



Internship Handbook*
Master of Public Administration Program
University of Louisville

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Introduction

The professional internship (PADM 682) is the capstone of the Master of Public Administration program because it integrates the skills and knowledge accumulated during the program of study with the professional work environment. The internship should be taken at or near the end of the program of study for just that reason.

The internship involves a challenging professional work experience that highlights the myriad demands that face public and nonprofit administrators and managers. It also offers the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and a network of professional colleagues that are critical to career placement and career advancement. Along with professional development training provided by your MPA faculty, the internship fully integrates theory and practice.

This handbook will answer many of the questions you have about this course, and assist you as you plan and prepare for the internship. Please direct any questions you may have to the director of the degree program.

****Revised 2024***

The Internship

The internship is a guided work experience in a government, non-profit, or an appropriate private sponsoring organization available to pre-service students. Students are considered in-service when they are currently employed in a responsible administrative position with a governmental, non-profit, or other appropriate organization and have been employed there for a period of at least one year. Those student will take the practicum alternative to the internship. The internship is carried out under the direction of both an organizational mentor and a faculty supervisor assigned by the student advisor.

Internships are paid at the rate typically offered by the government or organization for internships. Payment rates can vary significantly among governments and nonprofits. ***No student is required to perform an unpaid internship to receive credit for PADM 682.*** However, occasions arise when a student's interest in a particular organization is so strong that he/she requests an unpaid internship. These requests will typically be granted.

The faculty supervisor will have expertise in the type of organization or type of work assignment required of the student, and is there primarily to help the student integrate theory and practice during the course of the internship. Rarely, but occasionally, some issue will arise during the course of the internship that requires faculty assistance or intervention. Either the faculty mentor or the program director will intervene as appropriate in such a case. It is important to stay in contact with your faculty mentor during the entire span of the internship.

The MPA internship should include a minimum of 200 hours over a period of not less than one full academic semester. Internships can cross semesters and be completed during the summer. The final product of the internship includes a paper and a journal. Criteria for grading the paper are detailed later in the handbook. The journal is for the student's use in preparing the paper and does not have to be turned in.

The Application Process

Successfully securing an internship or practicum requires that the student complete the following steps (all necessary form are found in the back of the handbook).

1. **ONE FULL SEMESTER BEFORE** the anticipated start of the internship, the student should schedule a planning meeting with the program director to secure the internship or to have the desired internship approved. If the student has not identified an internship opportunity, he/she needs to bring a one-page resume to the meeting.
2. Once the internship organization is determined, the student will need to secure a memorandum of understanding with a mentor in the agency or organization.
3. The student should transmit the application for internship form to the program director (electronically) along with the signed memo of understanding. The MPA program administrator will contact the registrar's office and PADM 682 will appear as an eligible course for enrollment the next business day.
4. Enroll in PADM 682 for three credit hours. When PADM 682 appears on the student's class schedule, the student will be able to access the PADM 682 Blackboard website where this guide, forms, the grading rubric and all the professional development class materials are located.

Student Responsibilities

The professional internship not only provides the student with a valuable learning experience to complement the academic curriculum, but can also play a critical role in the development of career opportunities. Internship opportunities require both professional conduct and responsibility. For that reason, student's performance will be evaluated by the mentor using the instrument included in the handbook. The purpose is to prepare for a successful transition from study to career, and to use the internship as an opportunity to adopt high standards of professional practice.

The student is expected to conform to standards of professional behavior including understanding of the organization's policies, dependability and punctuality, meeting deadlines, and appropriate dress and positive attitude. It is the intern's responsibility to determine the organization's policies and follow them. Questions about policies and expectations should be directed to the sponsoring mentor.

Similarly, the sponsoring organization should exhibit the same professional standards toward the intern as if he/she were an employee. Please bring any concerns regarding the sponsoring organization to the attention of the program director.

