.
6. Communicate specialized and technical information in both written and oral form.
7. Develop new professional contacts and assess career objectives.

An MPA student who selects the program’s internship option is required to secure an internship in the public or not-for-profit sector, and to subsequently enroll in GOVT 510 for 3 credits. A student who is already working in an appropriate organization (an in-service student) may complete the internship in that setting, although the specific project undertaken must extend beyond the normal scope of his or her official duties. A student who is not working in an

appropriate organization (a pre-service student), must identify an organization that is willing to sponsor her or him as an intern. The MPA faculty will assist in finding an internship placement but it is the student's responsibility to find an acceptable position. During the internship each student will work with and under the direction of a student-selected faculty internship advisor (advisor) and an agency internship supervisor (supervisor). The MPA Director serves as a point of contact, assists in finding internships, and helps to coordinate specific placements through the internship agreement process discussed below. All materials submitted in fulfillment of GOVT 510 requirements will be treated with the utmost confidentiality by the MPA program and New Mexico State University.

Criteria for Selecting a Sponsoring Organization

In identifying a setting for completing the internship requirement students are encouraged to pursue opportunities directly related to their career interests. This might include a placement in either the public or non-profit sector. It can be an organization with general or limited jurisdiction, and may range from local to international in focus and impact. Although students are given considerable latitude, the MPA program utilizes the following criteria in approving a particular organization or agency to sponsor an internship:

1. The agency must be recognized as having a service function, be legally established, and have sound financial support;
2. The agency must approve in writing the internship arrangement between the student, the agency and the MPA program;
3. The agency supervisor of the intern should be willing to:
 - A. give sufficient time to the intern, while providing guidance in the completion of on-the-job tasks;

- B. provide a practical and reasonable orientation of the workings of the agency;
 - C. schedule regular supervisory conferences with the intern;
 - D. be available in emergency situations;
 - E. communicate periodically with the faculty advisor to discuss the performance of the intern;
 - F. meet with the advisor and/or MPA Director as necessary; and
 - G. prepare two written evaluations for the faculty advisor.
4. The agency should provide suitable desk space, office supplies, reimbursements for expenses while on agency business, clerical and other support services, and private space for supervisory conferences, interviews or other activities requiring privacy; and
5. The agency should seek to identify a major project (or a set of projects) with an identifiable end-product(s) (e.g., report, manual, training program, new procedures etc.) for the intern to complete, particularly when the internship involve an in-service student.

Although compensation is not required, the sponsoring agency should make every effort possible to provide for some sort of salary for an intern, especially in the case of a pre-service student. This might take the form of an hourly rate, a contracted amount or salary supplement. All arrangements are to be stipulated in the internship agreement.

General Expectations Concerning Internships

It is assumed that the internship experiences of students will vary according to the particular field setting. However, there are two general expectations which are universal to any placement. The first is that the intern is to be treated and regarded by the sponsoring agency as an "employed" staff member. This means the intern is expected to implement agency policies and to abide by agency rules and regulations. Among these responsibilities is that of protecting all confidential information which an intern encounters by virtue of his or her status in the agency.

The total time that an intern should work at the agency will depend on the tasks to be completed, though it is essential that a pre-service student be given ample opportunity to have structured time at the agency. As a rough guide it is expected that an intern will log approximately 300 hours in order to earn three academic credits of GOVT 510. This translates into 20 hours a week for 15 weeks during a regular semester (fall and spring). Adjustments are necessary during the summer and/or depending on the nature of the internship.

General Procedures Governing MPA Internships

The success or failure of an internship rests primarily with the student. It begins by recognizing that the student is ultimately responsible for identifying an acceptable placement according to the aforementioned criteria. Equally important, however, is what happens during and at the completion of the internship. The student has obligations at all three stages.

Prior to the Internship

A student must have completed at least 18 credit hours in the MPA program prior to setting up an internship and enrolling in GOVT 510. This must include at least 9 credit hours of MPA "core" requirements, though it is highly recommended that pre-service students complete most, if not all, of the core before embarking on an internship. The MPA Director or a potential internship advisor has the authority to reject a proposal if it is believed that the student does not have the requisite coursework or skills.

A student must adhere to the following procedures before starting an internship and enrolling in GOVT 510:

1. Discuss various placement options with the MPA Director and/or members of the MPA faculty, including self-identified internships.
2. Arrange for a meeting, either face-to-face or by conference call, with the prospective host agency. This meeting should be attended by the student, a faculty advisor selected by the student, the MPA Director, and the prospective internship supervisor. The host agency may require the presence of other personnel as well. Prior to this meeting, it is the responsibility of the student to provide a copy of this document to the prospective supervisor. The purpose of this

meeting is to delineate the parameters of the internship from the perspective of the participants to generate a list of desired and compatible goals, objectives and activities.

