

# **MPA in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management**

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SUNY Buffalo State University



**Student Handbook  
2024/25 Edition**

## **Introduction**

This handbook provides students matriculated in the MPA in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management Program with information and guidance they may need to complete their degree program successfully. In addition, it presents current MPA program policies and procedures and supplements the policies of SUNY Buffalo State University.

This handbook supplements but does not replace the SUNY Buffalo State University Graduate Catalog. The Graduate Catalog is available at: <https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/>

Additional information is available at the department's website:  
<https://politicalscience.buffalostate.edu/mpa>

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE MPA COORDINATOR

Dear MPA Students,

Welcome to the MPA in Public Administration and Nonprofit Management Program, which is currently located in the Department of Political Science & Public Administration at SUNY Buffalo State University. Other public administration offerings include a Graduate Certificate in Public Management, a Graduate Certificate in Disaster and Emergency Management, a 4 + 1 program, and an undergraduate minor.

By applying to and enrolling in the MPA program, you have indicated a desire to develop and expand your professional knowledge, skills, and abilities as they relate to public service and nonprofit management. I am confident that you will find the next two or more years of study challenging and rewarding, whether you recently graduated with a baccalaureate degree and have limited public service experience or have worked for many years within the public or nonprofit sectors.

When you complete your MPA degree, you will be prepared to lead public and nonprofit organizations as they tackle the complex challenges of the contemporary world. Our department faculty are committed to helping you learn and apply the theories, analytical skills, and ethical values that distinguish public and nonprofit administration through formal courses, programmatic activities outside of class, and one-on-one advising. Along the way, the faculty will also evaluate and assess your performance. Successful completion of the MPA degree represents our certification to the world that you have mastered the requirements of leading these critical organizations.

Here are some suggestions that will help improve your opportunities for success.

- **Adapt to graduate school.** A graduate program is very different from and more demanding than undergraduate studies. Graduate school will demand more from you in terms of the quantity and quality of work you complete, and the volume of material you will need to absorb is much greater. Your professors will expect you to apply what you learn to novel situations drawn from your work and community. The MPA program is designed to assist you in honing your intellectual and analytical abilities, communication skills, and public service values.
- **You are not alone.** The chances are good that you will find there are times when the work seems overwhelming, or circumstances in your personal life become very difficult. This is to be expected. Get to know your fellow students right away. When difficult times come, lean on your friends and family, and talk to your professors. There are always ways to resolve what seem to be insurmountable problems.
- **Conduct yourself professionally.** Treat yourself, your colleagues, and your instructors with respect and expect the same from them. Your students, organizational leaders, faculty, and staff network are your best career resources. Cultivate your network with your performance. Be prepared and be on time. Manage your time carefully so you can meet deadlines. It is crucial to

keep in mind that you are matriculated in a professional degree program. All communication related to the program should be appropriate for a work setting.

- **Develop your communications skills.** Leading public and nonprofit administrators must connect with many audiences, including citizens, supervisors, employees, technical specialists, and policymakers. Administrators who speak and write effectively influence opinions and actions. Effective communication occurs with practice. Take every paper presentation and course discussion seriously and be attentive to details. The type of writing required by the MPA program will differ significantly from what you were asked to write as an undergraduate. You should expect to learn new communication skills and improve your ability to write for a professional audience.

- **Use evaluations to improve your performance.** The ability to give and receive criticism constructively is an essential skill for people engaged in public service. Much of your work in the MPA Program will be evaluated and critiqued by faculty and peers. While most of us naturally want to defend ourselves when our work is judged, we will learn more by addressing weaknesses identified by these evaluations. Criticisms of your work are not judgments about you as a person; they are simply a form of feedback intended to help you improve the quality of subsequent work. While it is understandable to be concerned about your grades, this should not be your primary focus. Instead, spend your time and energy on improving your understanding of the material and expectations. Your efforts will eventually lead to improved performance, and your grades will reflect your performance.

- **Expect to make sacrifices.** Pursuing a professional degree is a significant undertaking. You will have less time for your family and friends and will regularly have to forgo other opportunities or activities to give time and attention to your schoolwork. Know that this is a temporary commitment and that it will pay off in the long run. If you are not prepared to make some sacrifices, you may want to reconsider whether this is the right time to be in the MPA program. Or, perhaps, the Graduate Certificate in Public Management might be the better option.

- **Help shape the future of the MPA program.** The public administration and nonprofit faculty are committed to working with the community, particularly local, state, and federal governmental offices and nonprofit organizations. Faculty continue to make essential contributions to the communities in which they live and work as well as to the broader public service profession. As an incoming student, you have a role in shaping the program. Dedicate yourself to playing a positive and constructive role in our present and future.

Again, welcome, and I wish you all the best as you start this latest chapter in your life. I look forward to learning about your personal and professional interests as you progress through the program, and I hope to see you in a class sometime soon.

Best wishes,

**MPA Coordinator**

Suparna Soni, Ph.D., MPA, MSW,



## Chapter 1 About our MPA Program

### Brief History

SUNY System Administration in Albany and the New York State Education Department certified the SUNY Buffalo State MPA in 2011.<sup>1</sup> Our establishment of an MPA program was the culmination of our department's longstanding commitment that began in the late 1960s to offer professional training for current and future government administrators, lawyers, social workers, and nonprofit managers. From its inception as a free-standing department, we have offered a minor in public administration, and our faculty and alumni-led the effort to establish the Buffalo-Niagara Chapter of the American Association for Public Administration (ASPA) (a commitment that continues to this day). Further evidence of our department's commitment to state-of-the-art professional education was admission to the Network of Public Administration and Public Affairs (NASPAA) in 2011.

### MPA Program Mission Statement

The SUNY Buffalo State Public Administration and Nonprofit Management MPA Program prepares a diverse body of pre-service and in-service professionals for positions of leadership in local, national, and international public service. The program cultivates values of accountability, ethics, and social equity through learning, service projects, and research. The program contributes to the body of knowledge and advances the quality of governance.<sup>2</sup>

### What is an MPA?

The MPA degree is the core professional degree for a management career in public service. The curriculum is designed to aid students in developing the skills and techniques used by leaders and managers to implement policies, projects, and programs that resolve important societal problems. Graduates of an MPA program work in all levels of government (federal, state, and local), in nonprofits, in international organizations, consulting firms, and in the private sector (NASPAA, 2012).

Buffalo State's MPA combines the theory and practice of public administration, public finance, human resource management, quantitative and qualitative research, and a thorough grounding in intergovernmental relations. The program offers three tracks: Public Administration (government), Nonprofit Management, and International Public Management. The tracks consist of four courses by advisement. The MPA program, **totaling 36 credit hours** includes seven required core courses (21 credit hours); four track courses (12 credit hours); and 3 credit hours of the MPA Project.

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<sup>1</sup> SUNY and SED approved the Graduate Certificate in Public Management in 2009.

<sup>2</sup> The SUNY Buffalo State University's MPA Mission Statement was crafted by and approved by the MPA Advisory Board, which is comprised of practitioners, faculty, and MPA students.

## **NASPAA Membership<sup>3</sup>**

The [Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration](#) (NASPAA) is the global standard in public service education. It is the membership organization of graduate education programs in public policy, public affairs, public administration, and public & nonprofit management. Its nearly 300 members - located across the U.S. and in 14 countries around the globe - award MPA, MPP, and similar degrees. NASPAA is the recognized global accreditor of master's degree programs in these fields. NASPAA's twofold mission is to ensure excellence in education and training for public service and promote the ideal of public service.

