

PADM 6500

Internship in the Public Service

Six credits (300 hours of internship time). Syllabus v. 9.5.2023

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Course description

Students may be approved for an internship and enrollment in PA 6500 after completing at least 15 credit hours of coursework.

Students *determined by their advisor* as being “in-service” – having one or more years of professional-level experience in a public agency, nonprofit, or public affairs setting – may be considered as exempt from the internship requirement. Such students must then satisfactorily complete an alternative assignment documenting their experience and its relationship to the competencies and coursework of the MPA, due by one week following comp exams in their final semester.

For six credits of internship, students must complete a supervised internship of at least 300 hours. Students typically work for state or city agencies acquiring on the job experience in government, or with a nonprofit organization. Students with little or no experience in public or non-profit administration should contact the director or coordinator concerning an internship.

Students may locate a potential internship on their own or request assistance from instructors in locating one. Once a potential internship has been discussed by the sponsoring agency and the student, a contact person – preferably the intern’s work supervisor – must be identified. This individual will play an important part in providing periodic feedback to the instructor concerning the intern’s performance on the job. Thus, students must inform the instructor of this individual’s contact information via the [Internship Details Form](#). The internship description worked out between the student and the agency must also be reviewed by the internship coordinator/department chair *prior to commencement of work*, to determine that it falls within criteria for credit. Therefore, students should not enter into a commitment to an internship with an agency in hopes of receiving credit towards their MPA without discussing it with the internship coordinator/department chair.

Students must register and pay for 6 credits of PADM 6500 in order to receive credit for their internship once the Internship Coordinator/Department Chair has indicated that the terms of the internship agreement between the student and the internship organization meet criteria for credit.



Students must provide the [Information for Internship Organizations](#) PDF to their supervisor early in the process of discussing a possible internship, to ensure that the organization is aware of the documentation needed for credit eligibility, including the internship award letter with job description and the final supervisor evaluation form.

Summary of required documentation and materials

Documentation and materials required for evaluation of the internship experience consist of the following:

Before internship starts:

- ❑ **INTERNSHIP DETAILS FORM.** First, at the beginning of the internship, the student must submit the [Internship Details Form](#) to the department internship coordinator/department chair.
- ❑ **AGENCY AWARD LETTER.** This letter or other official correspondence regarding the agency's approval of the internship and job description must be submitted along with the Internship Details Form. (See the [Information for Internship Organizations PDF](#) which should be provided to the supervisor, which includes information about this letter).

Prepare during internship:

- ❑ **INTERNSHIP DAILY LOG.** During and throughout the entire internship, the student must create and maintain the Internship Daily Log (details below).

Complete at end of internship:

- ❑ **INTERNSHIP REFLECTION PAPER.** Towards the end of the internship, the student must write the Internship Reflection Paper (details below), which draws upon the log but is more formal.
- ❑ **SUPERVISOR EVALUATION FORM.** Finally, the student must ensure the internship supervisor at the agency has a copy of the required [Supervisor Evaluation Form](#) and knows that it should be submitted directly to the internship coordinator/department chair by one week prior to the end of the semester. (Also, any other agency performance evaluations completed during the internship period should be submitted to the instructor.)

Evaluation for the internship will be holistic based upon the log, paper, and supervisor evaluation. High-quality work will be complete, thorough, and well-written; reflection must also demonstrate accurate understanding of relevant PA concepts from coursework and readings and their thoughtful application to the experiences of the internship.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS: Internship Details Form and Agency Award Letter

At the beginning of the internship, the student must submit the [Internship Details Form](#), to the department internship coordinator/department chair. Also included with that form must be the agency award letter or other official equivalent correspondence regarding the agency's approval of the internship and job description. Students should not enter into a commitment to an internship with an agency in hopes of receiving credit towards their MPA without discussing it with the internship coordinator/department chair. Information about this letter is included in the [Information for Internship Organizations PDF](#) which should be provided to the supervisor during discussion of any potential internship to be eligible for credit.