Checklist of Student Responsibilities

1. Review the *Internship Handbook*.
2. Update resume and schedule a meeting with the program director one full semester prior to beginning the internship.
3. Secure memorandum of understanding with your internship mentor and enroll in the course.
4. Complete 200 internship hours.
5. Secure the performance evaluation to be completed by the sponsoring mentor. Ask the mentor to transmit the evaluation to the program director electronically (by email). If there are any issues that may arise as a result of the evaluation with the sponsoring mentor, contact the program director to discuss them.
6. Complete your evaluation of the internship experience using the form provided and turn into the program director during the last professional development class. Your feedback helps the program director ensure that the internship was valuable and appropriate, and helps identify weaknesses in preparation that can be addressed in future classes.
7. Turn in the final paper by the last day of class in the semester in which you enrolled in the internship (which will sometimes be different than the semester in which the internship was completed.)

Role of the Faculty Supervisor

The faculty supervisor will act as a resource for the intern during the internship, and if necessary will act as a liaison between the intern and the sponsoring organization. At the completion of the internship, the faculty supervisor will grade the final paper using the grading rubric provided. In many cases, the faculty supervisor will be the program director. However, another MPA faculty member may have specific skills and interests that make him/her better suited to supervise the experience. If so, the program director will work closely with the faculty supervisor to ensure a quality internship experience.

Role of the Sponsoring Organization

The sponsoring organization must be legally established and financially sound. A representative of the sponsoring organization must sign the internship agreement and must assign a member of its staff as an internship mentor. The mentor should:

1. Discuss the internship responsibilities and be available to answer questions and offer guidance to the intern.
2. When necessary, hold conferences with the intern to discuss the intern's progress in meeting the objectives of the internship.
3. Provide the intern with a suitable work environment, including clear expectations.
4. Complete the online final evaluation report.

Paper Guidelines

The internship paper is designed to demonstrate a student's ability to integrate theoretical classroom and research experiences with the body of applied skills attained during the internship experience. The paper should demonstrate your grasp of public administration theories, concepts, methods, and issues by relating them to aspects of the administrative context in which the student participated.

The purpose of the research paper is not to provide a narrative review of your day-to-day job duties nor is it a sequential course-by-course review of the significance of your classroom experience. Rather it is to discern your ability to synthesize and apply what is relevant in this broad interdisciplinary field to professional practice. The best practice is to keep a journal during your internship, recording both your activities and your impressions.

The MPA faculty's goal is to determine that you have demonstrated achievement of certain universal competencies through your internship program. Assessment of your internship paper is based on a rubric developed by identifying specific skills or understandings that are linked to the competencies. That rubric is presented at the end of this document and can also be found on the Blackboard website.

Refer to the UPA Writing Guide for preparation of the paper. In short, while no explicit length is required, approximately 10-12 double-spaced pages should normally suffice. APA standard citation style should be used consistently within the paper. An alphabetical list of references must be provided at the conclusion of the paper. The organization of the paper should follow the general outline below:

1. Introduction: Provide a description of the organization. Include information about the organization's structure and a description of your duties and responsibilities. Your role in the unit and the unit's role in the organization is important context for the comparison of theory and practice and should be included.
2. Public administration issues to be examined: Identify and discuss public administration concepts that are relevant to the internship experience. This section should comprise about one-third of the paper. In some cases, there may be only a few concepts presented, but those concepts should be fully developed. For example, an organization experiencing a funding crisis would provide an excellent opportunity to discuss cutback management from several different field areas. The process could be drawn from public finance, the execution from public

management, and the results from organizational behavior or human resources. When there is no single overarching issue as was just described, another way to proceed is to consider the major fields in the discipline (finance, human resources, management, organizational behavior, ethics) and identify any appropriate subfields (administrative law, social equity, economic development, grantsmanship, etc.) that pertain to the experience. Use your course materials and the evaluation rubric to guide this section of the paper.