SUNY Buffalo State's MPA program is a Member of the NASPAA. Therefore, Buffalo State's MPA core curriculum is designed to comply with NASPAA accreditation standards and is assessed using NASPAA criteria for NASPAA accreditation. In addition, our faculty attend NASPAA meetings and workshops. However, membership in NASPAA is not equivalent to MPA program accreditation. Being a relatively young MPA program (having started in mid-2011), we began the accreditation process in 2023. The accreditation process is on-going, with an expectation that the NASPAA review be completed by the end of 2024.

## **MPA Advisory Board**

The MPA Advisory Board is comprised of practitioners from the public and nonprofit sectors. They are responsible for writing and revising the MPA's Mission Statement, suggesting program revisions, and ensuring the MPA is meeting the needs of the Western New York community. The advisory board is governing by its own bylaws and officers. At least one current MPA student serves on the board. The MPA Advisory Board has the authority to convene itself as deemed necessary. The MPA Coordinator serves as the MPA Advisory Board liaison and attends board meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> NASPAA. (2012). MPA & MPP FAQ. Retrieved from <http://www.naspaa.org/students/faq/faq.asp>

## Chapter 2 MPA Program Information

### Program Requirements & Tracks

#### Core requirements

MPA Core courses are designed to meet NASPAA's universal competencies. Students who complete the core courses in the MPA program will have demonstrated competency in the following five areas:

1. Lead and manage in public governance.
2. Participate in and contribute to the policy process.
3. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions.
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective.
5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

21 credit hours (7 courses-sections offered during the academic year) \*

PAD 500 Public Administration and Policy

**MUST BE TAKEN IN THE STUDENT'S FIRST SEMESTER**

PAD 601 Public Budgeting

PAD 640 Human Resource Management in Public and Nonprofit Organizations

PAD 646 Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations

PAD 680 Research Methods in Public Administration

**MUST BE TAKEN IN THE STUDENT'S FIRST SEMESTER**

PAD 681 Data Analysis and Presentation (must be taken at Buffalo State to satisfy MPA degree requirements; no transfer credit accepted)

PAD 735 Public Organizations (former title, Administrative Practices in Public and Nonprofit Sectors)

**MUST BE TAKEN IN THE FIRST NINE CREDIT HOURS**

\*The core is designed to meet NASPAA's Standard 5.1 Universal Required Competencies. Therefore, courses in the core may not be substituted for any other courses. In order to transfer courses into the core, when permitted, these courses must have been completed in a NASPAA accredited MPA program.

### Tracks

#### Specialization Tracks in the MPA Program

The program offers three specialized tracks

- Public Administration (government)
- Nonprofit Management
- International Public Management

Students take four courses in their track (12 credit hours).

The MPA Program page contains a list of the elective courses available for each track.<sup>4</sup>

Any substitution in track courses **MUST** be approved by the MPA faculty adviser accompanied by an advisement note in Degree Works.

**The Public Administration Track** prepares students for a career in the public sector. This track requires the student to complete either *PAD 515 NYS Government & Budget*, *PAD 607 City & County Management*, or *PAD 608 Intergovernmental Relations*, and other topical courses designed to prepare students for a career in public service.

**The Nonprofit Administration Track** prepares students to effectively plan, develop, manage, evaluate, and lead nonprofit programs. This track requires students to complete *PAD 604 Nonprofit Management and Governance*.

**The International Public Management Track** is designed to prepare students for careers with international non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and government agencies working in the international arena. This track requires students to complete *PAD 605 International Public Management and Service*.

All tracks include a capstone Master's Project (Capstone) (PAD 690).

The MPA program, **totaling 36 credit hours** includes seven required core courses (21 credit hours); four track courses (12 credit hours); and 3 credit hours of the MPA Project. Students may earn up to three credit hours for PAD 588 Graduate Internship. This is designed as local internship experience for those students lacking professional experience in a public or nonprofit agency and who seek to gain experience in the public or nonprofit sectors prior to embarking on the MPA project. Students should visit the MPA Internships webpage to learn more about opportunities and requirements.

### Course Descriptions

Course descriptions can be in the Graduate Catalog. See <https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/courses/pad/>

### Master's Project

PAD 690 MPA project is the **capstone experience** in the MPA program. It involves several stages, including purpose statement, literature review, original research, write-up, presentation, and dissemination of results. A capstone experience is a requirement in NASPAA-accredited MPA programs. This is offered in an independent study setting (in-person or virtual platform) and is offered each fall and spring semester.

For more information about the MPA project see MPA Guidelines in the Appendix of this handbook.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://politicalscience.buffalostate.edu/mpa-program-requirements-tracks>

Many students have uploaded their MPA projects to the [Digital Commons](#).<sup>5</sup> (To qualify for the Outstanding MPA Project Award, a student must upload their project to this platform.)

### **Mode of Course Delivery**

#### *Traditional*

In-person courses are scheduled once/week for 2 hours and 40 minutes.

#### *Online & Hybrid Courses*

Many of our MPA courses are offered online or as a combination of traditional and online (“hybrid.”)

Online courses may be scheduled as either synchronous (via web conferencing) or asynchronous (via a learning management system – Buffalo State uses Brightspace).

#### *Master’s Project-*

Instructor and Student Agree to Meeting Times and Mode (in-person, web conferencing or a combination of the two).

#### *Summer/J-Term Sessions*

Some courses are offered during Summer and J term sessions. In these sessions, courses are offered online to meet the needs of working professionals.

#### *Independent Study*

PAD 590 Independent Study

A maximum of 3 credit hours of independent study (PAD 590) may be included as an MPA elective. The student’s MPA adviser must approve this course in advance and communicate this approval by writing and posting a note to the student’s Degree Works.

### **Sequence of Courses**

MPA students are required to enroll in *PAD 500 Public Administration & Policy* and *PAD 680 Research Methods in Public Administration* within their first six credit hours. In addition, it is suggested students enroll in *PAD 735 Public Organizations* in their first nine credit hours. PAD 500 is offered every fall in-person and summer online, and PAD 680 is offered each fall in-person and very occasionally in the summer online. PAD 735 is offered in the fall face-to-face and during J-term online. Enrolling in PAD 680 in the fall semester is crucial because PAD 681 Data Analysis & Presentation is offered in the spring semester ONLY.

**NOTE:** MPA students are required to complete *PAD 680 Research Methods of Public Administration and Nonprofit Management* and *PAD 681 Data Analysis and Presentation* prior to beginning their capstone experience (*PAD 690 MPA Project*).

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<sup>5</sup> [https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/mpa\\_projects/](https://digitalcommons.buffalostate.edu/mpa_projects/)

## **Internships**

The MPA program offers three credit hours for internships for graduate students in Western New York. Students register for *PAD 588 Public Administration Graduate Internship*. This experience is designed as a local or state internship experience for those students who do not currently work in the public or nonprofit sectors and are seeking to gain experience in the public or nonprofit sectors before embarking on the MPA project.

**The NYS Assembly Graduate Internship** is a paid internship that takes place in Albany when the NYS Legislature is in session (spring semester).<sup>6</sup> If students wish to earn credit for this experience, they can register for either *PAD 515 NYS Government & Budget* (course by contract) or *PAD 588 Public Administration Graduate Internship*. For more information about the NYS Assembly Graduate Internship program, see <https://nyassembly.gov/internship/>.

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<sup>6</sup> This internship carried a stipend of \$23,000 for the 2025 legislative session.

## Chapter 3 The MPA Project (Capstone Experience)

PAD 690 MPA Project is offered as an independent study. This is the capstone experience in the MPA program. The MPA project has a first reader (who serves as the student's primary supervisor) and a second reader. The first reader must be a full-time member of faculty teaching in the MPA program. Under special circumstances, campus administrators and part-time faculty can supervise MPA projects, subject to approval by the MPA Committee.