REQUIRED PRODUCT: Student Internship Daily LOG

Students will need to keep a log or journal of their internship experience. Use a three-ring binder or large notebook divided into three sections.

LOG SECTION: "Job Notes"

One section of the notebook will be written in, during or after each work day. These "Job Notes" simply record what you did at the internship assignment that day. Each entry should be dated. Try to be as descriptive as possible. You do not need to enter a chronology of events. Instead, strive for as complete a description of your overall activities of the day as you can. In addition, information about the agency's mission, your job description, a discussion with a co-worker, feedback from your supervisor or a colleague can be entered here. Aim for at least a page per day. Note: please do not refer to supervisors or co-workers by name; initials or pseudonyms will suffice.

LOG SECTION: "Reflections"

The second section labeled "Reflections" will record how you felt about the assignment recounted in "Job Notes." As in "Job Notes" students should write in this section every day. Each entry should be dated. Ask yourself questions such as:

- How did your tasks today connect with any specific competencies and student learning outcomes (https://www.tnstate.edu/cpsua/documents/programs/competencies_by_course_mpa.pdf) or the mission and values of the MPA program (<https://www.tnstate.edu/cpsua/degrees/mpa.aspx#missionvalues>)?
- Did your experience today mesh with what you understand of your agency's mission or your internship job description? Or did it challenge your expectations?
- Did you receive direction or feedback from anyone?
- If you dealt with clients, what did you think about those encounters?
- How would you evaluate today's internship experience? Did you feel good, bad, confused, indifferent about your assignment today?

LOG SECTION: "Theory and Practice"

The third section labeled "Theory and Practice" should discuss how what you have studied thus far in public administration elucidates your job experience. For example, if February 29th's entry cites your work that day consisting of envelope stuffing for a mass mail-out, what have you read or studied in public administration which helps you understand why you were stuffing envelopes or how. Writings or lectures on bureaucracy, efficiency, customer service or Taylor's scientific management might be introduced depending on how you conceptualized the work assignment that day. While this section may not consist of daily entries, students are encouraged to write in this section at least several times a week.

REQUIRED PRODUCT: Student Internship Self-Evaluation PAPER

This paper will be due at the end of your internship. It should evaluate your internship as a learning experience. Since you will be turning in your Log as well at the same time, you can refer to it as a secondary source (e.g. Log, p. 29 or Log, February 29th). You are aiming to achieve three general purposes with the Self-Evaluation. You must:

- Evaluate whether/how your internship experience effectively taught you how a government/non-profit/health agency works; how an employee helps to deliver that agency's mission or goals; how people fit/don't fit organizations, etc.
- Demonstrate the relevance or application of the coursework you have had, including concepts and readings, in the context of your internship. The Theory and Practice section of your log should help with this aspect.
- Articulate career goals or a career strategy more precisely as a result of the internship experience.

Your paper will be evaluated holistically according to whether and how well you meet these three criteria.

- ➔ Before you begin to write your paper, please **take a close look at the five overarching MPA program competencies and associated student learning** outcomes available at this link: https://www.tnstate.edu/cpsua/documents/programs/competencies_by_course_mpa.pdf. You will be making connections between concepts and skills you choose from your MPA coursework and these competencies in your paper.
- ➔ Also, please **review the mission and values statement of the MPA program** at Tennessee State University: <https://www.tnstate.edu/cpsua/degrees/mpa.aspx#missionvalues>. Feel free to make connections with the mission and values statement as appropriate in your paper.
- ➔ Required length is **12 to 20 double-spaced pages** (not including any references if applicable). Use 11-pt. font (Calibri, Cambria, Arial, or Times New Roman.)
- ➔ **Proofread** your work just like you would for a course paper.
- ➔ **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND USE OF SOURCES:** This is *not* a research paper: however, you may want to cite a textbook, course readings or other material from your studies as you make clear the connections between your internship experience and your learning in the program. **The entire paper must be written in your own words** (except for any quotations, which should be included in quotes and with source documented in APA format). Sources must be cited for any paraphrased or summarized material. Papers may be submitted to Turnitin for plagiarism detection; any issues with plagiarism or insufficient/patchwork paraphrase will result in the paper being turned back to the student for rewriting, which may delay program completion.