3. Discussion and analysis: How did the experience compare with the presentation of the selected issues in the classroom? In what ways were they similar? In what ways different? Were there important organizational events or decisions related to an issue area that were not addressed at all in class? Was there theoretical material presented in class that might have been productively used to improve the organization in a particular issue area? Were there barriers to using theories presented in class in the organizational setting? If so, how could they be overcome? This section should comprise at least one-third of the paper.
4. Learning outcomes: Along with the final section of the paper, this section is an opportunity to reflect on what you learned about the professional practice of administration as a result of the internship experience. What did you learn about administration during the experience that you could not have learned in the classroom? A useful way to proceed with this section is to compare and contrast the expectations you brought into the internship with the realities of professional practice you encountered. This section may be as brief or as lengthy as you wish.

Reminder: The due date for the internship paper is the last day of class for the semester that the student is enrolled in the internship. Check the academic calendar for the semester you enroll in the internship and make a note of the last day of class for that semester. This is the due date for your paper.

The paper will be graded on the extent to which it follows the format described above and conforms to the grading rubric that corresponds to the five universal competencies. That rubric can be found at the end of this guide. A letter grade will be assigned to the paper.

Professional Development Activities

When you are enrolled in PADM 682 you will see a syllabus for the professional development activities on the Blackboard website. These activities are designed to support the internship and also prepare students nearing graduation for the practical management challenges they will face. The content was chosen by your MPA faculty in consultation with government and nonprofit executives who spoke candidly about the management and leadership skills they expect the successful graduate to have.

The content may change from year to year depending on student feedback, but the basic topics are:

- Visual display of data
- Making professional presentations
- Professional communications
- Managing conflict
- Negotiation
- Managing teams and projects
- Preparing a resume and professional portfolio

- Interviewing skills

Two other topics will also be covered in the professional development sessions: applying the rubric to your final internship and a debriefing about your internship experience.

One grade will be assigned to the three-hour internship. The internship paper will comprise 70% of the final grade. The other 30% of the final grade will be determined by performance on the professional development activities. Specific guidance on each activity can be found in the weekly module on the Blackboard website.

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

A	90% or above
B+	85-89%
B	80-85%

All students must earn a B or better in PADM 682 in order to graduate. Students who do not earn a B are assigned a grade of W until all appropriate work material is submitted.

In certain circumstances a grade of X might be appropriate for PADM 682. Situations in which an internship crosses two semesters or is performed in the summer are examples. An X means course work has not been finished because of the nature of the work involved. It does not affect the student's GPA.

The next section of this document is comprised of the forms needed to secure the internship and evaluate the internship. Pay close attention to the mentor evaluation form, as the elements reflect the skills and standards that are expected of the successful intern.

The final section of the documents contains the grading rubric that will be applied to your internship paper. It is important to read it carefully before you begin writing your paper. Every element of the rubric corresponds to the five universal competencies established by our national accrediting organization, the National Association of Schools of Public Administration and Affairs (NASPAA). An accredited program like the one at the University of Louisville must demonstrate that its graduates have these universal competencies.

**Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville
MPA Internship
Memorandum of Understanding**

University of Louisville MPA student _____, Student Intern
and _____ agree to the following:
Sponsoring Organization

1. The intern is a graduate student in the MPA program at the University of Louisville.
2. The intern will perform the services requested in a fully professional manner.
3. Interns will have a mentor at the organization in which the student interns and a faculty supervisor from the Department of Urban and Public Affairs.
4. The internship mentor and the intern will mutually strive to develop an effective working relationship, with the mentor providing an appropriate level of support and encouragement to the intern.
5. The internship mentor will make every effort to insure that the student participates in as many facets as possible of the work within his or her area of responsibility.
6. An intern who does a *practicum*, which is an internship at the student's regular place of work, will be required to engage in a work experience that is significantly different from his or her normal duties.
7. While every position requires some clerical tasks, these tasks should be incidental to the main duties of the internship.
8. When feasible, every attempt will be made to permit the intern to observe or participate in various levels of decision-making in which the supervisor participates.
9. The internship mentor will complete a formal evaluation at the end of the internship and return it to the internship coordinator.
10. The internship will commence on _____ and end on _____, and it will require approximately _____ hours of work per week. The intern's mentor, department, and general responsibilities are as follows:

Mentor and Title _____

Department _____

General Responsibilities _____

Stipend/Compensation (if provided by sponsor) _____

Faculty Supervisor _____

Additional Comments _____

Signed and dated:

Intern _____

Internship Mentor _____

Faculty Supervisor _____

Program Director _____

**Department of Urban and Public Affairs
Application for MPA Internship**

Student Name: _____

Student ID#: _____

Semester and Year: _____

Name of Organization or Agency: _____

Brief Description of internship activities _____

Name of Faculty Supervisor (print) _____

Signature of Faculty Supervisor _____

Instructor's ID# _____

Approval of Director of MPA Program: _____

Office use only:

Student registered on _____ *(date)*

Initials: _____

**Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville
MPA Internship Mentor Evaluation**

Name of Student Intern _____

Rating scale: 1: Poor
 2: Below Average
 3: Average
 4: Good
 5: Superior

<u>Content Knowledge</u>	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. Understood organization's mission and goals:	___	___	___	___	___	___
2. Grasped theoretical context of assigned task or function:	___	___	___	___	___	___
3. Applied theoretical knowledge to the task appropriately:	___	___	___	___	___	___
4. Knew how to secure relevant materials for the task:	___	___	___	___	___	___
5. Made good choices in selecting and using relevant materials:	___	___	___	___	___	___
<u>Research Competency</u>						
6. Could plan a course of action to address task or function:	___	___	___	___	___	___
7. Used appropriate analytical methods for task or function:	___	___	___	___	___	___
8. Could obtain pertinent data when needed:	___	___	___	___	___	___
9. Demonstrated competence in statistical analysis:	___	___	___	___	___	___

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
10. Interpreted research of others appropriately:	___	___	___	___	___	___

Professional Practice

11. Understood and respected policies and procedures:	___	___	___	___	___	___
12. Planned, organized and used time effectively:	___	___	___	___	___	___
13. Work products met expectations:	___	___	___	___	___	___
14. Was able to communicate effectively with staff at all levels:	___	___	___	___	___	___
15. Met assigned deadlines:	___	___	___	___	___	___
16. Was willing to assume leadership or take on additional responsibilities:	___	___	___	___	___	___

Additional comments:

Would you feel confident in hiring/recommending this intern for a job?

Do you have any suggestions for the improvement of the MPA Program?

Additional comments: _____

Signature of Agency Mentor _____

Mentor's Name (printed) _____

Title _____

Name of Agency _____

Date _____

**Department of Urban and Public Affairs
University of Louisville
MPA Internship Student Evaluation**

Name of Student Intern _____

- Rating scale:
- 1: Strongly Disagree
 - 2: Disagree
 - 3: Not applicable or No Opinion
 - 4: Agree
 - 5: Strongly Agree

	<u>Content Knowledge</u>	1	2	3	4	5
1.	I understood the organization's mission and goals:	—	—	—	—	—
2.	I was able to relate the task to the organization's mission and goals:	—	—	—	—	—
3.	I knew how to find background materials I needed to frame the task:	—	—	—	—	—
4.	My coursework helped me organize and complete my written work products:	—	—	—	—	—
5.	As a result of my internship, I have a greater understanding of the concepts and theories in my course of study:	—	—	—	—	—
	<u>Research Competency</u>					
6.	I knew how to find the data I needed to complete the task:	—	—	—	—	—
7.	I knew how to organize the data for the analysis:	—	—	—	—	—
8.	I knew the right statistical tools for data analysis:	—	—	—	—	—

