

Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program:
Student Outcome Assessment Plan (SOAP)

University Vision & Mission Statement:

Vision:

- We will become New California's premier engaged university, nationally recognized for our teaching, learning, transformational scholarship, and dynamic leadership which engages faculty, students, staff, and community in mutually beneficial and respectful collaboration benefiting the region and society as a whole.

Mission:

- The university prepares students for productive careers as responsible citizens of the world through undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences and a variety of professional disciplines.
- The university provides educational opportunities to enhance its students' intellectual horizons, foster lifelong learning, prepare them for future professional study, productive community involvement, and instill in them an appreciation of the arts, continuing education, and cultures other than their own.
- The university also provides educational opportunities for personal and career enhancement through advanced study that prepare students for positions of leadership in the arts, sciences, and professions.
- The university provides educational opportunities that stimulate scholarly inquiry and discourse, engage students, inspire creative technical competence, encourage research and creative activities and their dissemination, and recruit and develop outstanding teacher-scholar/artists.
- The university assists in the transformation of the region through applied research, technical assistance, training, community service-learning, civic engagement, and other related public service activities.
- To enhance the economic vitality and quality of life for all in our rural and urban communities, the university develops partnerships with agriculture, business, education, industry, health services, human services, nonprofit organizations, and government.

MPA Program Vision & Mission Statement:

Vision:

- 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.

Mission:

- The MPA program prepares individuals to develop competencies that will allow them to effectively 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 individuals to have analytical and critical thinking skills; to appreciate and engage in ethical decision making; and to have the ability to communicate effectively.

MPA Program Goals:

1. Use knowledge of public administration and/or nonprofit theory, research, and practice to evaluate public policy issues.
2. Think critically about issues facing public and nonprofit administrators and policy makers.
3. Use both analytical skills and ethical principles to respond to public policy issues.
4. Communicate effectively in oral and written presentation.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1.1. Examine the impact of different social, economic, and political phenomena on public policy issues using statistical analysis.
- 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 effective organizational arrangements and incentives for individual behavior within public and nonprofit organizations.
 - 2.2. Design budgeting processes and strategies that will lead to more effective use of budgetary resources.
 - 2.3. Formulate human resource systems that are more effective in terms of both protecting individual employees and enhancing organizational performance.
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- 3.1. Formulate alternative regimes for 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.
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- 4.1. Construct effective arguments or discussions concerning the basic principles of public administration.
 - 4.2. Evaluate the merits of competing perspectives on a given policy and alternative approaches to its design and implementation.
 - 4.3. Demonstrate an understanding of basic public administration/nonprofit principles, theories, and research.
 - 4.4. Create original responses to competing perspectives on a given policy and alternative approaches to its design and implementation.

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.

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 120g, MPA 200, 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 120g, MPA 200, 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 year 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.

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. The exact timing of each of these indirect measures can be seen in Table 3.

Matrices outlining the relationship of SLO to the MPA program are listed in the tables that follow. Table 1 illustrates the linkage between MPA program courses and specific SLO. Table 2 contains information on how the various SLO will be assessed (e.g., what type of assessment measure will be used to gather data). Finally, Table 3 provides a timeline on when these assessment activities will be conducted.

Table 1. Matrix of Courses and Student Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Outcomes	Course Numbers													
	120g	200	210	215	230	240	245	250	260	280T (Prog. Eval.)	287	289T	290	299
1.1	IEU									U	U	U	U	U
1.2		IEU	EU	EU			U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
1.3			IEU			U	U				U	U	U	U
1.4					IEU		IEU				U	U	U	U
1.5				U		EU			IEU		U	U	U	U
2.1			IEU	EU		EU					U	U	U	U
2.2					IEU						U	U	U	U
2.3							IEU				U	U	U	U
3.1		IEU		EU				U		U	U	U	U	U
3.2									IEU	EU	U	U	U	U
4.1	IEU	IEU	EU	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
4.2	IEU	IEU	EU	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
4.3	IEU	IEU	EU	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
4.4	IEU	IEU	EU	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U

Key: I = Introduced; E = Emphasized; U = Utilized

Table 2. Student Learning Outcomes and Corresponding Assessment Measures

Student Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measures									
	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
1.2	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
1.3	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
1.4	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
1.5	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
2.1	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
2.2	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
2.3	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
3.1	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
3.2	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
4.1	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
4.2	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
4.3	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
4.4	X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X

Table 3. Timeline of Assessment Activity

Assessment Activity	Time Line						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
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	