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 describes 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 to showcase your professional talents for the greater public policy and administration community.

We are confident that your SLP will strongly 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 s 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. Students now have the opportunity to select a Case Study based approach to PPA 697 which allows the student to construct responses to practical situations in each core subject area.

The SLP provides evidence of development in writing, problem solving, and critical analysis skills through the submission of exemplar assignments. Section III of the SLP requires that student submit examples of their written work to illustrate growth and development in the aforementioned skills. The combination of all of these elements will produce a SLP document that demonstrates the overall academic development of the student and serves as an important vehicle for assessing student-learning outcomes.

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

**Sections of the SLP**

**Section I--Skills Self-Assessment**

The Student prepares 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.

The Student completes a Final Skills Self-Assessment in PPA 697 and includes 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. The Student combines these two assignments and submits 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--Examples of Work**

Section III will consist of a minimum of two papers, presentations, or other assignments completed in the MPA Program.

The Student must include at least two papers, presentations, or other assignments completed in core or elective courses that have not already been included in the SLP.

The Student should complete the Section III Assignment Cover Sheet (Appendix C) for each assignment included in this section of the SLP, indicating the course and term when the assignment was completed.

**Section IV--PPA 697**

The Student 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 IV of the SLP. Students who wish to complete a traditional research project for PPA 697 must consult one of the full-time faculty who will agree to sponsor their research. In that case, the final Research Paper will then be submitted as Section IV of the SLP.

The student should attach the Case Studies (or Research Paper) to the PPA 697 approval form (Appendix D) and include them in the SLP.

The PPA 697 Instructor reviews the Case Studies (or Research Paper) and signs the approval form.

The Student will also complete the Final Skills Self-Assessment. This requires students to re-assess their abilities in each of the core content areas and provide examples of how their skills and abilities have increased as a result 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. The PPA 697 Instructor forwards one copy of the Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessments to the Department Chair for program evaluation.

### Major Elements of the SLP

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| **Section I** | PPA 500  
• Initial Skills Self-Assessment Completed in PPA 500  
• Final Skills Self-Assessment Completed in PPA 697.  
• Initial and Final Skills Self-Assessment Approval Form (Appendix A) | PPA 500  
PPA 697 |
| **Section II** | Core Courses:  
Pre- and Post-Instructional Assignments for each of the following courses: (Appendix B)  
1. PPA 555 & Approval Form  
2. PPA 577 & Approval Form  
3. PPA 660 & Approval Form  
4. PPA 670 & Approval Form  
5. PPA 696 & Approval Form  
After each Core Course obtain Instructor approval (only one form with both Pre- and Post-Assignments attached) | At time of completion of SLP |
| **Section III** | Elective Submissions:  
Examples of assignments completed in core or elective courses in the MPA program (minimum of 2 required)  
Section III Assignment Cover Sheets (Appendix C) | At time of completion of SLP |
| **Section IV** | PPA 697:  
1. Completed Case Studies in each core content area with one PPA 697 Approval Form (Appendix D)  
-or-  
2. Completed PPA 697 Directed Research Project with one PPA 697 Approval Form | At time of completion of SLP |
| **SLP Final Review** | Petition for SLP (Appendix E) | At time of completion of SLP |
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 6 unit course. Students may take 3 units of PPA 697 each semester for two semesters, or they may take all 6 units in one semester. Students who enroll for 6 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 1, for Fall semesters and May 1, for Spring semesters.

3. Complete Section III—Section III consists of examples of work completed while in the program. These papers/presentations must be individual assignments and students are required to include at least two different assignments in this section.

4. 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 and all required forms to the PPA 697 Instructor including the Petition for Student Learning SLP Approval form. The Student must complete the top portion of the petition.

The PPA 697 Instructor reviews the SLP and completes the bottom half of the Petition for SLP Approval form. The PPA 697 Instructor provides a copy of the approved Petition 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 Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration, 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 easily find, 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 as well.
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.

Assignment Cover Sheet (Appendix C)

This cover sheet should accompany each example of work that is included in Section III of the SLP. It does not require Instructor approval but will indicate the course number and semester in which the assignment was completed.

PPA 697 Case Study Approval (Appendix D)

This form will accompany either the Case Studies or the traditional directed studies Research Paper that is completed in PPA 697. It requires the approval of the PPA 697 Instructor.

Petition SLP Approval (Appendix E)

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: _____________________________________________

______________________________ ________________________
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

Section III Assignment Cover Sheet
MPA Student Learning Portfolio  
Section III Assignment Cover

This form must be completed and attached to each example of written work that is included in Section III of the Portfolio.

Please complete the required information and attach this form to each example of written work included in Section III of the Portfolio.

Student Name: _________________________________

Student ID: _________________________________

Student Email: _________________________________

Assignment Title: _________________________________

Course Number: _____________________

Semester/Year: _____________________

Instructor: _____________________

Date: _____________________
Appendix D

PPA 697 Case Study Approval
MPA Student Learning Portfolio
PPA 697 Case Study Approval Form

Student: Please complete the following information and submit to your 697 instructor.

Student Name: ________________________________

Student ID: ________________________________

Student Email: ________________________________

PPA 697 Instructor: ________________________________

Core Area: ________________________________

Date Submitted: ________________________________

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

Core area faculty reviewer: Please review the case study and return to the PPA 697 instructor listed above.

Core Area Faculty Name: ________________________________

Grade: _______ Date Returned to 697 Instructor: ________________________________

Comments:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Instructor Signature Date
Appendix E

Petition Student Learning Portfolio
Petition Student Learning Portfolio

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

Name: ___________________________ Student ID: ___________________________

Email: ___________________________ Graduation Semester: ___________________________

Street Address: __________________ City: _______ State: _______ Zip: __________

Job Title: ___________________________ Agency: ___________________________

Business Address: __________________ City: _______ State: _______ Zip: __________

I have advanced to candidacy: Yes No

Students should complete the top portion of this form and turn it in to their PPA 697 Instructor with the completed portfolio (including all Core Course items, the reflective essay, and PPA 697 project).

Checklist

I. Skills Assessments or
   PPA 500 Resume and Essay
   ____________________
   III. Two Examples of Written Work
      ____________________

   II. Portfolio Assignments
      PPA 555
      ____________________
      PPA 577
      ____________________
      PPA 560
      ____________________
      PPA 670
      ____________________
      PPA 696
      ____________________

Office Use Only:

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<th>Section</th>
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<td>I.</td>
<td>Skills Assessments or PPA 500 Resume and Essay</td>
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<td>II.</td>
<td>Portfolio Assignments for:</td>
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<td>III.</td>
<td>Two Examples of Written Work</td>
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<td>IV.</td>
<td>PPA 697 Case Studies/Project</td>
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Instructor Signature: ___________________________ Date: ____________

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