Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration

Student Learning Portfolio Handbook
Dear MPA Student:

In 2002, the faculty of the Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration adopted a Student Learning Portfolio (SLP) as an MPA program requirement. This handbook includes a description of the SLP, how to complete it, and how it is evaluated.

We feel the SLP will help you to gain the greatest possible benefit from the MPA Program. It will also help you display your professional talents for the greater public policy and administration community.

We are confident that your SLP will contribute to your success in the MPA Program. If you have any questions about the SLP, please contact any full-time faculty member. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

MPA Faculty
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The Student Learning Portfolio (SLP)

The Student Learning Portfolio (SLP) requirement serves two important purposes, one internal to the MPA program and the other external. Internally, it allows both you and PPA faculty to track and assess your progress throughout the program. It also helps the faculty to advise you more adequately, by letting you know about resources in the larger University community that can facilitate your educational success.

Externally, whether you are searching for a first job or a promotion from your current position, a SLP is a valuable tool that details the capacities, skills, competencies, abilities, and accomplishments you have acquired or developed over your professional and educational career.

The expected student learning outcomes for the MPA program include mastery of core concepts in five areas of study (budgeting and finance, human resource management, organization theory, policy analysis, and research methods) as well as demonstrated ability in five areas of skill (oral and written communications, analytical skills, critical thinking and problem solving, interpersonal skills and teamwork, and information competency).

The SLP is comprised of materials that are representative of your learning, growth, and development, both educationally and professionally. Hence, a SLP is:

- An organized record of what you have accomplished, both professionally and educationally, throughout the MPA program
- A learning opportunity designed to help you integrate and apply your formal education to professional experience and vice-versa
- A structured process that can help both you and your instructor assess your own learning, as well as your professional development, in an objective way
- A tool that can help you to present, or help a prospective employer to appreciate, your demonstrated capacity for learning and development

Purpose of the SLP

The purpose of the SLP is to create a document that presents a layered approach to the assessment of student learning outcomes. First, the new approach requires that students and faculty evaluate a student’s skills and abilities in the core fundamental areas of public policy and administration. This is accomplished through the completion of an initial skills self-assessment in PPA 500 and a final skills self-assessment in PPA 697. The initial skills self-assessment provides a frame of reference for students to compare their individual skill level upon entering the program with their skills and abilities at the end of PPA 697. Through these two self-assessment mechanisms, students can assess their own substantive progress within each core subject area.
The SLP allows for faculty assessment of student progress in each core course. This is achieved using pre- and post-instructional assignments. Faculty and students alike can compare approaches taken before the instruction received in a core course to the approaches pursued after instruction has been received. These instructional assignments provide a course-by-course assessment mechanism.

The SLP allows for faculty and student assessment of student problem solving in each core area. This assessment approach is facilitated by the use of a case study based PPA 697 course. The PPA 697 case studies allow the student to construct responses to practical situations in each core subject area.

Finally, the SLP serves as a program evaluation tool for the Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration (GCPPA). It helps the MPA program to demonstrate that its graduates are meeting the competencies required by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration necessary for continued accreditation.

**Sections of the SLP**

**Section I--Skills Self-Assessments**

Students prepare an initial skills self-assessment in PPA 500. The form can be found on the GCPPA website (Appendix A). The purpose of this assignment is to allow students to examine their current knowledge and skills in each core content area: Budgeting and finance, human resource management, organization theory, policy analysis, and research methods. This assessment assignment will be submitted to the PPA 500 instructor early in the semester.

Students complete a final skills self-assessment in PPA 697 and include copies of both the initial and the final self-assessments in the SLP, along with an approval form.

The PPA 697 instructor signs the Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval form.

**Section II--Core Course Instructional Assignments**

Each core course requires the completion of one or more designated SLP assignment(s). The student completes a pre-instructional assignment within the first three weeks of the semester and completes a second post-instructional assignment later in the semester. Students combine these two assignments and submit them with a single Core Course Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignment form to the instructor (Appendix B). The core course instructor reviews the pre- and post-instructional assignments and signs the approval form.