		1	2	3	4	5
9.	I knew how to find other research on the topic:	—	—	—	—	—
17.	I felt confident that I could evaluate other research on the topic of my task:	—	—	—	—	—

Professional Practice

11.	The internship provided practical experience in my area of interest:	—	—	—	—	—
12.	The internship activities were challenging and stimulating:	—	—	—	—	—
13.	The mentor clearly communicated expectations for the task:	—	—	—	—	—
14.	I was provided with the resources I needed to complete the task:	—	—	—	—	—
15.	My supervisor was available and accessible when I had questions:	—	—	—	—	—
16.	I was able to relate effectively with staff at all levels of the organization:	—	—	—	—	—
17.	I would recommend the organization to other students as a place to work or do an internship:	—	—	—	—	—
18.	There were sufficient learning opportunities to make the internship worthwhile:	—	—	—	—	—
19.	I feel more confident in my preparation for public administration as a result of this internship:	—	—	—	—	—
20.	The internship confirmed my commitment to a career in public/nonprofit administration:	—	—	—	—	—

PADM 682 Internship Paper Grading Rubric

Competency 1. To lead and manage in public governance

Assessment Tool: Internship/Practicum Paper

Possible Points: 20

Indicators	Not Proficient Scoring Range 1	Proficient Scoring Range 2-3	Highly Proficient Scoring Range 4-5	Score
Analyze organizational structure using appropriate concepts	No organizational chart nor description of the structure of the organization	Organizational chart provided but insufficient discussion of structure	Organizational chart provided and structure of organization evaluated using appropriate concepts	
Evaluate the organization's mission and objectives using performance management theory	No discussion of the mission of the organization or its objectives	Formal mission statement and objectives provided but not linked to performance evaluation	Link between mission, objectives and measures described and evaluated in in context of performance management theory	
Demonstrate understanding of internal and external factors that influence management of the organization, including resources	No discussion of how factors within the larger organization or external to the organization influence management	Identification of factors within the larger organization or external to the organization that influence management	Identification and discussion of how internal and external factors (including budget and other resources) influence management	
Use management theories and concepts to describe organizational and managerial problems	No discussion of organizational and managerial problems	Identification of organizational and managerial problems without theoretical underpinning	Identification and analysis of organizational and managerial problems with appropriate theoretical application	

Competency 2. To participate in and contribute to the policy process

Assessment Tool: Internship/Practicum Paper

Possible Points: 20

Indicators	Not Proficient Scoring Range 1	Proficient Scoring Range 2-3	Highly Proficient Scoring Range 4-5	Score
Understand the foundational policy associated with the organization's public/nonprofit mission	No discussion of what problem the organization is tasked with addressing nor the policy foundation	Identification of the organization's origins in a policy context and the policy role the organization plays	Discussion of the organization's origins in a larger policy context and identification of policy evolution in the organization	
Identify relevant stakeholders and their policy preferences	No discussion of stakeholders	Identification of stakeholders without their policy preferences	Identification of stakeholders and preferences and how organization manages competing preferences	
Understand policy alternatives and the different instruments used to address them	No identification of policy alternatives or how they could be addressed	Identification of alternatives and instruments but without theoretical or in-depth analysis	Identification of policy alternatives and instruments and evaluation of them based on appropriate criteria	
Understanding of the legal and institutional environment associated with policymaking	Fails to identify the important legal or institutional factors associated with policy making	Demonstrates some understanding of the legal and institutional environment associated with policymaking	Demonstrates an understanding of legal and institutional factors and describes how those factors limit policy alternatives	