### Selection of first reader

1. Student fill out Parts A & B of the [Individual Graduate Study Application form](#).
2. Along with this form, students must attach a one-paragraph description of the MPA project.<sup>7</sup>
3. The student emails the form and one-paragraph description to Dr. Soni ([sonis@buffalostate.edu](mailto:sonis@buffalostate.edu)) along with first reader preference (if any).
4. The MPA Committee meets to review these materials.
5. The MPA Committee considers several factors in assigning the first reader:
  - a. Student faculty preference (if stated)
  - b. Faculty expertise
  - c. Number of projects a faculty member is currently supervising. (The MPA Committee seeks to ensure that projects are shared evenly among the faculty.)
6. Upon selection of the first reader, that faculty member, in consultation with the MPA Committee and the student, can select the second reader.

### Approval of Research with Human Subjects

Many MPA projects will require approval by the campus Institutional Review Board. Students must have a current CITI certificate

## Software Requirements

### SPSS

SPSS is the industry standard for statistical analysis. SPSS is used in PAD 681 and PAD 690. SPSS is available at many computer labs. A list of labs with SPSS is provided in PAD 681.

### MS Office Suite

Students are expected to enter the MPA program with at least BASIC skills in Microsoft Office Suite programs Excel and PowerPoint and INTERMEDIATE skills in Microsoft Word as follows:

#### *Excel*

**Basic** – format cells; copy and move data; manage workbooks; autofill; print worksheets and workbooks

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<sup>7</sup> [https://suny.buffalostate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Ind\\_Grad\\_Study\\_App-not721or722-Updated%202023.pdf](https://suny.buffalostate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Ind_Grad_Study_App-not721or722-Updated%202023.pdf)

Intermediate-create, modify, and format charts; perform multiple-level sorting; use mathematical, logical, statistical, and financial functions; create and modify some Macro commands

Advanced – perform some programming in VBA; work with pivot tables; use personalized toolbars; manage Macro commands (concepts, planning, operations, execution, modification interruption)

### *Word*

Basic-basic formatting, editing, printing, document page setup

Intermediate-customize toolbars, import and insert graphs, embed Excel data, elaborate reports

Advanced-style and autoformat features, work with large documents that require a table of contents, footnotes, endnotes, and cross-references; manage and track document changes using highlights and comments.

### PowerPoint

Basic-create title and bullet slides; work with notes; print presentation; create an organization chart; select a template

Intermediate/Advanced-create a template; work with graphics; animation, and multimedia; inserting movies and sound; customize PowerPoint toolbars and automate the slide production; build interactive presentations, using hyperlinks, creating interactive objects, working with slide show options

### **Qualtrics**

Buffalo State uses Qualtrics for web-administered surveys. No other survey platform is permitted for MPA projects without the permission of the MPA project adviser.



## **Chapter 4 Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes in the MPA Program**

Each of the core courses in the MPA program undergoes assessment. The seven core courses are assessed using a two-year cycle, with the MPA project assessed on an annual basis. Assessment is conducted by committee of full-time (tenure or tenure-track) faculty who teach in the MPA program. Following assessment, the MPA Committee meets to discuss the results and possible program improvements/re-tooling.

### **SLO 1 Lead & Manage in Public Governance**

Design and Use Performance Measures

Motivate Workforce both ethically and effectively

Analyze organizational behavior to improve system and performance

Apply theories that can inform leadership and management in organizations

### **SLO 2 Participate in and Contribute to the Public Policy Process**

Critically assess the policy implementation experience and provide input to future policy development

Recognize and articulate public economics rationales for policy choices

Explain institutional and legal environment of government

Explain the external and institutional politics of decision making

Understand challenges of implementation

Use decision tools to make data-driven evaluation and policy choices

### **SLO 3 Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems & Make Decisions**

Analyze information from diverse sources to define and evaluate problems

Illustrate and practice appropriate ethical research procedures that respects a diverse population and policy environment communicate

Study results and recommendations to a broad and diverse audience

Identify, develop and recommend potential solutions to problems

### **SLO 4 Articulate & Apply a Public Service Perspective**

Present policy and/or program information and/or recommendations to a diverse audience

Communicates study results and recommendations to a broad and diverse audience

### **SLO 5 Communicate & Interact Productively with a Diverse and Changing Workforce and Citizenry**

Provides information and/or recommendations to a diverse audience

Communicates study results and recommendations to a broad and diverse audience

Exhibits an appreciation for diversity and inclusion in policy development practices

Appreciates and integrates multiple perspectives into policy related materials

Demonstrates listening, cooperation, integration of perspectives, and communication

Appreciation for diversity and inclusion in policy development practices

## **Chapter 5 Beyond the Classroom in the MPA Program**

### **MPA Program Activities**

Throughout an academic year, the MPA program coordinates various events:

- Student Orientation (January & August)
- MPA Project Presentations (December & May)
- Co-sponsors on-campus and off-campus events with the Buffalo-Niagara Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration
- Award Ceremony (May)

### **Communication with Students**

1. Emails from MPA Program Coordinator & MPA Advisor
2. Public Administration Community on Brightspace

### **Career Counseling**

The SUNY Buffalo State University Career & Professional Education provides comprehensive services to matriculated undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, employers, and faculty/staff. The center's staff assists students and alumni with career exploration and decision-making, gaining valuable experience, job search preparation, finding jobs and internships, and selecting and applying to graduate schools. Visit: <https://cape.buffalostate.edu/>

### **Contacting Faculty**

The MPA faculty hold office hours on a weekly basis. Students are encouraged to utilize these office hours for their questions or concerns and receive proper guidance. Email addresses are located on the department website. Faculty also schedule meeting via MS Teams or Zoom.

### **Advisement & Course Registration**

#### *Degree Works*

Track progress through DegreeWorks. The MPA adviser is listed on Degree Works and Banner.

#### *Course Registration*

Via Banner

### **The American Society for Public Administration**

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) is the principal professional association for public administrators. There are two ASPA chapters located in New York State – in the greater NYC metro area and in Western New York.

Students are strongly encouraged to join ASPA and the local chapter (Buffalo-Niagara). Visit <http://www.aspanet.org/> and <https://aspabuffaloniagara.org/>. Membership rates are reduced for students. Many Buffalo State alumni are members of the local chapter.

## **Awards, Scholarships, Honor Society**

### *Keith M. Henderson Memorial Scholarship*

Each spring semester MPA students are invited to apply for the Dr. Keith Henderson Memorial Scholarship. The department sends out an email to all MPA students with application information and deadlines. If the student has a tuition bill, the award is applied. Otherwise, a check is sent to the student. Please check your Buffalo State email on a regular basis.

### *Outstanding MPA Award*

The MPA Committee selects an Outstanding MPA Award each year. The alumnus/a need not apply. However, to qualify for this award, students must have uploaded their MPA project to the Digital Commons.

### *Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society*

Pi Alpha Alpha is the Global Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration recognizes outstanding undergraduate and graduate students. MPA students are invited into Pi Alpha Alpha based on their class ranking/GPA. Invitations are emailed during the spring semester.

### *Excelsior Service Fellowship*

The Excelsior Service Fellowship Program is an initiative to bring highly talented recent graduates of law, graduate and professional schools into government service. Excelsior Fellows bring diverse backgrounds and new perspectives to a host of policy and operational positions in New York State government. Excelsior Fellows start each year in early September and are placed within [the Executive Chamber, a government agency or authority](#) for a two-year fellowship. All MPA students receive the call out through their email. The MPA typically receives one to two fellowships per year. The student must be willing to work in Albany. This program is for recent graduates. To be nominated, fellows must receive their MPA during the academic year prior to starting the Fellowship program. There is no direct application process. The student is recommended by a committee comprised of the MPA Committee and the Career and Professional Education Office.

See <https://www.ny.gov/new-york-state-fellowship-programs/excelsior-service-fellowship-program> for more information.

## Chapter 6 Academic Policies of SUNY Buffalo State University

This chapter contains information regarding the academic policies of SUNY Buffalo State University and the MPA program.

