

Student Outcomes Assessment Plan (Soap)

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Mission Statement

Working within both the general vision and mission of the California State University, Fresno, the MPA program provides educational opportunities in the area of public and nonprofit administration to those individuals seeking to improve the human condition via public service.

- The MPA program teaches competencies in public and nonprofit administration that allow students to effectively and ethically serve the public interest.
- The MPA program prepares students to gain expertise in public and/or nonprofit management; to educate both elected officials and citizens about public policy tradeoffs; and to facilitate an understanding among diverse perspectives on a given policy issue.
- The MPA program provides educational opportunities for students to develop analytical and critical thinking skills; to appreciate and engage in ethical decision making; and to have the ability to communicate effectively with individuals of diverse social backgrounds.

I. Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

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Goals: Students will be able to use knowledge of public administration and/or nonprofit theory, research, and practice to evaluate public policy issues (1). Students will also be able to think critically about issues facing public and nonprofit administrators and policy makers (2). Students will be able to use both analytical skills and ethical principles to respond to public policy issues (3).

SLOs:

- 1.1. Examine the impact of different social, economic, and political phenomena on public policy issues using analytical tools, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques.
- 1.2. Evaluate the quality of public policy and the behavior of public servants using various ethical principles and frameworks.
- 1.3. Appraise the activities of organizations and individual behavior in those organizations using various theories of complex organizations and organizational behavior.
- 1.4. Evaluate both current budgetary and human resource practices in public and/or nonprofit organizations in terms of impact on organizational performance.

- 1.5. Evaluate alternative approaches to how policies are defined, designed, implemented, and evaluated.
- 2.1 Design and implement effective organizational arrangements and incentives for individual behavior within public and nonprofit organizations.
- 2.2. Design and implement budgeting processes and strategies that will lead to more effective use of budgetary resources.
- 2.3. Formulate and utilize human resource systems that are effective in terms of both protecting individual employees and enhancing organizational performance.
- 3.1. Formulate and utilize regimes of ethical behavior and decision making in public and nonprofit organizations.
- 3.2. Formulate alternatives to existing policy based on the combination of theoretical frameworks and original policy research.

II. Curriculum Map (Matrix of Courses X Learning Outcomes)															
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Matrix of Courses and Student Learning Outcomes															
Student Learning Outcomes	Course Numbers														
	200	201	210	215	230	240	245	250	260	(Prog. Eval.)	280T	287	289T	290	299
1.1	IEM	IEM	IEM	M	M	M	M	M	M	M		M	M	M	M
1.2	IEM		EM	EM			M	M	M	M		M	M	M	M
1.3			IEM			M	M					M	M	M	M
1.4					IEM		IEM					M	M	M	M
1.5				IEM		IEM			EM			M	M	M	M
2.1			IEM	EM		EM	EM					M	M	M	M
2.2					IEM							M	M	M	M
2.3							IEM					M	M	M	M

3.1	IEM		IEM	EM		EM		M	EM	M	M	M	M	M
3.2					IEM	IEM			IEM	EM	M	M	M	M

Key: I = Introduced; E = Emphasized/Reinforced; M = Mastered

Assessment Methods: In order to effectively assess the student learning outcomes (SLO) for the MPA program, we will utilize both direct and indirect measures. In addition to this, we will seek to use multiple measures of the same SLO in order to collect as much information as possible on the complex phenomena that are the products of the educational process.

