

## **PUBLIC POLICY ADMINISTRATION MASTER'S PROGRAM EXIT PROJECT PAPER GUIDELINES**

### **Brief Overview:**

The exit project paper is viewed as the capstone of the MPPA program. In this project, students integrate concepts, skills, and methods learned in their coursework into a written paper.

### **Purpose of the Exit Project:**

The purpose of the project is to provide evidence to the faculty that the degree candidate has mastered the skills (such as empirical policy analysis: quantitative and/or qualitative; economic theory and application; application of emphasis area theory to a problem, issue or situation; and research skills) learned in the MPPA coursework and can apply them to the analysis of a practical research policy problem, issue or situation.

### **Topic Choice:**

The exit project should identify some problem, policy or issue within the field of public policy, public administration or nonprofit organization management. Topics are most likely to be of an applied nature, though theoretical questions are not necessarily unsuitable. All applied topics should contain a statement of the problem and what if any policy is currently addressing it. Samples of prior exit projects are available for review in the MPPA office.

### **Scope of the Exit Project:**

The completed exit project should reflect the quality and effort associated with a well-executed professional staff paper. It is not a Master's thesis. In the project paper, each student must set forth a well-defined policy question: a problem, issue or situation that needs addressing by proposed policy alternatives or an analysis of an existing policy addressing a policy problem, issue or situation. In addition, each paper must cite prior/related literature, present alternatives and critical evidence necessary to assist in making a decision, provide policy analysis of an existing policy or analytical thinking regarding proposed alternative policies for the problem to be addressed, set forth results of this analysis, make a policy recommendation and provide adequate justification for your choice.

Students completing one of the MPPA specializations should consider doing the exit project on a problem, issue, situation or policy affecting that specialization. For example, the nonprofit organization management specialization might address internal or external organizational issues such as how to make a governing board more effective or how to diversify the organization's financial resources.

Exit project papers are to be approximately 25-30 **double-spaced** pages but under no circumstances should an exit project exceed 40 pages. Quality is more important than quantity in an exit project paper.

### **How to Complete the Exit Project:**

#### **1) Register for MPPA 499 (Exit Project)**

Prior to the student's final semester, he/she must register for MPPA 499 Exit Project Research. A special consent form is needed. This course is worth one-credit hour and is required for the degree. The students should contact the MPPA administrative assistant at University of MO. St. Louis at 314-516-5145 for additional assistance, if needed.

#### **2) Choose an Advisor**

To successfully complete the exit project (and obtain the MPPA degree), each student must meet with the MPPA Director to identify the general topic for the student's exit project and to identify a prospective exit project advisor. The advisor will be largely chosen on the basis of the compatibility of the faculty member's research and teaching interests with the proposed project.

Once a faculty member agrees to serve as exit project advisor/chairperson, he or she assumes responsibility for the appropriateness of the topic and standard of analysis, monitoring progress on the project, presenting the student at the oral Exit Presentation, and assigning a grade for the course.

**Each student should expect to meet with his or her exit project advisor regularly. Also, students should expect to turn in several drafts of their project to their exit project advisor for comments and then make the necessary changes prior to the APPROVED version of the project, which is submitted to the entire committee.**

### **3) Choose Two Other Committee Members**

The MPPA Director in conjunction with the exit project advisor will identify two additional readers for the Exit Project. These two faculty members will not receive the exit project until the faculty exit project advisor informs the MPPA Director that an approved exit project has been completed. The Committee chosen may not change without the permission of the MPPA Director.

### **4) Schedule the Oral Exit Presentation**

Once the exit project advisor has approved a draft of the exit project, an exit examination will be scheduled. The exit project advisor will schedule the exam in conjunction with the MPPA program office.

**The student must provide the faculty exit project advisor and the two other committee members with a copy of his/her APPROVED DRAFT OF THE EXIT PROJECT a minimum of 10 days before the scheduled exit examination.**

Students should note that an oral exit presentation may be held at any time, but **in order to graduate in a particular semester, the oral presentation must be held no later than three weeks prior to commencement** (note: check calendar for these dates). If these deadlines are not met, the student will not graduate until the following semester **and will be charged an additional fee. **THUS, THOSE STUDENTS SEEKING TO GRADUATE IN A GIVEN SEMESTER MUST PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO DEADLINES.**** The MPPA program has a six-year deadline within which to finish all work for graduation.

### **Exit Project Assessment:**

The exit project committee determines acceptability of the exit project. At the completion of the exit (oral) examination, the student will be asked to leave the room while the committee members make a decision. There are three possible outcomes:

- 1) Accepted: The student is to be graduated subject to the proviso that all other degree requirements have been completed.
- 2) Accepted, Subject to Revisions: In this case, the student will be advised to make minor changes. Given the three-week interval between the exit exam and graduation, it should be possible to complete the revisions suggested by the committee and be awarded the degree on time.
- 3) Rejected: In this last case, the student will be advised to re-do the Exit Project, postponing graduation by one or more semesters.

Most students' projects fall in the second category. At the oral presentation the Committee will designate the exit project faculty advisor to judge whether the student has satisfactorily completed the revisions. The revised exit project must be judged acceptable by the exit project advisor no later than ONE WEEK prior to the date of graduation.