### Academic Preparation

The MPA prepares individuals for positions of leadership and management in public and nonprofit organizations. The program provides students with an advanced course of graduate study concentrating on the conceptual, technical, and professional education and skills required for administrative and leadership positions in governmental offices and nonprofit organizations. The program blends three essential components of training to prepare graduates for a career in the public and nonprofit sectors:

1. In-depth knowledge of the public and nonprofit sectors.
2. Professional or craft knowledge in the administration of government and nonprofit organizations.
3. Exposure of students to the world of practice by means of an MPA project (PAD 690).

### Academic Load

1. Full-time status: Full-time academic status typically consists of a course load of 9 graduate-level credit hours per semester.
2. Graduate assistants: Full-time academic status for graduate assistants is 6–9 graduate-level credit hours per semester.
3. Last semester of study: Full-time academic status is granted to students in their final semester of study if they are working full-time on a master's project or master's thesis. Advisers and department chairs must verify the student's workload in these cases.
4. Finances: In determining billing status, students pay tuition based on the number of registered credits—up to 12 credits.
5. Financial Aid: To be eligible for financial aid, students must be enrolled as matriculated students in an eligible program of study. Other guidelines vary depending on the type of aid. Various state and federal financial aid programs require that students be registered for 12 graduate credits; loans typically do not. Students should contact the [Financial Aid Office](#) or [Graduate Studies](#) for details and personalized counseling.
6. Fully employed part-time students registered in the fall and spring semester should limit themselves to a maximum of two courses each semester.

Academic status designation does not guarantee eligibility for financial aid. Students should consult the [Financial Aid office](#) for eligibility guidelines.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See [https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/course-load/#:~:text=Full%2Dtime%20status%3A%20Full%2D,\(check%20with%20your%20department\)](https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/course-load/#:~:text=Full%2Dtime%20status%3A%20Full%2D,(check%20with%20your%20department).).

### **Continuous Registration and Leave of Absence**

All matriculated students must enroll in at least one credit per Fall and Spring semester until they graduate; this is continuous registration. Summer registration is not required.

Students who fail either to maintain continuous registration or request a leave of absence must reapply to the Program (which means paying an additional application fee to the University) and pay a penalty fee equal to one credit per semester that they did not enroll, up to a maximum of four credits.

A leave of absence is granted for exceptional circumstances of hardship (family illness, etc.) Normally, leaves are granted for up to one year. Students must be registered during the semester in which they graduate. See PAD 721 (project continuation), which is the course that is used to ensure continuous enrollment.

### **Add, Drop, Withdrawal**

Details about add, drop, and withdrawal policy is available online at <http://registrar.buffalostate.edu/courses>.

You are responsible for knowing the policies that apply to you and ensuring that any necessary paperwork is properly completed. This expectation applies to financial aid, course registration, student accounts, continuous registration, leaves of absence, incompletes, adds, drops, withdrawals, declaration of candidacy, internship forms, and any other paperwork directly related to your academic progress.

### **Graduate School Grade Requirements**

Graduate School requirements are:

1. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 (B grade) in all graduate-level coursework. No grade lower than a C grade (2.0) is acceptable to meet degree requirements.
2. See policy under Transfer Credit in the Graduate Catalog.
3. A minimum of 15 credit hours of coursework at the 600- or 700-level is required in all degree programs.
4. A maximum of 6 credit hours of independent study (XXX 590) may be included in a degree program.
5. A maximum of 6 credit hours of special topics (XXX 587), workshops (XXX 594), conferences (XXX 596), and microcourses (XXX 598) may be included in a master's degree program.

## Grading System

The MPA grading system follows that of SUNY Buffalo State University.

Letter Grade	Description
A	Superior
A-	Above Average
B+	Above Average
B	Average
B-	Below required average, may be used to meet degree requirements
C+	Below required average, may be used to meet degree requirements
C	Below required average, may be used to meet degree requirements
C-	Below required average, may not be used to meet degree requirements
D+	Below required average, may not be used to meet degree requirements
D	Below required average, may not be used to meet degree requirements
E	Failure or unofficial withdrawal
EV	Failure, never attended
S	Satisfactory
SD	Satisfactory with Distinction (graduate thesis only)
U	Unsatisfactory

Letter Grade	Description
I	Incomplete
IP	In progress
N	Grade Delayed
NR	Grade no required
X	Grade not submitted
W	Withdrawal

Refer to: <https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/grading/>

## Transfer of Credit

See policy under Transfer Credit on page 16 of the Graduate Catalog.

PAD 690 Master's Project **must be taken** at Buffalo State (no transfer credit accepted to satisfy the capstone requirement).

## Cross Registration Policy at SUNY Buffalo State

SUNY Buffalo State University's Cross Registration Policy is available at <https://registrar.buffalostate.edu/suny-cross-registration-deadlines>. Concerning the MPA, cross-registration is only permitted for elective (track courses) and **MUST** be approved by the student's MPA adviser (the individual listed in Banner/Degree Works). In addition, the MPA Program Coordinator must write an advisement note in Degree Works stating approval. Having said that, there are many relevant graduate courses available in other majors. We encourage students to take the time to review course offerings and discuss options with the academic adviser.

### **The Student Conduct Code**

Buffalo State's [official academic misconduct policy](#) states that "all students at the college are expected to display honesty and integrity in completing course requirements and following college academic regulations." "Academic misconduct" refers to any form of plagiarism or cheating on examinations or assignments and is inconsistent with the aims and goals of the State University College at Buffalo. Source: <http://academicstandards.buffalostate.edu/misconduct>

### **Time Limit for Degree Completion**

All coursework and degree requirements must be completed within the six years immediately preceding a student's graduation.<sup>9</sup> Coursework completed more than six years before the date of graduation cannot be used to satisfy degree requirements unless approved by the adviser, department chair, and school dean. In addition, a form is required to petition for the inclusion of courses taken before this six-year period expired. This form is available at: <https://suny.buffalostate.edu/graduate/current>. (Scroll to the bottom of this webpage to access Guidelines & Forms a list of clickable forms.)

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ecatalog.buffalostate.edu/graduate/academic-requirements/time-limit-degree-completion/>

## **Chapter 7 Financial Information**

### **Financial Aid**

The goal of the Financial Aid Office is to assist students with securing sufficient funding to cover their educational expenses. Most graduate students receive some form of financial aid (federal; state; institutional; private) while attending SUNY Buffalo State. Staff members in the Financial Aid Office, Moot Hall 230, are available year-round to assist students and their families with the financial aid application process.

For complete information about financial aid, see <https://financialaid.buffalostate.edu/>.

### **Graduate Assistantships**

The Graduate Studies Office has a search function on their website for available assistantships. <https://suny.buffalostate.edu/graduate/funding>

### **Graduate Fellowships**

Some MPA students have been awarded fellowships that provided tuition remission. Check application requirements at <https://suny.buffalostate.edu/graduate/funding>.

### **Graduate Scholarships**

See <https://suny.buffalostate.edu/graduate/funding> for information about available scholarships. Additionally, each spring semester MPA students are invited to apply for the Dr. Keith Henderson Memorial Scholarship. The department sends out an email to all MPA students with application information and deadlines. Please check your Buffalo State email on a regular basis.



## **Chapter 8 Student Services**

### **Regarding Services Provided by the Dean of Students**

The Dean of Students Office helps students navigate the college experience, particularly during difficult situations such as personal, financial, medical, and/or family crises. If you or someone you know needs support, services are available. For a list of support services and information, please visit <http://deanofstudents.buffalostate.edu/>, 716-878-4618 or stop by 311 Campbell Student Union during business hours.