Section II of the SLP will consist of pre- and post-instructional assignments along with the signed approval form from the following courses: PPA 555, PPA 577, PPA 660, PPA 670, and PPA 696
Section III--PPA 697

Students enrolled in PPA 697 will complete the five case studies covering the required core courses. As a guideline, students should aim to complete one case study about every two to three weeks, to meet the deadline of December 1st for Fall semester or May 1st for Spring semester. The five case studies will become Section III of the SLP.

Students should submit the completed case studies to the relevant dropbox in the department’s Beachboard organization site. These cases should also be included in Section III of the SLP along with a screenshot of the final case study grades from Beachboard.

The student will also complete the final skills self-assessment. This requires students to reassess their abilities in each of the core content areas and provide examples of how their skills and abilities have increased because of the MPA Program. The student will combine the initial and final skills self-assessments and attach the appropriate cover sheet for approval by the PPA 697 instructor.

The PPA 697 instructor reads the initial and final skills self-assessments and signs the approval form.

### Major Elements of the SLP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>When Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section I</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skills Self-Assessment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Initial Skills Self-Assessment Completed in PPA 500</td>
<td>PPA 500</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Final Skills Self-Assessment Completed in PPA 697</td>
<td>PPA 697</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval Form (Appendix A)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Section II</strong></td>
<td><strong>Core Courses</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignments for each of the following courses (Appendix B)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. PPA 555 &amp; Approval Form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. PPA 577 &amp; Approval Form</td>
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<td>3. PPA 660 &amp; Approval Form</td>
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<td>4. PPA 670 &amp; Approval Form</td>
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<td>5. PPA 696 &amp; Approval Form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>After each Core Course obtain instructor approval (only one form with both Pre- and Post- Assignments attached)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Section III</strong></td>
<td><strong>PPA 697</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Completed Case Studies in each core content area with grade center screenshot from Beachboard</td>
<td>PPA 697</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SLP Final Review</strong></td>
<td><strong>SLP Clearance (Appendix C)</strong></td>
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PPA 697
Course Scheduling and the SLP

The importance of careful planning in completing your required courses cannot be overemphasized. You must plan your program of study carefully to ensure that you complete the SLP in a timely manner. To minimize the possibility of delays in graduating from the MPA Program, you must complete the following steps in the SLP process in this precise order:

1. Complete all required courses (500, 555, 577, 660, 670, and 696)--Obtain approval of your pre- and post-instructional assignments from the instructor in each of these courses. You cannot be enrolled in any of these courses in the semester in which you plan to complete the SLP/PPA 697. Obtain approval of each of your SLP assignments as soon as you complete the course.

2. Complete PPA 697 Directed Research--You must have completed all other required courses (see above) before taking PPA 697. PPA 697 is a six unit course. Students may take three units of PPA 697 each semester for two semesters, or they may take all six units in one semester. Students who enroll for six units of PPA 697 in a single semester and do not complete the course will be required to enroll in GS-700 (through CCPE) each semester until the course is completed. PPA 697 includes completion of the case studies (or research option) and the student learning SLP. Generally, the due date for all PPA 697 case studies is December 1st for Fall semesters and May 1st for Spring semesters. The due date for the SLP is generally December 15th for Fall semesters and May 15th for Spring semesters. Students must complete at least three cases in a semester to receive a grade of Report in Progress (RP). If a student fails to complete at least three cases in a semester, the student will receive a grade of “WU” which is calculated as an “F” for GPA purposes.

3. Submit the complete SLP for final approval. You must have completed all the steps detailed above before submitting your complete SLP to your PPA 697 instructor for final approval.

Please note that you may take your elective courses at any time, and in any order. Completion of elective courses does not affect the SLP process. Please consult the sample student program on the PPA web site and/or in the MPA Student Handbook. If you have any questions about scheduling, please contact any full-time faculty member.
Steps for Final SLP Review

The Student submits the completed SLP to the PPA 697 instructor including the SLP Clearance form. The Student must complete the top portion of the form. Students with two different PPA 697 instructors only need to submit the SLP to one instructor.

The PPA 697 instructor reviews the SLP and completes the bottom half of the SLP Clearance form. The PPA 697 instructor provides a copy of the approved form to the Department Administrative Coordinator for transmittal to Enrollment Services.

In order for the SLP to pass the final review, all of the following must be satisfactorily completed:

1. All forms must be in place and properly signed
2. All required elements of the SLP must be present
3. All parts of the SLP must be of good quality

If the SLP is “Approved,” the Center will advise both you and University officials that you have met all degree requirements. The University will then undertake its final review and approval process.

