PA/PAH 509: Organizational Experience
Orientation and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
What is PA/PAH 509?

- Final integrative experience in the MPA, MPA: HA and MPH: HMP programs
- Worth six credits (equal to two classes)
- Taken after at least 42 credits of coursework completed
- Ideally taken as close to end of program of study as possible
Purpose of PA/PAH 509

- Provides a final, culminating, applied, integrative, personalized experience
- Allows students to apply knowledge acquired in courses to field settings
- Gives opportunity to experience and “work” in a new organization
- Can explore possibility of future employment
- Offers opportunity to reflect on learning/career
Who takes PA/PAH 509?

- All MPH:HMP students (no exceptions)
- MPA and MPA:HA students who have not had at least 3 years of managerial and/or supervisory experience
  - Faculty advisor must sign off on 509/alternatives for students
- Experienced MPA students are encouraged to take PA 509
If I don’t take PA/PAH 509...

- You must have your advisor’s permission to waive the PA/PAH 509

- Instead of PA/PAH 509 you will take PA 512 Case Analysis (6 credits)

- If you think you can waive PA/PAH 509, you may leave this presentation now; please consult with your faculty advisor for approval and to register for PA 512
Why “organizational experience” and not “internship”?

- An “internship” is perceived by many in the field as a full-time intense experience for students who bring very little expertise, require intense supervision, and may not produce much in the way of a substantive product.

- Many students have considerable expertise and will not do PA/PAH 509 full-time or need extensive supervision because of their backgrounds.

- SO: “experience” rather than “internship” with higher expectations for outcomes.
Prerequisites

- Completion of at least 42 credits of the MPA, MPA:HA or MPH:HMP program of study
- For MPA students only, have a signed “Field of Specialization” form on file
- Meet with your faculty advisor to discuss your interests and relevant sites for a PA/PAH 509 experience (they know you and have good contacts)
- Attend the PA/PAH 509 Orientation and review the relevant current documents
What is involved in PA/PAH 509?

- Field-based applied experience
- Placement negotiated by you to meet your career goals and learning objectives
- 6 credits = 2 days per week over one quarter or 1 day per week over two quarters plus research and writing time (200 total hours)
- Develop project report relevant to setting AND a reflective paper AND public presentation
- Graded A-F:
  - Project Overview 5%; Project Report 40%; Reflective Paper 30%; Presentation 20%; PA/PAH 509 Faculty Assessment 5%
509 Faculty

- Faculty who approve contract, grade your work, and help resolve problems
  - Billie Sandberg for MPA students; 503-725-8223, billie.sandberg@pdx.edu
  - Jill Rissi for MPA:HA and MPH:HMP students; 503-725-8217, jrissi@pdx.edu

- Regular faculty advisor reviews and approves draft of contract; PA/PAH 509 faculty gives final approval and grades.
Finding a Field Site

- Use your own contacts
- Get suggestions from your faculty advisor or other faculty
- Pull information from program listservs
- Conduct informational interviews
- Create a special project arrangement at the organization where you work (NOT your regular duties and job)

**** Start looking early ****
What is appropriate for a project?

- Parameters for the field-based project(s):
  - Topic of interest to you
  - Substance of work of interest to the field site and makes a contribution to its operations
  - Work required integrates across the curriculum
- Can complete within timeframe available
- Must have relevant expertise/coursework
  - For example, do not take on an evaluation project if you have not taken a course on program evaluation or do not have relevant expertise
Can I get paid?

- Yes if feasible
- Not expected/required
- May be negotiated between student and field supervisor
- Not a condition of establishing the PA/PAH 509 experience
- University not involved in arrangements
The Learning Contract
The Learning Contract

- Completed and signed two-page cover sheet
- Unofficial PSU transcript of classes to date (#4)
- MPA students: Copy of Field of Specialization form, signed by your faculty advisor
- Current resume (#5)
- Career goals -- now and 5 years from now (#6)
- Description of the setting and the work you will do (#7)
- Learning objectives for PA/PAH 509 experience (#8)
- List of relevant courses completed, theoretical principles, application to PA/PAH 509 project (#9)
- Description of final submissions to be graded (#10)
- Discussion of relevant Divisional competencies (#11)
- Signed special registration form(s)
Why is the learning contract so important?

