

A-STATE MPA PROGRAM INTERNSHIP GUIDE

General Information about the MPA Public Internship

General Rule

Every MPA student must take the Internship *unless*:

- (a) The student is classified as ***in-service*** **OR**
- (b) The student chooses the MPA thesis option (only recommended if a student is planning on completing a Ph.D.)

Classification as In-Service

If a student already has 1+ years of administrative-level experience in the public or nonprofit sectors, then he or she is classified as ***in-service***, is exempt from the internship requirement, and would instead take Strategic Planning.

The MPA student does not have to prove that he or she already has sufficient work experience. Rather, when the student signs up instead for the Strategic Planning course, we will then assume that the student has sufficient work experience.

The MPA student cannot use his or her current job for his or her internship.

Purpose

The main reason for the internship is to provide a learning experience for the intern. Public internships provide students with work experience to give them a realistic exposure to an organizational environment and the administrative method. This experience is expected to develop the student's awareness of the internal dynamics of a public organization and of the values/attitudes of public employees. The intern is expected to handle real work assignments and, consequently, be held accountable for concrete assistance to the employing agency.

Duration and Timing

To obtain three hours of graduate credit, the internship period must consist of 300 work hours (7 weeks of full-time employment). The internship should only be undertaken after the student has completed 18 credit hours in the program.

Planning

Students who need the internship, regardless of their preferred location or sector, are ***strongly*** advised to begin planning for the internship by the end of the second semester of their program. The responsibility for identifying appropriate placement sites is shared jointly by the intern and the Director, but the student is expected to take the **lead** role in this process to assure the best fit with the student's career goals. All placements must be pre-approved by the MPA Program Director.

Placement

In recent years, students have done internships with the City of Jonesboro, the local Habitat for Humanity chapter, the United Nations, the State Attorney General, the City of Little Rock, several area nonprofits, a variety of foreign governments, and many other interesting places. The earlier you begin your consideration of internship possibilities, the better chance you have of obtaining something truly interesting and useful for you. Opportunities may be available in Little Rock through contact with the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC), a joint program of Arkansas State University, University of Arkansas-Little Rock and University of Arkansas-Fayetteville.

Compensation

The placement agency is strongly encouraged to provide a stipend or a salary to the intern. A-State's MPA students are skilled and valuable. We believe that our students will enhance the organization's performance to such an extent that the organization should be willing to pay for that expertise. (However, if an agency cannot provide intern compensation, this will not keep the student from obtaining course credit and/or doing the internship.)

Procedural Matters

A. For the Supervising Agency

In order to approve the internship, the MPA Director will need a statement of internship service on organization letterhead signed by the intern's supervisor at the beginning of the internship. This statement must include information on the duration of the internship, the types of duties the student will undertake, and the compensation to be provided to the intern.

Supervision

The supervisor will confer on a regular basis with the intern to give directions and aid, and review work performed. The supervisor will also make a systematic effort to expose the intern to the full range of agency operations.

Supervisory Evaluation

At the end of the student's internship, the supervisor will prepare an evaluation of the intern (see the Agency Evaluation of MPA Student Intern form attached).

B. For the MPA Student

The student intern must register for POSC 6603: Internship in Public Administration, upon approval by the MPA Director.

The *clinical* component of the student's internship is considered fulfilled when the student meets the time duration requirement and the agency supervisor provides APAC and the MPA Director with a completed performance evaluation form.

The *academic* component of the student's internship is considered fulfilled when the student's **Internship Report** is approved by the MPA Director.

POSC 6600 is graded on a pass/fail basis. The assignment of a "Pass" by the MPA Director is based on how well the student integrated the academic and clinical components of the internship.

Guidelines for the Preparation of the Internship Report

- The report must be submitted by the date specified by the MPA Director
- The paper must meet accepted standards of graduate level work and adhere to an accepted manual of bibliographical style (Turabian, MLA, Chicago, or APA)
- The paper should contain the following sections:
 - (1) Identification of the organization where internship was served;
 - (2) Summary of responsibilities assumed during the internship;
 - (3) Evaluation of the internship experience; and
 - (4) Records of time spent working at the internship.

The "Evaluation of Internship Experience" section is the heart of the report. It should be prepared from the following perspective: Assume the stance of a consultant who has been requested to recommend improvements in the programs and administration of the agency for which you interned that would enhance its effectiveness. The evaluation section therefore should address the following issues:

- A. **Programmatic assessment.** Search current professional journals that deal with programs handled by the agency for which you have interned and explain the latest developments in the field. Based on such study, suggest any projects/programs that your agency could undertake which would place it "on the cutting edge" of such developments. (Example: one interning for a human resources agency would review, among others, the last eight issues of the *Review of Public Personnel Administration*);
- B. **Administrative capacity assessment.** Reflect on the public administration literature that you have studied in the MPA program and assess, to the extent to which you have been exposed by your internship to such areas, its personnel practices, the quality of its fiscal controls and practices, and its program evaluation methods. Recommend actions that you expect to improve the management of the organization.

Your recommendations should reflect formal learning (literature studied) and not your personal opinion. You must ground the basis for any recommendation that you make in the public administration body of knowledge. When referring to a theory, a principle or a research finding derived from your MPA studies, or other literature, you are required to cite such works.

The **Internship Report** is expected to be no less than 15 typed, double-spaced pages including footnotes and bibliography but excluding appended materials. There is no upper limit on the length, but mere verbosity is discouraged.

Registration Note for Online Students: It is rarely possible for an online student enrolled in a 7-week course to be able to complete 300 work hours in that amount of time. Therefore, the student has two choices: (1) start the internship in one semester; finish the internship & take credit for it in the next semester OR (2) start the internship and take credit for it in one semester; get assigned an Incomplete grade, and finish the internship the following semester.

AGENCY EVALUATION OF MPA STUDENT INTERN

Intern: _____ Semester/Year: _____

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT-ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Dr. Catherine C. Reese ccrease@astate.edu

To Agency Supervisor: We hope that this intern has been of assistance to you and to your agency, and that now you may help the student and us by providing the following evaluation. Your assessment is vital to an evaluation of the student's internship experience. Your feedback provides Arkansas State University with information regarding his/her ability to translate that knowledge into practice. Thank you for your help.

I. Ratings Please evaluate the Intern on the following areas:

| Area N/A | Excellent | Good | Average | Fair | Poor |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------|---------|------|------|
| Performance of Duties | | | | | |
| Initiative | | | | | |
| Communication | | | | | |
| Ability to Represent Agency | | | | | |
| Reliability | | | | | |
| Academic Preparation for the Work | | | | | |

II. Describe the intern's most significant accomplishment or activity.

III. If you were in a position to fill a vacancy in your agency, would you hire the intern based on performance during the internship period? Yes___ No___

Comments: (please continue on another page if needed)

Supervisor _____ Date _____