



Instructions for the Professional Project

As a terminal degree, the MPA develops practical skills in an applied setting, as well as in the classroom. The experiential learning courses offer students the opportunity to further develop their competencies in a professional setting. The content is unique to each student and specially designed around the student's needs and interests.

PADM 6950 Professional Project is one of two experiential electives available to all MPA. Students may choose to enroll in PADM 6900 Thesis as an alternative. Responsibility for creating the project falls upon the student. However, the Director and MPA faculty regularly facilitate projects, and announcements about possible projects are often sent to all current MPA students.

Students are encouraged to discuss the options for a professional project early in their program with any of the MPA faculty. All MPA faculty are available to supervise professional projects, and adjuncts can supervise projects on a case-by-case basis. The faculty supervisor's role is to ensure the project experience is completed in a safe and appropriate learning environment for the student. The faculty supervisor also serves as an advocate on behalf of the student should difficulties arise during the project.

Although the topic and goal of projects can vary considerably, students should generally follow the steps listed below. The sequence of steps may vary somewhat.

1. *Develop a concept.* The professional project is an initiative that needs to be undertaken, but would not otherwise happen without support from the student. In most instances, the project is completed for the student's employer. If so, it cannot be part of the student's regular job responsibilities, but it can be related. (See the Student Handbook for example topics.) The student can develop a concept by soliciting comments from his/her supervisor or other people within the organization. Once a general idea is developed and the organization is interested in the project, the student should contact a faculty advisor.
2. *Discuss the concept with a faculty advisor.* The student should select and meet with a faculty advisor who is a member of the MPA faculty. If the student would like an MPA adjunct to serve as faculty advisory, the student must first discuss this option with the Director of MPA. The student should be prepared to discuss the project's scope, goals, organizational support, and other relevant aspects with the faculty advisor (and the Director when appropriate.)
3. *Submit a proposal.* Students must develop a written proposal and submit it to the faculty advisor and the project supervisor within the organization. The proposal is considered a roadmap that will guide the process and decisions. Once agreed upon by the faculty advisor, the supervisor within the organization, and the student, significant changes should not be made to the project. The proposal should include all of the following information:

Title of Project:

Your name:
Preferred telephone number:
Alternate telephone number:
Email address:
T-number:
Semester the project will begin:
Semester the project will end:

Organization name:
Organization's address:
Supervisor's name:
Supervisor's telephone number:
Supervisor's email address:

- a. Description of the project goals, specific deliverables, and the project's scope. A project's scope consists of the boundaries or limits of the project, such as the entire organization or simply specific parts of it, or data that will, or will not, be collected, etc.
 - b. Description of the MPA competencies and area of emphasis competencies (if applicable) that you hope to develop through the project. You do not need to include them all. If you select a competency from outside the MPA program but relevant to your personal goals, you must identify the source (e.g. other professional standards) and explain why you want to focus on it.
 - c. Anticipated challenges or concerns.
 - d. Signature line for the faculty advisor, supervisor within the organization, and the student.
4. *Register.* Once your advisor approves the above and everyone signed the proposal, register for PADM 6950 Professional Project. The advisor must approve the student's registration.
5. *Submit Interim Report(s).* A progress report must be submitted monthly to the faculty who is supervising the internship. The monthly report should include major tasks completed, accomplishments, unexpected challenges, interim deliverables, or other project related events or issues.
6. *Complete Final Project Report.* The content and format of the final report may be negotiated among the supervising organization, the faculty advisor, and the student. Typically, a written report is one of the final deliverables. Also, students are strongly encouraged to deliver an oral presentation to the supervisor and stakeholders within the recipient organization. If this occurs, the faculty advisor should be advised of the presentation date and may attend. Students must ensure the faculty advisor receives at least one copy of the report that can be placed in the student's file (e.g. hard copy or flash drive). The final report should follow APA style or other style as agreed upon by the faculty advisor and student, and include:
- a. Executive summary and table of contents.
 - b. Goal(s), project scope, methods.
 - c. Major tasks completed and/or analysis of data or information.
 - d. Conclusions and recommendations.
 - e. Other sections as required by the faculty advisor or supervisor within the organization.
7. *Submit Self-assessment Report.* Students should write and submit to the faculty advisor a separate report on the experience. The self-assessment report should include:
- a. Discussion of how the competencies identified in the Proposal were developed through the project.
 - b. Discussion of how the project can benefit your career.

- c. Reflection on key learning points from the project.
- d. Other items as deemed important by the academic advisor.

Due to the unique nature of the Professional Project, the faculty advisor may adjust some of the above requirements to meet the needs of the student or the organization. These adjustments should be made in the initial stages of the project proposal. Similarly, faculty may require specific reading or other assignments to augment the experience. The faculty advisor, supervisor within the organization, and the student should negotiate the details of the project before the project begins, and should make only minimal changes when necessary while completing the project.

Students must notify the faculty supervisor of any change in assignment, location, or conditions. Also, students must immediately notify the faculty supervisor of any significant conflict, harassment, accident, or incident during the project.

For additional information, contact:

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