- Serves as your syllabus for PA/PAH 509
- Allows you to define:
  - A relevant learning experience
  - Your expectations
  - The expectations of the field supervisor
- Builds upon your career, skills, graduate education
- Protects you from inappropriate assignments
- Provides the basis for your final reflection
- Basis for PA/PAH 509 faculty evaluation and grading
#5: Writing a Resume

- Many resources on campus
  - Career Center
  - Library
  - Writing Laboratory
- Check these resources for assistance to write/update resume
- Resume should be current (not as of application to program)
#6: Writing Career Goals

- Articulate what you want to do in the near-term
- Articulate where you want to be in 5 years in terms of professional work
- Ensure relevance to current program of study
- Consider potential:
  - Titles
  - Settings/Kinds of organizations
  - Responsibilities
- Not necessary to discuss your current work, volunteer activities or education
- **2-3 pages** in length (double-spaced)
#7: Work Description

- Describe the setting, organization
- Identify the supervisor by name and position
- With the **field supervisor**, define the work to be done and articulate:
  - Skills, relevant course work/experience
  - Expectations
  - Responsibilities
  - Deliverables/products
- Specific for the work you will do during PA/PAH 509 from the perspective of the field site
- **2-3 paragraphs** in length (double-spaced)
#8: Writing Learning Objectives

Learning objectives describe the work you will be doing from your perspective as a learner

- **4-5 objectives** that integrate across your courses completed to date
  - Define tasks and evidence for each learning objective (i.e. processes and outcomes)
- What will be different about you as a result of what you learn/do in the PA/PAH 509 experience?
  - New/enhanced knowledge, skills, competencies
- **PLUS required final objective** on integration and application of curriculum
- **1-2 pages** in length; see examples p. 6-8 in student guide; point form is acceptable
Example: Learning Objective

Objective 1: Develop & Apply Communication Skills

Tasks:
- Identify relevant constituency groups
- Develop targeted outreach brochures
- Create presentation slides and script
- Speak to at least four community groups

Evidence:
- Copies of brochure, slide presentations, script, list of community groups
- Written narrative describing process
#9: Relevant Course Content

- Your experience should draw upon **8-10 courses** you have completed in your current program

- For each course:
  - List the course name and course number
  - Identify and discuss specific and relevant theoretical learning principles
  - Discuss how you will **apply** these in your project work

- Provide evidence you have the necessary academic background to do the defined work

- **2-3 pages** in length (double-spaced)
#10: Final Submissions

Explanation of your final submissions must include a description of the project report you will be developing for the site.

- Includes **detailed written documentation** developed for the organization (as relevant)
- May include **recommendations, conclusions, policies**
- Should identify any **additional submissions** you will provide that reflect the evidence discussed in your learning objectives
- Should also discuss **briefly** the project overview, reflective paper, and the presentation
#11: Competency Attainment

Your organizational experience should help you to attain many of the 10 Divisional competencies.

- Identify *by number* which of the competencies your experience will help you attain.
- Describe which competencies will be achieved through which of the learning objectives (may be multiple).
- Add other clarification to help you focus on the competencies.
- Health students should use the health version of the competencies (on website).
Approval of Learning Contract

- Meet with your faculty advisor soon
- Find a placement and field supervisor
- Negotiate project(s) and expectations
- Complete all elements of the learning contract in draft, email text of points #6-11 to faculty advisor, receive feedback, revise, get faculty advisor approval of draft (iterative)
- Email approved revised draft (#6-11) to PA/PAH 509 faculty, revise, finalize (iterative)
- In-person meetings are not required
Registering for PA/PAH 509
To Register for PA/PAH 509

- When PA/PAH 509 faculty approves learning contract, prepare all materials in hard copy including completed, signed special registration form(s)

- Register for 6 credits in one quarter, or 3 credits each in 2 consecutive quarters
  
  - Complete and sign 1 special registration form (6 credits) or 2 forms for 2 quarters (3 credits each)

- MPA register for PA 509; MPA:HA and MPH:HMP for PAH 509 (use correct CRN on special registration form)

- Submit hard copy and PA/PAH 509 faculty will sign contract and register you (no one else can do this)

- Registration cannot be done online or without a complete signed contract
Approval/Registration Deadlines