A. Direct Measures

We will utilize the following direct measures: Course-embedded assessments and rubrics. With respect to course-embedded assessments; we will utilize essays, final papers, and comprehensive exam answers. Each of these materials will be analyzed in terms of how it relates to program-related SLO. Course instructors will be asked to prepare a short report on how students have performed with respect to the program SLO, as well as their recommendations concerning actions required in light of their assessment. Faculty may also utilize the comprehensive examination process to perform course-embedded assessments. Each MPA student is tested over the program’s six core courses (MPA 200, MPA 201, MPA 210, MPA 230, MPA 245, and MPA 260). Student answers to questions posed as part of the comprehensive exam will provide additional insights into how well students are doing with respect to relevant SLO. In order to process the information and gain important insights, course-embedded measures will be administered in the following cycle: (1) Fall core courses (MPA 200, MPA 201, and MPA 245) will be administered in ODD years (e.g., Years 1, 3, 5, and 7 of the timeline listed in Table 3); (2) Spring core courses (MPA 210, MPA 230, and MPA 260) will be administered in even years; and elective courses (e.g., 215, 240, 250, and 280T) will be administered every other time they are offered (program electives are offered on a two-year cycle). The use of both writing and oral presentation rubrics will be administered on a continual basis. The writing rubric is used to evaluate student writing portfolios. Students in core courses have their final papers collected and evaluated according to the writing rubric adopted by the MPA program. At the end of their program, students will have a total of six papers in their portfolio. Instructors review these in an ongoing process. After papers have been evaluated, students are to meet with either the course instructor or the program director to review the assessment of their writing. In addition to writing, students will also be evaluated on their formal presentation skills. Currently, instructors in both the MPA 230 and MPA 260 courses require students to do formal research presentations. We have developed an oral presentation rubric for use in evaluating this important aspect of our students’ development.

B. Indirect Measures

The MPA program faculty will also use indirect measures to assess SLO. We will rely on several different types of surveys, as well as focus groups to gather information on student, alumni, and employer perceptions. While all of these assessment measures will be more comprehensive in nature, SLO will be an important component of each one. Students in core courses will be asked to evaluate their attainment of program SLO that are specifically related to the particular courses they are currently enrolled in at the time of the survey. Instructors may wish to include their own course-specific SLO when administering the survey for program-related SLO. Much like other course-embedded measures, this particular survey will be administered on a rotating basis: (1) Fall core courses will be administered in ODD timeline years; and (2) Spring core courses will be administered in EVEN timeline years. Other types of surveys include exit interviews, alumni, and employer surveys. Exit interviews will be administered in both questionnaire and interview formats, whichever is preferred by students graduating the program. Both alumni and employer surveys will be offered on a less frequent basis than the others. To supplement the MPA program's information on the attainment of SLO between these surveys, the program will use focus groups that consist of current students, alumni, and public/nonprofit employers.

III. Student Learning Outcomes X Assessment Methods Matrix

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Student Learning Outcomes and Corresponding Assessment Measures

	Assessment Measures									
Student Learning Outcomes	Embedded - Essays	Embedded – Final Paper	Embedded – Comprehensive Exam	Rubric – Writing Portfolio	Rubric – Oral Presentation	Survey – Student Learning Outcomes	Survey – Exit Interview	Focus Groups	Survey – MPA Program Alumni	Survey - Employer

1.1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
1.2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
1.3	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
1.4	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
1.5	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
2.1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
2.2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
2.3	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
3.1	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
3.2	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

IV. Timeline for Implementation of Assessment Methods and Summary Evaluations

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Timeline of Assessment Activity

Assessment Activity	Time Line						
	AY 12-13	AY 13-14	AY 14-15	AY 15-16	AY 16-17	AY 17-18	AY 18-19
Embedded – Essays	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Embedded – Final Paper	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Embedded – Comprehensive Exam	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rubric – Writing Portfolio	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Rubric – Oral Presentation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Survey – Student Learning Outcomes		X		X		X	
Survey – Exit Interview	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus Groups	X		X		X		X

Survey – MPA Program Alumni			X			X	
Survey – Employer			X			X	

V. Closing the Loop - Summary Evaluation, Curriculum Adjustment, and Reporting

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Sample 'Closing the Loop' for our MPA 260 class:

MPA 260: Public Policy Administration Embedded Question

(1) Specific Issue or Question Examined: Final research papers for the course.

(2) Assessment of overall class performance on Issue or Question: Overall performance of the class was a little bit less than expected. Grade distribution was as follows: 4 “A”; 4 “B”; and 3 “C.” While most students did demonstrate a good understanding of the factual material of their particular policy, there was a definite problem in the both the development of theoretical arguments and application of these arguments to the case material. There were also some noticeable issues with organization of the paper. This was related to problems with the development of a theoretical framework. There was a tendency mix analysis and description (e.g., development of theoretical framework).

(3) Recommendation for actions to be taken: Place more emphasis on the need to separate development of theoretical framework and application of framework to the case material. This will include more class time dedicated to discussing the organization of the paper, as well as mandatory meetings with the instructor prior to the writing of the research papers.