- Bengal 2 Bengal is an emergency fund offered for students in need. More information on parameters of the fund and application requirements can be found on the Dean of Student's website: <https://deanofstudents.buffalostate.edu/emergency-relief-programbengal2bengal-fund>.
- The [Milligan's Food Pantry](#) is an excellent resource for students on campus. Milligan's provides students who are food insecure with the opportunity to get non-perishable food from a campus source. Juliet Meade can respond to questions regarding Milligan's or the Emergency Relief Fund and is available at [meadejl@buffalostate.edu](mailto:meadejl@buffalostate.edu) or at 716-878-4618.
- [Student Conduct and Community Standards Office](#): Phone: (716) 878-3051
- [Weigel Health Center](#): Phone: (716) 878 – 6711
- [The Counseling Center](#): Phone: (716) 878-4436
- Student Resources Page: <http://deanofstudents.buffalostate.edu/resources-students>

### **Student Accessibility Services**

Accommodations: Students who need accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability are invited to make their needs known to the [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) Office, E. H. Butler Library 160, (716) 878-4500, email [sas@buffalostate.edu](mailto:sas@buffalostate.edu) or complete their request by filling out the [Initial Accommodation Request form](#).

Students registered with SAS should use the [Accommodate Portal](#) to submit their "[Semester Request](#)" (Letter of Accommodation) every semester. This letter informs faculty of the student's academic accommodations.

### **Title IX**

Our priority as your professors is to ensure a safe, respectful education environment where all students can learn and thrive. The University does not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment (including sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking) based on protected characteristics (e.g., sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, pregnancy, etc.) or related retaliation. All faculty and teaching assistants are considered mandated reporters by the University, which means that if they observe or learn of sex-based harassment/ discrimination or related retaliation, they are obligated to immediately share that information with the University's Title IX Coordinator. This obligation, grounded in law and policy, is designed to protect the safety of students and the broader Buffalo State community, as well as ensure that students receive information about available supportive measures and resolution options to enable them to make informed choices. Supportive measures include reasonable academic accommodations

available with or without the filing of a formal complaint.

If you need academic accommodations due to sex discrimination, harassment, or related retaliation, you may:

**On Campus Resources:**

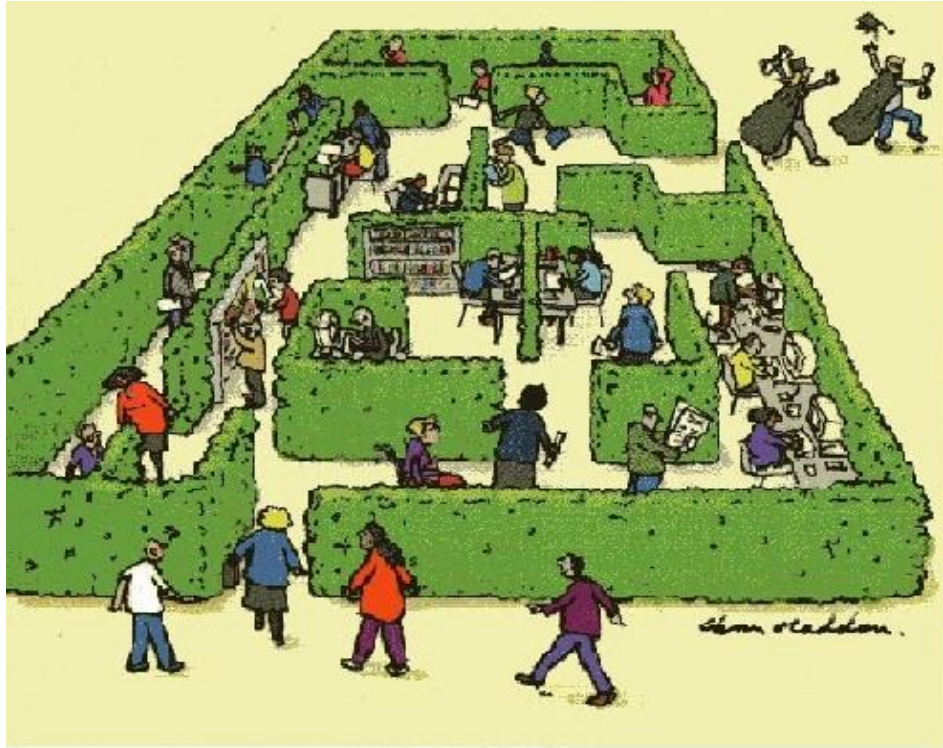
- Contact the TIX Coordinator directly ([titleix@buffalostate.edu](mailto:titleix@buffalostate.edu) or 716-878-5212), without sharing any personal information with me.
- If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor about sexual misconduct, The Counseling Center provides 24/7 confidential support for students via the Bengal Support Line (833-823-0260), or by scheduling an appointment at 716-878-4436.
- If you are a student with a disability and require reasonable accommodations to meaningfully participate in this course, please contact the University's Student Accessibility Services at your earliest convenience ([sas@buffalostate.edu](mailto:sas@buffalostate.edu) or 716-878-4500), as SAS is responsible for processing and approving such requests.
- If you are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth, and/or have medical needs related to childbirth, please contact our Title IX Coordinator for assistance.
- You can file an anonymous report with our University Police Department: 716-878-6333, [police@buffalostate.edu](mailto:police@buffalostate.edu)

**Off Campus Resources:**

- Crisis Services: 24/7 hotline, 716-834-3131
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Family Justice Center: 716-558-7233, [safe@fjcsafe.org](mailto:safe@fjcsafe.org)

## **Appendix I Capstone Experience**

# PAD 690 MPA Capstone Project Guidelines



**SUNY Buffalo State University**  
**Department of Political Science, Public Administration, &**  
**Planning**

Last update, 24 August 2024

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## Capstone Experience for the MPA

PAD 690 is the capstone experience in the MPA program. Buffalo State is a member of NASPAA<sup>10</sup> and follows NASPAA accreditation requirements for its MPA program. NASPAA-accredited MPA programs must include a capstone experience in which students practice NASPAA's five universal competencies<sup>11</sup>:

1. To be able to lead and manage in public governance.
2. To participate in and contribute to the public policy process.
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective.
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenship.

At all stages of the MPA capstone project students need to be cognizant of the fact that the Graduate Committee in the Department of Political Science, Public Administration, and Planning has designed the capstone project to ensure Buffalo State MPA students practice these universal competencies.

### Course Prerequisites

Students must complete *PAD 500 Public Administration & Policy*, *PAD 680 Research Methods for Public Administration and Nonprofit Management* and *PAD 681 Data Analysis and Presentation* prior to entering PAD 690. These sequenced courses cover the public administration theories and concepts, research methods, statistics, software skills (Microsoft tools, SPSS, and Qualtrics), and formatting of and citing sources in professional papers using APA 7<sup>th</sup>. If a student plans to complete the MPA program in three semesters, the student should take PAD 680 in the first fall semester, PAD 681 in the spring semester, and PAD 690 in the second fall semester.<sup>12</sup> PAD 680 and PAD 681 are (typically) taught face-to-face (rather than online).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> NASPAA is the accreditation body for the MPA and MPP.

<sup>11</sup> MPA students are introduced to NASPAA's five universal competencies in PAD 500 Public Administration and Policy.

<sup>12</sup> PAD 680 is offered in the fall semester only. PAD 681 is taught in the spring semester only.

<sup>13</sup> If SUNY or Buffalo State University administrate mandate (due to a pandemic or other circumstance), PAD 680 & PAD 681 may be taught online during the academic year. On occasion, 680 is offered in the summer (4-week, online) at the discretion of the department chair.

There are five essential parameters for conducting research in the public and nonprofit sectors:

1. A focus on administrative and policy issues – either in the public or nonprofit sectors.
2. A focus on an agency/organization setting or service delivery with which the student is familiar so that he or she has knowledge of the setting/deliverables. The MPA capstone project results should be shared with, and presumably be of a positive benefit to the organization or agency.
3. Must have access to study participants.
4. Must have permission from the appropriate authorities to pursue the research – supervisor, agency’s legal counsel, etc.
5. Finally, the student should have passion for the subject matter.