If the SLP is “Not Approved,” your PPA 697 instructor will communicate to you, in writing, the reasons, as well as the specific corrective action(s) you must take. A copy of the written notification will also be sent to the Director of the GCPPA, and to the Administrative Coordinator, for inclusion in your student file. You will not be cleared for graduation until the SLP is “Approved.”

You must take corrective action as directed by the written notification and resubmit the revised SLP to the same PPA 697 instructor. This process will continue until you have satisfactorily completed all corrective action required by your PPA 697 instructor. You will have one year from the date of the original submission of the SLP to complete revisions. When your SLP has been “Approved” by your PPA 697 instructor, this will be communicated to University officials for their final review of degree requirements and approval of the degree.

If you fail to meet the one-year deadline specified above, a Review Panel of three full-time faculty members will be convened, before which you must orally defend the contents of your SLP.

General Presentation Guidelines

All items you include in your SLP must be of good presentation quality. Sophisticated graphics are not required, nor is expensive paper, but everything should be neat and well organized.
Make sure that everything in the SLP is secure, for example, using a three-ring binder or expandable files and clearly labeled. This allows you and the reviewers to locate, remove, and replace materials.

If you have oversized items, you wish to include, place them in an appropriately labeled envelope, and secure them to the rest of the SLP. Likewise, if you have small items (such as photographs, video tapes, or other items), place them in an appropriately labeled envelope, and secure them to the rest of the SLP. Students also have the option of submitting the SLP in electronic form. This can be done by saving the SLP on a removable drive and submitting the drive to the PPA 697 instructor.
Required Forms

These forms facilitate faculty review and approval of your SLP. Samples of these forms are included in this Handbook and on the GCPPA website.

Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval (Appendix A)

This form accompanies the initial and final skills self-assessments. It will be approved by your PPA 697 instructor upon the successful completion of PPA 697.

Core Course Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignment Approval (Appendix B)

One copy of this form accompanies the pre- and post-instructional assignments for each core course. Only one form must be signed by the course instructor and be attached to both assignments.

SLP Clearance (Appendix C)

When you are ready for your SLP final review, complete the top portion of this form and present it to your PPA 697 instructor along with your completed SLP.
Appendix A

Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval
MPA Student Learning Portfolio
Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval

This form must be completed and attached to the initial and final skills self-assessment assignments.

Student: Please submit your initial skills self-assessment assignment completed in PPA 500 and the final skills self-assessment assignment completed in PPA 697 to your PPA 697 Instructor for approval.

Student Name: ________________________________

Student ID: ________________________________

Student Email: ________________________________

Course Number: ________________________________

Semester/Year: ________________________________

************************************************************************

Course Instructor Name: ________________________________

Approval (circle one): YES NO

Date Returned to Student: ________________________________

Comments: ________________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Instructor Signature

Date
Appendix B

Core Course Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignment
MPA Student Learning Portfolio
Core Course Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignment

This form must be completed and attached to the Pre- and Post-Instructional assignment for each Core Course.

Student: Please submit your Pre- and Post-Instructional assignments to your course Instructor for approval.

Student Name: ________________________________

Student ID: ________________________________

Student Email: ________________________________

Course Number: ________________________________

Semester/Year: ________________________________

************************************************************************

Course Instructor Name: ________________________________

Approval (circle one):  

YES  NO

Date Returned to Student: ________________________________

Comments:
Appendix C

Student Learning Portfolio Clearance
University policy requires that a student has Advanced to Candidacy before being permitted to submit the Student Learning Portfolio as a MPA program requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Student ID:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td>Graduation Semester:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Street Address</th>
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<th>Zip</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Title:</td>
<td>Agency:</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Address</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Zip</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have advanced to candidacy: Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

Students should complete the top portion of this form and turn it in to their PPA 697 instructor with the completed portfolio.

**Student Check list**

| I. Initial and Final Skills Assessments |
| II. Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignments |
| III. Case Study Grades Screenshot |

**Office Use Only:**

| I. Initial and Final Skills Assessments |
| II. Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignments |
| III. Case Study Grades Screenshot |

Instructor Signature __________________________ Date __________