Competency 3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions

Assessment Tool: Internship/Practicum Paper

Possible Points: 20

Indicators	Not Proficient Scoring Range 1	Proficient Scoring Range 2-3	Highly Proficient Scoring Range 4-5	Score
Identify and summarize important components of problems (assumptions, relationship to other problems, trends, etc.)	Identification of problems but no discussion of larger context of problems	Identification of problems and some discussion of their components	Identification of problems and discussion of larger context focusing on interconnectedness and underlying assumptions	
Distinguish between fact and opinion, and acknowledge the value judgments associated with analysis	Opinions stated as though factual; no discussion of underlying value judgments	Underlying value judgements identified but not related to problem or recommendation	Problem analyzed and/or recommendations grounded in facts; underlying value judgements fully discussed	
Employ tools for analyzing, presenting and interpreting data, especially graphic data, including appropriate statistical techniques and concepts	No display or interpretation of relevant data nor discussion of techniques used to derive data	Display of relevant data in appropriate format but without discussion of techniques used to derive data	Display of relevant data in appropriate format with discussion of how data were derived and analyzed	
Articulate recommendations that are supported with high quality sources rather than opinion and value judgments	Recommendations not sufficiently supported with high quality sources	Recommendations supported with single source, especially source of questionable authenticity	Recommendations supported with high quality data and research; multiple sources identified	

Competency 4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective

Assessment Tool: Internship/Practicum Paper

Possible Points: 20

Indicators	Not Proficient Scoring Range 1	Proficient Scoring Range 2-3	Highly Proficient Scoring Range 4-5	Score
Identify ethical dilemmas in the context of the organization and its mission; relate to public administration	No ethical dilemmas identified nor related to public administration ethics	Ethical dilemmas identified but not related to public administration ethical theory	Ethical dilemmas identified and related to appropriate public administration theory	
Present alternatives or recommendations with consideration of public service values	Alternatives or recommendations presented that are inconsistent with public administration values	Alternatives or recommendations presented without regard to underlying public service values	Alternatives or recommendations presented in accordance with public service values	
Consider the preferences of multiple stakeholders when recommending an alternative or course of action	Does not consider how different stakeholders may be affected by an alternative or a recommendation	Considers how multiple stakeholders may be affected but without an underlying public service perspective	Considers how multiple stakeholders may be affected while articulating alternatives or recommendations from a public service perspective	
Evidences an understanding of cultural diversity include age, race, gender, and nationality.	Limited attention to cultural diversity or influenced by stereotype	Sensitivity to cultural diversity but without consideration as to how different stakeholders experience the organization's activities	Sensitivity to cultural diversity with consideration as to how different stakeholders experience the organization's activities	

Competency 5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

Assessment Tool: Internship/Practicum Paper

Possible Points: 20

Indicators	Not Proficient Scoring Range 1	Proficient Scoring Range 2-3	Highly Proficient Scoring Range 4-5	Score
An ability to clearly and concisely describe problems, concepts, alternative and actions	Sentence and paragraph structure is unclear; no subheadings; jargon use obscures meaning and purpose	Paper organized for clarity and purpose; subheadings used appropriately	Paper begins with introductory paragraph that sets out purpose is organized around the purpose, accomplishes the purpose	
Ability to write without spelling or grammar error, format paper properly and cite sources appropriately	Writing contains errors, paper not well formatted for flow, citations not presented in APA style	Few errors, but paper lacks logical flow and/or citations are not presented APA style	Paper is error free, flows well from one section to the next and citations are well chosen and properly formatted	
Paper is logically presented and would be accessible to one not familiar with the subject matter and would provide insight into the issues chosen to explore	Paper assumes reader has specific knowledge of organization and mission and does not communicate central themes clearly	Paper is accessible but lacks logical flow from central themes or presents the themes without proper context	Paper flows logically, is accessible to persons without specific understanding and communicates central themes in an engaging manner	
Paper engages the topic of diversity of the workforce or the citizens served in a manner that demonstrates understanding and cultural sensitivity	Paper does not mention the composition of the workforce or citizens served or does so without appropriate consideration of diversity	Paper describes the workforce and clientele but without regard to diversity or how persons of different backgrounds may interpret organization activities	Paper describes the workforce and clientele with attention to diversity and how persons of different backgrounds may interpret organization activities	