### **CITI Certification**

Students are required to obtain research involving human subjects’ certification for Buffalo State’s Institutional Review Board. **All MPA students obtain a certificate successfully by completing the free, self-paced online CITI Course as part of their course requirements for PAD 680.** The certificate is valid for three years, after which time students are required to take the refresher course on CITI.

### **Registering for PAD 690**

Students take PAD 690 on an independent study basis.

PAD 690 MPA Project is offered as an independent study. This is the capstone experience in the MPA program. The MPA project has a first reader (who serves as the student’s primary supervisor) and a second reader. The first reader must be a full-time member of faculty teaching in the MPA program. Under special circumstances, campus administrators and part-time faculty can supervise MPA projects, subject to approval by the MPA Committee.

### **Selection of first reader**

1. Student fill out Parts A & B of the [Individual Graduate Study Application form](#).
2. Along with this form, students must attach a one-paragraph description of the MPA project.<sup>14</sup>
3. The student emails the form and one-paragraph description to Dr. Soni ([sonis@buffalostate.edu](mailto:sonis@buffalostate.edu)) along with first reader preference (if any).
4. The MPA Committee meets to review these materials.
5. The MPA Committee considers several factors in assigning the first reader:
  - a. Student faculty preference (if stated)
  - b. Faculty expertise

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<sup>14</sup> [https://suny.buffalostate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Ind\\_Grad\\_Study\\_App-not721or722-Updated%202023.pdf](https://suny.buffalostate.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Ind_Grad_Study_App-not721or722-Updated%202023.pdf)

- c. Number of projects a faculty member is currently supervising. (The MPA Committee seeks to ensure that projects are shared evenly among the faculty.)
6. Upon selection of the first reader, that faculty member, in consultation with the MPA Committee and the student, can select the second reader.

### **IRB Approval**

Buffalo State MPA capstone projects involving human participants (including analyses of databases supplied by an agency) must be cleared by the campus IRB. IRB compliance is covered in PAD 680. IRB applications are submitted via an electronic system. Visit this website for details on the electronic IRB submission system at the university:

<http://sponsoredprograms.buffalostate.edu/suny-rf-pacs-irb-module>

You will need to fill out the [Protocol Template](#).

### **To submit an IRB application:**

First you need to register for a PACS IRB account.

Click on this link: <http://www.rfsuny.org/Information-For/Online-Tools-/SUNY-PACS/SUNY-PACS-Login/All-Other-Locations-PACS-Login/> and then, click PACS LOGIN or Login icon on the screen.

Don't have a SUNY PACS account? (all except University at Buffalo)

[Click here to register](#). Registration is open to:

- SUNY campus faculty, staff and students.
- External SUNY campus partners who need access to the campus site in PACS, including collaborators from other SUNY campuses.

SUNY PACS Login Account

*Don't have a SUNY PACS account? Click [here](#) to register.*

After a student register for an account, he or she needs to create and submit a new study.

## Required Texts

MPA project advisors and students will reference the textbooks required in PAD 680 and PAD 681:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7<sup>th</sup> edition. Washington, DC: APA, 2010. (Purchased in PAD 680.)

Creswell, J. W. and J. David Creswell (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Sage. (4<sup>th</sup> edition acceptable). (Purchased in PAD 680.)

Cronk, Brian. C. (2015). *How to Use SPSS*. New York: Taylor & Francis (any edition) (Purchased in PAD 681.)

Salkind, N. J. (2017). *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Purchased in PAD 681.)

Berman, E., & Wang, X. (2018). *Essential statistics for public managers and policy analysts*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press. (Supplement material)

Pollock III, P. H., & Edwards, B. C. (2019). *An IBM® SPSS® Companion to Political Analysis*. CQ Press.

※ E. H. Butler Library at SUNY Buffalo State University provides research help to students who are willing to have research assistance and tutorials [here](#).

## Required Software

## 1. Statistical Analysis

Students may use Excel for graphical representations and descriptive statistics. Inferential statistics require a statistical software package such as R, SAS, SPSS, or STATA. SPSS is taught in PAD 681 and is available on computers in C-104, Butler Library, and the Economics/Political Science computer lab in Cassety Hall B21. A 6-month to one-year SPSS grad pack is sold on Amazon and other internet sellers.

## 2. Web-administered Surveys

Buffalo State uses **Qualtrics** for web-administered surveys. To access Qualtrics: <https://buffalostate.co1.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/>. See <https://buffalostate.teamdynamix.com/TDClient/2003/Portal/KB/ArticleDet?ID=93800> for links to Qualtrics training sites. Qualtrics is introduced in PAD 680, with hands-on practice in writing surveys on the Qualtrics platform taught in PAD 681.

## Recommended Software

EndNote is the industry standard for organizing bibliographies and embedding in-text citations and references (bibliography). EndNote integrates seamlessly with Word. EndNote also has excellent free technical support with short wait times. At times, there's a 30-day free trial. Here's the link to a [Student License](#).

Another option is an open access electronic bibliography system such as [Mendeley](#) and [Zotero](#). Butler Library provides training in citations [here](#).

## Research Methodology, Data Collection & Analysis

Research methodology and data collection are taught in *PAD 680 Research Methods for Public Administration and Nonprofit Management*. Statistics (and the SPSS software package) is taught in *PAD 681 Data Analysis and Presentation*. Students are expected to arrive to PAD 690 in full command of these subjects. They should also be familiar with the Qualtrics Survey Platform if they intend to collect data through a survey.

## Guidelines for Preparing the Master’s Project

The Master’s Project (PAD 690) is (roughly) equivalent to an article in a public administration journal. Buffalo State uses APA 7<sup>th</sup> for formatting, in-text citations, and references. Butler Library provides information with students how to cite materials based on [APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition](#). Students should refer to the *Public Administration Review*, the scholarly journal published by the American Society for Public Administration (PAR), for guidance on writing a journal article. It is expected students have read many articles published in PAR throughout their MPA studies, and should be familiar with the format, quality of writing, length, and so forth.

The body of the paper should be 12-point, Times New Roman type, double-spaced with margins of one inch.

References must be single-spaced, double spaced between entries.<sup>15</sup> Manuscripts should be approximately **8,000 words, including** abstract, footnotes, references, tables, and figures. Appendices **are excluded** from the word count. Figures, tables, and boxes must be incorporated into the manuscript and referenced in the narrative. The point of these visual materials is to help the reader grasp the narrative – so you need to tie the two together.

The MPA project should be written in the best expository style—grammar, punctuation, and syntax are important and should be corrected. Students should make use of a writing manual when preparing their paper.<sup>16</sup>

In general, most research is written in the past tense, since any report on research must necessarily follow the data collection process and describe what was observed. The student should write in the third person form. Terms such as “the researcher” or the “writer” are acceptable. Students should write in the **active voice** whenever possible.

Refer to the APA Publication Manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition for paper formatting. Papers must use APA 7<sup>th</sup> heading formatting as follows:<sup>17</sup>

Level	Format
1	<b>Centered, Bold, Title Case Heading</b> Text begins as a new paragraph.
2	<b>Flush Left, Bold, Title Case Heading</b>

<sup>15</sup> In EndNote, click the arrow in the box below “Instant Formatting.” Click: Configure Biography<Layout<TmsRoman 12, Single Spacing

<sup>16</sup> The APA Style Manual 7<sup>th</sup> ed. is required. *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White is a classic, but there are many others.