3. Prepare an "Internship Contract" according to the guidelines found in Appendix A and submit to the advisor for review and approval. The content of this contract will reflect, in large measure, the meeting discussed above.
4. Obtain the agency supervisor's signature on the contract and submit it to the MPA Director for final approval. The MPA program will keep the original on file and distribute copies to each signer.

During the Internship

In addition to assigned work duties, the student has other obligations during the course of the internship.

1. The student is expected to act professionally at all times. The student is acting not only as an employee of the sponsoring agency but also as a representative of the MPA program. As such, the student is expected to abide by the rules of the agency and maintain the professional and ethical standards expected of all MPA students.
2. The student is to maintain what is sometimes called an Administrative Journal or Diary, representing a running account of the student's experiences as an intern. The journal is meant to aid the student as s/he is completing the internship requirements as explained in the next section. A copy is to be submitted to the advisor at the end of the internship, though it is not graded.

3. The student should meet regularly with the agency supervisor to review progress towards completing assignments.
4. The student should report to, and if possible meet with, the advisor regularly on progress towards completion of the internship.
5. The student needs to ensure that the supervisor completes and submits the interim (Appendix B) and final (Appendix C) evaluation reports to the advisor. The interim evaluation should take place somewhere around the mid-point of the internship, while the final evaluation should be completed right at the end but submitted to the advisor before the submission of a final internship grade. The supervisor is encouraged to discuss both evaluations with the intern.
6. The student should report any problems with the internship immediately to the advisor and/or MPA Director.

On Completion of the Internship

The student is required to submit two different papers in duplicate to the faculty advisor according to a mutually agreed upon deadline as stipulated in the Internship Contract. The first paper, called an Experiential Activity Report, should address in detail the intern's duties/responsibilities, activities completed, and progress in accomplishing internship objectives. Copies of any reports, memos, presentations, etc. that were created as part of the internship are to be attached. There is no particular page length that is required but the report should be as complete and thorough as possible.

The second paper is an analytical research paper of substantial depth, demonstrating the overall relationship among the (1) instructional components of the program, (2) theoretical elements of the field of public administration, and (3) the actual experiences of the student as an

intern. See Appendix D for more information about the preparation of this paper. The intern's administrative journal should be attached to this second paper.

These two papers, along with the supervisor's final evaluation of the intern, will be used to determine the final grade for the internship. Internships are graded as being either satisfactory (S) or unsatisfactory (U). Incomplete grades (I) are strongly discouraged but may be necessary in light of the circumstances surrounding a particular placement.

Lastly, a student should expect that the internship will be covered at two additional junctures during his or her studies. The first is when the student enrolls in GOVT 519, the capstone course for students selecting the internship option in the MPA program. The second time will be as part of a student's final oral examination. The student will be asked to make a short oral presentation summarizing the internship for the committee, and s/he should be prepared to answer questions regarding the internship.

Appendix A

Internship Contract

(Use additional pages as necessary.)

NAME:

SEMESTER/YEAR:

SPONSORING AGENCY:

ADDRESS:

AGENCY SUPERVISOR (TITLE):

PHONE NUMBER:

I. Objectives

The student identifies the knowledge and skills s/he plans to acquire and demonstrate through the completion of the internship.

II. Description of the Internship

The student describes the nature of his or her work and seeks to identify duties and responsibilities while serving as an intern. The student describes the activities s/he will carry out to achieve the objectives noted above and the additional work that will be undertaken in preparing the analytical research paper. Issues related to work schedule and compensation should be noted.

III. Evidence of Accomplishment

The student describes the products s/he will prepare and submit to both the supervisor and the advisor.

IV. Time Line for Completion

The student identifies deadlines for completing work and mechanisms for both the supervisor and advisor to monitor the intern's progress towards completion.

Provide signature lines, date lines, and email lines for student, faculty advisor, MPA Director and agency supervisor.

Appendix B

Interim Evaluation of MPA Intern

DATE:

STUDENT:

AGENCY:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you again for agreeing to serve as an agency supervisor.

Please use the form on the following pages in evaluating the performance of the MPA candidate who is interning with your organization. We encourage you to discuss the contents of this evaluation with the student. Please return the completed evaluation to the intern's advisor. Arrangements can be made to handle this process electronically, just contact the student's advisor or the MPA Director.

