PADM 7900: CAPSTONE SEMINAR IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

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Fifth Edition
(2020)

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MPA PROGRAM

Overview

One of the major purposes of a professional portfolio is to showcase in a single document the skills, competencies, and knowledge an individual has developed over time. A portfolio should be all-encompassing, reflecting professional work experience, military service, and any volunteer experience appropriate to one's career field. In addition, all relevant academic work of one's major areas of course work and internship experience should be included.

Developing a portfolio provides each student an opportunity to take stock of his or her professional development, assess his or her professional standing, and plan for future career growth and development. The presentation of the completed portfolio also allows faculty to observe the professional growth and development each student has derived from the MPA program. Portfolios are also excellent tools for prospective employers to assess the professional experience and capabilities of MPA graduates. The best portfolios are those that reflect the highlights of each student's professional and academic experiences, thus the work must reflect the highest professional and academic standards.

Because developing a portfolio is a difficult and time consuming task, students are strongly encouraged to begin developing a portfolio upon entrance to the MPA program (PADM 7300). By beginning early, students expand their opportunities to reflect on their professional development. As decisions are made about the appropriate artifacts to include, students become more aware of areas in which they need personal development and gain a broader understanding of academic and professional expectations. In addition, the building of a portfolio provides a challenging opportunity to students to organize and create a document that reflects their skills, abilities, and accomplishments, while adhering to a stringent portfolio framework.

The following guidelines are provided by the Valdosta State University, College of Arts and Sciences Department of Political Science for students enrolled in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program. The portfolio is a requirement and is normally completed during the final semester of coursework as part of PADM 7900 and PADM 7210.

Portfolio Requirements

Each Portfolio Must Contain the Following Sections and Materials:

Title Page

Table of Contents

Introduction

Professional Goals Statement

Current Resume

Captioned Artifacts

Summary Statement

These sections must be comprised of two types of materials: *Productions*, which are documents prepared specifically for the portfolio; and *Artifacts*, documents produced during normal coursework, in the course of one's job, or while engaged in relevant volunteer work. For example, productions may include a student's professional goals statement and professional summary, while an artifact is a term paper from a class, a manual prepared for one's workplace, or a volunteer award received from a non-profit agency.

The artifacts shall be clearly captioned and should be selected to reflect a cross-section of both professional and academic experience. For pre-service students who may have few or no professional products or artifacts, extra effort should be made to relate educational or volunteer artifacts to professional career goals.

Title Page

The Title page must include the student's name, the class in which the portfolio was presented, the name of the professor, and the date of submission.

Table of Contents

The table of contents follows the title page.

Introduction

The introduction should provide a brief description of the portfolio, including the organizational scheme, as well as a brief statement about the student's decision process for inclusion of materials. The introduction is essentially an executive summary of the document. The introduction should address the following:

- The time span covered in the portfolio;
- The fact that the portfolio reviews professional, volunteer, and academic experiences;

- A description of the balance among professional, volunteer, and academic contents;
- A description of the author's current career status;
- A brief description of the author's professional/career goals; and
- Other information that introduced the document to potential readers.

Professional Goals Statement

The professional goals statement is a narrative of 300-500 words that specifies the student's short term and long term goals in his or her field of study. The statement may include the following:

- A brief account of the student's decision to seek the MPA degree;
- A brief summary of the student's professional values;
- A description of the student's career path and whether the MPA degree has influenced that direction;
- Short term goals, the goals the student hopes to achieve in the next one to two years;
- Longer term goals, the goals the student hopes to achieve in the next five to ten years; and
- Other statements that explain and describe the student's aspirations and philosophy.

Current Resume

The resume must conform to an acceptable format and should contain all of the student's academic experiences, including the anticipated date of award of the MPA degree. Valdosta State University's Office of Career Services can provide assistance in preparing an acceptable resume.

Artifacts

Portfolio artifacts are papers, reports, presentations, projects, and instructional materials -- in print or other media forms -- that reflect examples of work experience, military service, or other professional activities. Artifacts also include materials generated during academic study, such as coursework and related professional experiences occurring during a formal program of study from an accredited institution. These artifacts may have been designed, developed, or conducted either by the student as an individual or as a member of a team. The portfolio should contain 10 to 15 artifacts that cover a minimum of five academic subjects. Documents that are not in a digital format may be scanned for inclusion. A detailed list of artifacts must be included in the table of contents.

Captions

A caption is a standardized attachment to an artifact that introduces and provides summary information about the artifact. Captions should be approximately one page in length, be consistent in format, and appear on a sheet prior to the artifact it introduces. Artifacts must be clearly captioned and should include:

- Artifact number and descriptor(s);
- Title of artifact;

- The job (name/address) or professional experience during which the product originated;
- The course (name/number) in which the artifact was created or to which course(s) the professional experience artifact relates;
- Approximate date when the product originated; and
- A rationale statement that briefly describes (in a paragraph or two) the artifact, elaborates on demonstrated competencies, states why it is included, reflects on what was learned from the experience represented by this artifact, and whether it was developed individually or as a member of a team.

Note: Captioning can be difficult as students have long been taught not to "toot their own horns" or to "show off." The portfolio, however, is an opportunity for you to frankly state your strengths and to share your demonstrated successes. Keep in mind, however, the limitations of the artifacts and cite only those competencies that the artifacts clearly document.

Example Caption: A student is using a budget analysis from class as an artifact. The paper received a grade of A, with glowing comments from the professor. The caption might note that the artifact demonstrates:

- Ability to understand and analyze a budget;
- Ability to analyze quantitative data;
- Capacity to conduct interviews (you interviewed the budget director and mayor);
- Knowledge of the literature on budgeting (you cited 15 sources);
- Capacity to bring information from numerous sources to bear on a particular subject (as evidenced by your discussion of H.R. impacts of budget cuts);
- Excellence in written communication (the paper was flawlessly written);
- Skill at presenting data graphically (as evidenced by the nine figures in the paper);
- Proficiency in oral communication (as evidenced by the professor giving your oral presentation 98 out of 100).