<sup>17</sup> <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/headings>

	Text begins as a new paragraph.
3	<b><i>Flush Left, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading</i></b> Text begins as a new paragraph.
4	<b>Indented, Bold, Title Case Heading, Ending with a Period.</b> Text begins on the same line and continues as a regular paragraph.
5	<b><i>Indented, Bold Italic, Title Case Heading, Ending with a Period.</i></b> Text begins on the same line and continues as a regular paragraph.

*Note.* In title case, most words are capitalized.

APA 7<sup>th</sup> is the required citation style.<sup>18</sup>

Explanatory notes should be inserted as “footnotes” rather than “endnotes.” Use Word’s “References” tab.

Use “Professional” formatting (rather than “Student”) for your MPA project.

## Format for Paper

### Summary of Sections

The finished Master’s Project paper must follow the following format and include these sections listed below. Begin each section with the bolded headings on a new page.

### Title Page

Center the following on the page:

Title

---

<sup>18</sup> In addition to the required APA manual (PAD 680), there are many APA style guides available via the internet. See, for example, <https://apastyle.apa.org/> and <https://libguides.butler.edu/citations/apa>

Author

In partial fulfillment of requirements for PAD 690 Masters Project

SUNY Buffalo State

First Reader<sup>19</sup>

Second Reader

Date of completion

**Abstract** (1/2 page)

Keywords (no more than 5)<sup>20</sup>

Table of Contents

Introduction

Literature Review

Methodology

Results

Discussion

Conclusions

Institutional Review Board Statement

Declaration of Interest Statement

Acknowledgements

References

Appendix (appendices for more than one)

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<sup>19</sup> The First Reader is the faculty who you registered with for PAD 690. Your First Reader selects the Second Reader.

<sup>20</sup> Keywords are necessary to facilitate web searches in the event you submit your project for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or upload to the internet.



## **Master’s Project Detailed Outline**

This section contains a detailed description of each of the required sections of the MPA Project.

### **Title Page**

#### **Abstract**

100-150 words

#### **Keywords**

4-5 keywords<sup>21</sup>

Place keywords directly below the abstract.

### **Table of Contents**

The table of contents is placed after the abstract/keywords. This process is much easier if you create a clickable (dynamic) table of contents, which then you can continuously update as you enter new text. Creating an automatic table of contents is a two-step process.

1. You must use the heading feature in Word.<sup>22</sup>
2. Inserting the clickable table of contents.<sup>23</sup>

### **Introduction** (about three pages)

Provide a brief introduction to the nature and purpose of the research project. Explain why the study is important, who is affected by the problem, what the scope of the problem is, why this is a “problem” and why you, as a researcher, want to study the problem. The student is expected to describe and define the need or problem and explain its effect on the clients, community, or the

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<sup>21</sup> Keywords are necessary to facilitate web searches in the event you submit your project for publication in a peer-reviewed journal or upload to the internet.

<sup>22</sup> See <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/video-improve-accessibility-with-heading-styles-68f1eeff-6113-410f-8313-b5d382cc3be1#:~:text=To%20add%20a%20heading%20style,as%20the%20Heading%201%20button>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/insert-a-table-of-contents-882e8564-0edb-435e-84b5-1d8552ccf0c0#:~:text=Put%20your%20cursor%20where%20you,contents%20and%20choosing%20Update%20Field>.

organization. This description should include the scope, impact, and nature of the problem or need. The description should address the questions: Why is this problem, need, or issue important to research? Who does the problem, need, or issue affect? The purpose of the study section discusses the specific objectives of the study. These are the expected outcomes, products, or results of the research project. These objectives must be specific and observable outcomes. Explain why this study is important. Why are the problems or issues to be addressed important or significant? Who does the problem affect and in what manner? Address how this study will affect the problem faced by agencies or clients. This is the section where you discuss the agency (not in the literature review).

## **Literature Review**

The literature review should run about five pages in the MPA project but can be longer if the student wishes to delve further into the topic.

A review of the literature will be accomplished to gain an understanding of similar previous problem interventions and the state of research in the field pertaining to this problem or need. Refer to PAD 680 notes, Creswell text, and journal articles in *PAR* before you tackle the literature review.

The review of the literature is extremely important in support of your study. It is important to locate in your library or through the Internet, research journal articles, books, conference papers, working papers, government reports and legislation, reports published by think tanks, and any other documents that have been carried out and published in the area of your research investigation and problem. The review of the literature supports the notion that your study is or has been of interest in the research literature of public administration and non-profit management. The literature review serves as a “jumping off point” for your study. This means your literature review must INFORM what you will study. There must be a direct connection between previous findings and your research plan.

Finally, the literature review must be exhaustive in terms of uncovering all possible explanatory (independent) variables. If you miss a critical explanatory factor, you open up your study to threats to internal validity (review PAD 680 notes).

## **Methodology**

**A hypothesis(es)**, if appropriate (quantitative studies), will be included. As you learned in PAD 680 and PAD 681, hypotheses are only used in quantitative studies because one tests (reject or fail to reject the null hypotheses) through statistical analyses.

**Design.** Explain your study's design, refer to Creswell and your 680 notes, and published articles using this methodology, when appropriate. Pay close attention to sequencing and identify the correct methodology. Is the design qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods? If it's mixed methods, what type of mixed methods did you select, and why?

**Sampling.** Describe in detail your study population or sample. Describe the technique used to select the sample for your study. Discuss whether you are using a convenience sample, random sample, or other type of sampling technique. (Refer to notes on sampling in PAD 680, including the sampling table.) Explain to your reader why you chose the technique you are using. Your goal here is to ensure you 1) collected data according to scientific standards, and 2) because you adhered to these standards, your results will be generalizable to other people, places, and times.

If your research required IRB approval (a federal requirement for human subject research), include the IRB-approved protocol.

**Data Collection Methods.** Here the researcher describes the methods of data collection used in the research. A complete description of the development of questionnaires, surveys, interview questions is explained. Samples of instruments and written approvals of agencies or clients from which data are collected are included in appendices to the paper. The description of research methods should be clear, concise, and to the point. You should describe your research design in such a way that another researcher could replicate it and check on your results with another sample.

Describe the tests, questionnaires, scales, etc., which you used and how they were constructed and if they were original. If you are using questionnaires, interview questions, or focus group questions used by other researchers, cite some of these studies. (Do recall from PAD 680 and PAD 681 that is preferable to select instruments that have been used in studies published in peer-reviewed journals.)

This section of the paper should be "technical." The actual discussion of the results in the context of your study should wait until the next section, "discussion." (Think of this section as demonstrating your ability to interpret what the data are telling us as taught in PAD 680 and 681.) Think presentation of the data, not interpretation in terms of your problem and purpose statements.

**Reminder:** You are required to obtain written permission from agencies and clients to collect data through review of case materials, interviews, focus groups, or surveys which will be included in your IRB application. This written permission can be in the form of an email to the PAD 690 course instructor. **DATA CAN NEITHER BE COLLECTED NOR ANALYZE WITHOUT OBTAINING IRB APPROVAL.** Your course instructor will let you know if IRB approval is not needed.

## **Results**

### **A note on placement of figures, tables, photographs, maps, and boxes.**

APA 7<sup>th</sup> suggests placing illustrative matter in the body of the paper (rather than in the appendices). Consult this with your MPA capstone faculty adviser. You must refer to any illustrative matter in the narrative. If you are using many figures, etc. in your paper, you may wish to use Word's "Insert Caption" (References<Insert Caption) and "Cross-reference" (References<Cross-reference) features.