Please rate the performance of the intern on the following dimensions by placing an X in the appropriate space:

Ratings: 5 = Superior 4 = Good 3 = Average 2 = Fair 1 = Poor
 0 = No criteria to evaluate/does not apply

		5	4	3	2	1	0
	ABILITY TO WORK WITH PROBLEM						
1.	Understanding of purpose/function of agency						
2.	Ability to understand and use agency policies and procedures efficiently						
3.	Ability to plan, organize and use time effectively						
4.	Knowledge of and use of community resources						
	DEVELOPMENT OF SKILL						
1.	Ability to obtain pertinent information when needed						
2.	Ability to distinguish relevant from irrelevant materials						
3.	Ability to plan a course of action						
4.	Ability to relate and apply knowledge of specialized area to problem or function						
5.	Ability to communicate with staff and others						
6.	Ability to obtain relevant facts from materials						
7.	Ability to record pertinent facts						
8.	Ability to write and summarize reports						
9.	Ability to give oral reports						

	CAPACITY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT						
1.	Integration of theory and practice						
2.	Shows pattern of continuous learning						
3.	Ability to focus on problem and needs of agency						
4.	Attitude toward authority						
5.	Attitude toward assuming leadership/additional responsibility						
6.	Promptness						
7.	Dependability						

D. Additional Comments:

Signature of Agency Supervisor

Date

Title

Phone

Appendix C

Final Evaluation of MPA Intern

DATE:

STUDENT:

AGENCY:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you again for agreeing to serve as an agency supervisor.

Please use the form on the following pages in evaluating the performance of the MPA candidate who is interning with your organization. We encourage you to discuss the contents of this evaluation with the student. Please return the completed evaluation to the intern's advisor. Arrangements can be made to handle this process electronically, just contact the student's advisor or the MPA Director.

Please respond to the following concerning the intern: (use additional sheets as necessary)

1. Describe the intern's attitude toward the work assignment.
2. Describe any particular skills that the intern has acquired or improved.
3. Describe the intern's ability to cooperate and communicate with others.
4. Discuss the intern's ability to make decisions.
5. Generally, in what area(s) did the intern seem strongest?
6. Generally, in what area(s) did the intern seem weakest?
7. Would you feel confident in hiring or in recommending this intern for a job?
8. What grade (A – F) do you feel this student deserves for this internship?

Please make recommendations in the following areas: (use additional sheets as necessary)

1. What suggestions do you have to enhance the Intern's career development?
2. What suggestions can you make to improve our internship program?
3. What seems to be the area(s) of strength in our MPA Program?
4. What seems to be the area(s) of weakness or need of improvement in our MPA Program?

Appendix D

Guidelines for Preparing Analytical Research Paper

I. Purpose

The Research Paper is designed to serve as a capstone to the MPA degree candidate's academic preparation and to reflect his/her ability to integrate essentially theoretical classroom and research experience with the body of applied skills attained in his/her real world professional job performance. The paper should reveal the student's grasp of major Public Administration concepts, issues, normative premises and on-going concerns by relating them to aspects of the operational administrative context in which he/she functions. The overriding purpose of this assignment is not to obtain a narrative of the candidate's day-to-day job performance, nor a sequential course-by-course review of the significance of the MPA classroom experience; rather, it is to discern the candidate's ability to synthesize and apply what is relevant in this broad interdisciplinary field to the repertory of tasks that constitute his/her work agenda and to his/her role in the larger administrative system of which he/she is a member. The specific objective(s) of the internship should be incorporated in the "Abstract of Internship".

II. Form and Style

A conventional term paper format may be employed. While no explicit "length" is presupposed, approximately 15-20 typed, double-spaced, pages should normally suffice. Incorporation of a title page, table of contents, relevant footnotes, and a bibliography likewise should be anticipated. The bibliography should in no way attempt to encompass the learning experience of the entire MPA Program, but should merely incorporate documentation of the material annotated within the Internship Paper itself. Generally, a scholarly editorial style should be maintained, although this does not preclude a measure of first-person, opinion-rendering or narrative recounting. It is expected that, by and large, traditional expository rhetoric and syntax will be employed.

III. **Procedure**

Prior to the researching and writing of the first draft, the student should schedule at least one session of consultation with the faculty advisor. Prior to the preparation of the final draft, the student should also schedule at least one session of consultation with the faculty advisor. The finished Internship paper should be submitted to and received by, the faculty advisor, a minimum of one week before the end of the semester in which the internship is completed.

IV. **Confidentiality of Content**

All material submitted in fulfillment of GOVT 510 requirements will be treated with the utmost confidentiality by the MPA Program and New Mexico State University.