- ➔ **ACADEMIC HONESTY AND USE OF GENERATIVE AI:** Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for fair evaluation of your work. Use of generative AI, including but not limited to ChatGPT, is **not** permitted for this task, which is meant to be a personal reflection by the student. Any issues with use of generative AI may result in the paper being turned back to the student for rewriting, which may in turn delay program completion.
- ➔ APA citation format can be checked at [Purdue OWL](#). Other resources for writing are available at the [TSU MPA Communications Resources](#) site. The free version of [Grammarly](#) may be useful to you in your writing process.

Before outlining your paper, it is recommended that you re-read your Log and try to derive larger themes or a “bigger picture” of what you did, how you felt about it or even, your conception of public administration. Fictional examples follow:

“I had originally thought of my job description as vague but now I see that the vagueness was intentional. As a temporary, part-time employee, my task was to fill in the gaps between everyone else. I was the ‘glue’ that held things together!”

“I began the internship with great confidence in my abilities in any situation but gradually discovered by the second month that I had so much to learn about the organization’s operations, three more months just weren’t going to be enough.”

“So much of the public administration and management Literature discusses the big issues, the idealistic side. You don’t really get a sense from most of the readings of how much time and effort goes into a task (such as a mass mail-out) that its purpose – why you are doing it gets displaced by concerns of *how* you’re doing it. I can see how larger values like responsiveness and accountability get lost in a crisis or time crunch.”

As discussed, the self-evaluation is intended to draw the “big picture” from the student’s internship experience. You are trying to put the internship’s lessons in perspective both in the context of PA as well as your career goals. To get started, ask yourself about the goals and expectation you had at the beginning of the internship. Review what you wrote under “Job Notes” and “Reflections” those first few weeks and ponder your experiences with the benefit of hindsight:

- What do you know now you didn’t then?
- What knowledge or information would have made those first weeks easier?
- And, have you revised your career plans as a result of the experience?
- What do you want to learn now?

REQUIRED PRODUCT: Supervisor evaluation

As noted above, it is essential that the instructor be able to contact the intern’s work supervisor and that the supervisor has contact information for the internship coordinator/department chair. The supervisor’s role with respect to the awarding of credit for the internship is to provide the [Supervisor Evaluation Form](#) directly to the internship coordinator/department chair by one week prior to the end of semester in which credit is to be received.

Due Date

ALL required products from the internship must be submitted as part of a *single PDF file* (the Department Administrative Assistant can help create this PDF if needed from a printed packet, but printed materials will not be accepted as final deliverables), at least **one week prior to the last day of finals in the semester in which credit is to be received**. This PDF should be emailed to the internship coordinator/Dept. Chair. **Note: late papers will not be accepted**. If it is your last semester, late internship materials can prevent you from graduating as planned.

Supervisor concerns

The the work supervisor should contact the instructor if the intern’s performance or the internship experience is not satisfactory.

Student concerns

If at any time the student's internship placement does not proceed as promised – for example, the student is asked to work extra hours or is assigned work outside the scope of the initial agreement, if the student feels treated unfairly or unethically – he or she is urged to bring these matters to the internship coordinator (Department Chair's) attention. If serious problems arise, another internship may be required.

Recommended Learning Resources

There are a few books dealing with the value of internships and how to succeed in achieving the most from the internship. Most will deal with the subject from a broad perspective, that is, they cover both undergraduate and graduate-level internships and examine internships in the arts, business, retail, etc. in addition to government. These resources may not serve your more immediate needs. Nevertheless, if you are eager for additional information, several books are listed below:

- Coplin, William D. *10 Things Employers Want You to Learn in College: The Know-How You Need to Succeed.*
- Oldman, Mark. *The Internship Bible.* 10th edition (Princeton Review Series).
- Sweitzer, H. Frederick and Mary A. King. *The Successful Internship: Transformation and Empowerment in Experiential Learning.* Wadsworth, 2nd edition.