**Quantitative.** Students must begin with an analysis based on descriptive statistics before moving on to inferential statistics – this is a requirement of all MPA capstone projects which collect statistical data (whether using published data sets or data derived from a questionnaire). Describe how the data were analyzed, what statistical methods were used, and the level of confidence accepted, if appropriate. Report significant and non-significant results using the templates taught in PAD 681 (See Cronk SPSS book). If utilizing a quantitative methodology that is not statistical based – e.g. cost/benefit analysis – your course instructor will provide guidance. As much as possible, use questions from existing surveys. If your survey contains multiple Likert questions forming an index/scale (such as ProQOL, Public Service Motivation, Police Legitimacy, UCLA Isolation), you must run and report Cronbach's Alpha (a test of reliability – internal consistency) on the index/scale questions.

Describe the demographic information you are using such as race, gender, age, income, education. Explain how you collected demographic information – survey instruments? interviews? focus groups? U.S. Census data? or other methods relevant to the research. Are the demographics reflective of the population? Example: You are surveying police officers on a force where 25% of the officers self-identify as African American. Your survey results should have similar percentages. If not, you need to explain why you do not think the difference in percentages skew the results or make them any less generalizable to the entire population (of the police force).

This section should contain graphs, charts, tables, crosstabs, etc. The student should strive to present the raw data in a comprehensible form. At the same time, this section should not be "overloaded" with illustrative materials. Most of these can be placed in an appendix. A "rule of thumb" is that your basic quantitative results should be summarized in one or more tables. The inclusion of one or more graphic figures will further clarify the meaning of your data. This means that you must begin by constructing clear and meaningful tables and figures before you begin your descriptive writing. Your narrative will be centered on your tables and figures and will contain more information than you discuss. The tables must be clear so that the reader can examine them

and draw conclusions. This process can be facilitated by discussing in your narrative significant aspects of your findings that appear in the tables.

Validity and reliability should be considered in quantitative research. See 680 and 681 materials to review these concepts.

**Qualitative.** If your study is qualitative, describe results as taught in PAD 680. Students should also refer to MPA projects posted to Digital Commons utilizing a qualitative methodology. Sample information collection: focus groups, open-ended interviews, storytelling, thick description, participant-observer fieldnotes.

**Mixed Methods.** You must write up in the order you conducted the research. Review Creswell & Creswell Chapter 10 for sequencing the different types of mixed methods designs.

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**ALL STUDENTS:** refer to published journal articles that utilize the same methodology as yours to model your reporting of results.



## **Discussion**

This is the section of the paper that connects the findings with what we know about the subject matter (as explained in the literature review). This brings you one step away from solving the puzzle you laid out in your problem and purpose statements.

In this section present your findings in a clear, concise, and objective fashion with backward referencing to the literature review to guide interpretation of your findings. Example: Does the literature find that younger child welfare workers are more subject to compassion fatigue than their older counterparts? Does your study bear this out? Or has your study produced findings contrary to what the literature would predict? Why might your findings differ from what the literature predicted? Was, for example, the literature uncertain (e.g. empirical studies revealed contrary findings)?

This may well be the most difficult section of your project to compile and describe. Descriptive studies, for example, may require many tables and a lengthy discussion to cover the important findings, whereas the test of a clear-cut hypothesis may involve only an explanation of the basis for accepting or rejecting the hypothesis and the extent to which the literature predicted this result.

In your narrative, touch on the highlights, pointing out striking or significant information from one or more of the tables that make your results clearer to the reader. It is best to stick to straight expository writing and avoid conclusions as you write, rather present the facts as you found them, but always in the context of your literature review. One can see that this strength of this section is only as good as a competent literature review.

In this section, briefly recapitulate your problem statement and the methods by which the problem was studied. Now proceed to state the conclusions based on the findings that were reported in the data analysis and discussion sections. The conclusions should relate back to the relevant literature reviewed in the literature review section.

## **Conclusions**

*Summary.* Summarize your findings.

*Recommendations.* Offer FIRM recommendations to your agency – two or three is an acceptable number. Naturally, recommendations must be in line with the findings. Always keep in mind that the MPA is a professional degree program. This is not the place to be tentative or overly theoretical. Offer recommendations to help the agency improve a program, outreach, etc.

*Limitations of study.* Discuss any limitations of your research such as the inability to control certain variables that may have affected your results, limitations of sample size, interview bias, or other limiting factors. It is also important to indicate the weaknesses of the study if these weaknesses may have an important effect on the interpretation of the results.

*Implications & Future Research.* Discuss the implications of your results for the problem addressed. How do your results support a solution or explication of the problem? Does your study achieve its purpose? Suggestions for further research may include a suggestion to repeat the study with certain improvements designed to sharpen the clarity of the results. Discuss what other future research may be of use in exploring the problems addressed by your research. Discuss new areas of research uncovered by your project that may be promising in addressing the problems or issues studied. If possible, future research should be written to assist the agency in planning its next evaluation, etc. Future research takes careful thought and consideration because it reveals what you as the researcher would study next given the time, resources, and permission of the agency.

## **Institutional Review Board**

### **Insert this statement:**

The research for this paper was approved by SUNY Buffalo State's Institutional Review Board. IRB ID: STUDYXXXXXXX.

(fill in number listed in the "Approval of Submission" letter the IRB emailed to you).

### **If your project was exempted from IRB review, you must include the following statement:**

This research project was not reviewed by SUNY Buffalo State's Institutional Review Board (IRB) because the results will not be disseminated outside of the INSERT AGENCY. If the AGENCY decides it wishes to share this study with unaffiliated individuals or organizations, Ms. Gina Game, SUNY Buffalo State's IRB representative, should be contacted at GAMEG@buffalostate.edu for guidance.

## **Declaration of Interest Statement**

I have no potential conflict of interest.<sup>24</sup>

## **Acknowledgements**

Remember to acknowledge the individual (s) who supervised you at the research site/agency/office, the individuals whom you interviewed, participated in the focus groups, etc. Basically, people who gave of their time to help you identify this project, enabled you to collect your data, etc.

## **References**

List only those references cited in your paper and be sure to carefully check for APA 7<sup>th</sup> alignment, especially if you are typing in references by hand rather than using EndNote or another bibliographic software.

## **Appendices**

Include in the appendix section any tests, questionnaires, rating forms, letters to agencies, consent forms, surveys, interview questions, and the “Approval of Submission” form you received from SUNY Buffalo State’s Institutional Review Board. Any other material which will not fit naturally into the context of one or more sections, but which contains important information to the reader, should also be included in the appendix.

Assessment of the paper

The PAD 690 instructor will use the following criteria for judging the quality of the project:

- The paper’s conformance to the PAD 690 MPA Capstone Project format
- Specificity of the problem statement and research objectives.
- Thoroughness of the literature review and analysis.
- Validity and reliability of the theoretical construct, data collection instruments, and data analysis.
- Congruence between findings and conclusions or recommendations.
- Is the presentation such that what was accomplished and what was observed stand out clearly?
- Does the study show an awareness of the weaknesses, underlying assumptions, and so forth, in the study?
- Are the conclusions valid and in keeping with the findings?
- Was the research designed adequately within the practical limitations presented?

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<sup>24</sup> Cut and paste this statement into your paper. If you DO have a conflict of interest, you need to select a different project.

## Oral Presentation

Student will present their findings in a public forum during CEP week. The oral presentation is to an audience of MPA faculty, public and nonprofit managers from the Western New York community, MPA students, and alumni of Buffalo State's MPA program. Presenters should feel free to invite work colleagues and supervisors.

Students must be prepared to succinctly present their research and receive questions from the audience. The formal presentation should be no more than 10 minutes long, followed by about 5 minutes of Q and A.

It is very important for students to plan their oral presentation so that the most essential information about their study is conveyed to the audience. Each presentation should include a PowerPoint, which each slide answering the following questions:

1. What is your research question?
2. What is the public administration/nonprofit management problem at the heart of that question?
3. How did you design your research and what data did you collect?
4. What were your MOST IMPORTANT findings?
5. What are the implications of your findings?
6. What specific recommendations are you making?
7. What are the future research questions coming out of your study?