- Submit complete first draft of contract to your faculty advisor by email during quarter prior to registration
  - Faculty advisors need 2-3 weeks to review a draft
- Submit final approved draft of to PA/PAH 509 faculty
  - PA/PAH 509 faculty need 2 weeks to review draft
- Fall 2015: Deadline for advisor-approved draft to 509 faculty is September 18; must be registered by October 8
- Winter 2016: Deadline for advisor-approved draft to 509 faculty is December 14; must be registered by January 14
- Spring 2016: Deadline for advisor-approved draft to 509 faculty is March 21; must be registered by April 7
- Summer 2016: Deadline for advisor-approved draft to 509 faculty is June 6; must be registered by June 23
Completing PA/PAH 509
Important Completion Deadlines

- To receive a final grade, must hand in all four submissions in *hard copy* to PA office by:
  - Fall: Dec 1; Winter: March 1; Spring: June 1; Summer: September 1

- Presentation follows report submission

- May complete PA/PAH 509 in summer and still participate in June graduation

- If **all** requirements not completed by University deadlines, you must negotiate an incomplete with the PA/PAH 509 faculty with written agreement on file
  - You **must** submit products and present in the next quarter
Completing 509: The Project Overview

- 3-5 pages double-spaced
- Includes:
  - An overview of the setting of the work
  - The process for completing the work
  - The outcomes of the work
Completing 509: The Project Report

Project report format varies

- Includes *detailed written documentation* developed for the organization (as relevant)
- May include *recommendations, conclusions, policies*
- Provided to the organization and the university
- Should have a *table of contents; references between narrative of the report and appendices to track connections*
More on the Project Report

- Ensure evidence presented reflects approved learning objectives, but is not organized by them.
- Must be sufficiently detailed to merit 40% of 6 credits.
- Clearly indicate what is your original work, and what is the work of others.
- Do not include extraneous “nice to know” information; you are being graded for your work not for the work of others.
- Ensure this is a comprehensive, polished and professional document.
Confidential Material in Report

- Field supervisor needs to discuss with PA/PAH 509 faculty well in advance of project completion
- Determine what can be released in confidence and what must be blinded
- Report is only read by one PA/PAH 509 faculty and then returned to student
- Clarify timing of submission and return to maintain confidentiality
- Ensure student does not get caught in rework to remove confidential information at last minute
Completing the 509: Reflective Paper and Presentation

- Reflective paper based upon the experience (10-12 pages)
  - Achievement of learning objectives (or not)
  - Description of related learning
  - Opportunities for integration of curricular content
  - Accomplishment of some/all of the Divisional competencies
  - Need for future professional development
  - Implications for future career
  - Personal narrative describing new insights and observations
  - Submitted only to university

- Presentation
  - 10 minute presentation (no more than 12 slides)
  - Submitted in hard copy with other submissions
  - Presented in public setting, with 5 min. Q&A

Competency self-assessment (via email)
Presentations 2015-2016

- Each student presents 10 minutes on organizational experience (guide on website) + 5 minutes of Q&A
  - Be attentive to professional style and attire
- Field supervisors, faculty, students attend
- Opportunity to synthesize, share experiences, professional development
- Dates for 2015/2016:
  - Fall - December 11;
  - Winter - March 18;
  - Spring - June 9;
  - Summer - Sept. 16
- Required of all students to complete PA/PAH 509
- Alternative if out of town is via Skype, no waivers
Grade Determination

- **Project narrative (5%)**
  - Summation of the project and nature of work completed

- **Comprehensive final project report (40%)**
  - Complete and detailed documentation and synthesis of work, context, processes, challenges, accomplishments, and outcomes; professionally presented product

- **Thorough written reflection (30%)**
  - Accomplishment of learning objectives, insights into career goals and directions, thoughts on relevant coursework, competency attainment

- **Professional presentation (20%)**
  - Satisfactory summary and professional delivery

- **PA/PAH 509 faculty assessment of progress (5%)**

- Incomplete assigned if insufficient documentation to assess - must then complete next quarter

- 509 faculty will provide guidance for incompletes
What to do if ...?

- The emphasis of the work changes, OR
- The breadth/scope of the work changes, OR
- There are major disagreements, OR
- The field supervisor changes, etc.

- Refer back to the learning contract
- Attempt to resolve at the site
- Contact the PA/PAH 509 faculty
- Revise your learning objectives
- Get new objectives/evidence approved
Other Useful Information

- Plan ahead
- Be attentive to published deadlines
- Follow the guidelines to avoid delays
- Be prepared to revise materials
- Use current 509 materials on PA website
- Ensure PA/PAH 509 faculty have current contact information for you
- Respond promptly to all 509-related emails
- If you have not had a contact from the 509 faculty by one month prior to submission deadline, check your spam folder for emails!
Good luck!