Summary Statement

Provide a summary statement of no more than one page that ties the portfolio together. The summary should indicate why the collection of artifacts provides a good representative overview of current, professional development.

Portfolio Review and Presentation

A student completing the portfolio as part of the requirements for PADM 7900 and PADM 7210 must submit the portfolio to the course instructor no later than the

submission deadline stated in the syllabus. The portfolio must be user-friendly. Access to the contents should be simple and straightforward The final document must be in PDF format and flow in sequence. The portfolio must be presented to the instructor in the MPA program in a timely and professional manner, must include all required materials, and must be prepared and presented according to the written guidelines in the Professional Portfolio Guidelines. Any student who submits a portfolio deemed unsatisfactory by the instructor will have one opportunity to resubmit the portfolio. Portfolios will become the property of the MPA Program and will not be returned. Therefore, each student should make a personal copy of the portfolio for his/her records.

Once a student submits his/her portfolio to the instructor for review, the instructor will evaluate the portfolio according to the Portfolio Review Checklist included in this document. *This checklist is for instructor use only* but should serve as a guide for students as they prepare their portfolios. In order to merit a passing grade, the portfolio must meet or exceed minimum standards in **each** of the required areas (Table of Contents, Introduction, Professional Goals Statement, Current Resume, Captioned Artifacts, and Summary Statement) in the judgment of the supervising faculty member.

If the portfolio does not meet minimum standards in each of the areas, the student will be advised with a Portfolio Review Checklist which indicates the deficient area. A list of additions or changes that must be made will be provided along with a due date for correction. The supervising faculty member will maintain a copy of the Portfolio Review Checklist in the student's permanent folder. Following the formal review process, portfolios will be available for review by the MPA Program Advisory Committee and others as deemed appropriate for each MPA concentration.

Appeal of an Unsatisfactory Grade

If the portfolio is deemed unsatisfactory, the student may appeal the decision in writing to the Head of the Department of Political Science. If the Department Head is the reviewing faculty member, the written appeal must be made to the MPA Coordinator. The Department Head or the Coordinator will appoint a committee of three (3) faculty members not involved in the original review to hear the appeal. The student has the right to appear in person before that committee. Further appeal(s) will follow the guidelines established by the Graduate School at Valdosta State University.

Portfolio Tips

- Start work on your portfolio early! Past portfolio developers note that the effort has taken them much more time than they initially expected.

- Make your portfolio a unique document that represents you as well as your skills, knowledge, and experience. The portfolio checklist includes some general characteristics of good portfolios that may help you to plan and evaluate your own document.

- Seek feedback from colleagues, peers, loved ones, and faculty before you complete the final draft of the portfolio. Have folks you trust and respect review your document, and ask for honest feedback.

- Once you think you have completed your portfolio, give it a rest before coming back to it after some time away. Then ask yourself: Does this document look as good as I first thought? Does it need further work? Does this reflect my best work?

- Ask yourself: Am I proud of this portfolio? This is the best predictor of a first-rate effort. This is not a matter of false pride or bravado, but rather your own personal assessment of the job you have done. Internal satisfaction and a sense of pride will result when the portfolio reflects the student's very best work.

- An author should employ the technology and level of that technology with which she/he is comfortable. Portfolios must be presented as PDF files. Authors are advised NOT to employ unnecessarily complicated templates, backgrounds, or fancy bells and whistles. These only serve to distract from the real intent of the portfolio, which is intended to showcase the author's achievements. <u>No personal pictures are allowed!</u> If one wants to demonstrate his/her prowess with a program, there are opportunities to demonstrate expertise within the context of an artifact.

- Ask yourself: Is your portfolio organization meaningful, original, and constructed to facilitate review by faculty or potential employers? Is your documentation complete and consistent throughout the portfolio?

- Look at your artifacts, captions, and the rationale you have developed, and review them to make sure they fully reflect your professional development.

- Carefully proofread all components of the portfolio that accompany the artifacts. It is strongly recommended that you have someone provide editor's proofing of grammar, spelling, mechanics, and overall clarity of writing.

- Adherence to the guidelines and the ability to follow directions is expected of each public administration professional and MPA graduate.

GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR PORTFOLIO!

Public Administration Portfolio Review Checklist

Student Name:	Date:
Student's Signature:	
Overall Rating: **Satisfactory (S):**	**Unsatisfactory (U):**
Reviewer's Name:	**Reviewer's Signature:**

Portfolio Criteria Checklist:

I. Portfolio includes clearly labeled artifacts that demonstrate competency in all areas designated for the program.

____ Does not meet minimum standards
____ Meets minimum standards
____ Exceeds minimum standards

II. Portfolio includes all required materials:

____ Table of Contents
____ Introduction
____ Professional Goals Statement
____ Current Resume
____ Captioned Artifacts
____ Summary Statement

III. Portfolio organization is meaningful, original, and constructed to facilitate review.

____ Does not meet minimum standards
____ Meets minimum standards
____ Exceeds minimum standards

IV. Documentation is complete and consistent.

____ Does not meet minimum standards
____ Meets minimum standards
____ Exceeds minimum standards

V. Portfolio demonstrates thoughtful, in-depth reflection on processes and products.

____ Does not meet minimum standards
____ Meets minimum standards
____ Exceeds minimum standards

VI. Overall Physical Portfolio

____ Does not meet minimum standards
____ Meets minimum standards
____ Exceeds minimum standards