Guidance for PA/H 509 Field Supervisors

College of Urban and Public Affairs

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Welcome

On behalf of the Department of Public Administration at Portland State University, we would like to welcome you to our PA/H 509: Organizational Experience. Thank you for your interest in hosting one of our graduate students with your organization as they complete their graduate studies. Our students complete their PA/H 509: Organizational Experience as the culminating, integrative experience of their Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Administration: Health Administration (MPA: HA), or Master of Nonprofit Leadership (MNL) degree. Without you, the variety and depth of their experiences would be limited to the classroom. You are a partner with PSU in its mission to "Let knowledge serve the city!"

This short guidebook is designed to acquaint you with the Department of Public Administration, its programs, and, specifically, the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience, what it entails, and what it means to be an effective field supervisor. This guidebook should answer many of your questions regarding this experience, but do not hesitate to contact us with any additional questions.

Again, thank you for your interest in the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience.

Kind regards,

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The Department of Public Administration

The Department of Public Administration is located within the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government in the College of Public and Urban Affairs at Portland State University (PSU). The current configuration of the PA Department is the result of a merger between the Public Administration program at PSU and the Public Administration program at Lewis & Clark College, in 1996, and the development of the School of Government in the College of Urban and Public Affairs, in 1998. Currently the PA Department's programs are delivered by 11 faculty members and more than a dozen adjunct instructors.

The *vision* of the PA Department is to be an agent of change to develop and enhance public leadership through education, scholarship and service. Its *mission* is as follows:

> The Department of Public Administration at Portland State University is dedicated to preparing individuals for ethical, competent and effective public service in a range of roles in policy, management and leadership. We seek to improve practice by facilitating learning through community engagement, promoting scholarship, and encouraging reflection as we develop and work with leaders representing diverse communities across all domains of public service.

To that end, it delivers nationally accredited and well-regarded programs which are oriented toward preparing professionals for leadership in public service; research that advances the *praxis* of public administration; and, expert technical assistance to the local, regional, national, and international community. Its work is underpinned by the following *values*:

- We believe that the integration of theory and practice is essential for successful management and leadership in public, nonprofit and health organizations, and that reflective practice enhances this integration.

- We believe that a public service education that integrates ethics and experience is essential to our society.

- We seek to model in ourselves and develop in our students values of public service and provide mechanisms through which students can explore potential roles for engaging the public in their work.

- We are committed to addressing the life-long learning needs of our graduates and career public service professionals.

- We value scholarship that is both rigorous and relevant.

- We value Portland State University's commitment to community-engaged teaching and scholarship.

- We are committed to <u>collaborating</u> with public and nonprofit organizations and communities to create rich learning experiences that both assist the community and prepare graduates for productive public service careers.

- We believe that public service professionals must understand the ways in which a multiplicity of interests help to shape, and in turn are shaped by, the underlying values of our <u>systems of democratic governance</u>.

- We believe that understanding the dynamic social relationships in <u>diverse and global communities</u> is essential for public service leaders and managers.

Public Administration Programs

The Department of Public Administration is home to approximately 250 students across six programs: an undergraduate minor in Civic Leadership; graduate certificates in Nonprofit and Public Management and Energy Policy and Management; and master's degrees in Public Administration, Public Administration: Health Administration, and Nonprofit Leadership. The Department also manages and facilitates a master's degree in Public Policy, which is shared with the Department of Political Science and a Ph.D. in Public Affairs and Policy which is shared with the Departments of Political Science and Economics.

The PA/H 509: Organizational Experience is the culminating, integrative experience for the MPA, MPA: HA, and MNL programs, and these programs are described in detail below. For more information on our other programs, please refer to [the Department's website](#).

Master of Public Administration

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) focuses on preparing students for administrative positions in both governmental and nonprofit organizations. The MPA is a flexible degree that allows students to choose from a variety of options once they graduate. During the MPA program, students participate in courses in areas including public administration, administrative ethics and values, administrative theory and behavior, public policy, administrative law and policy implementation, public budgeting, financial management, human resource management, and analytic methods.

Within the MPA program, students must select an area of specialization. Specializations are typically chosen from one of five specializations approved by the Department: global leadership and management; human resources management; local government; nonprofit management; and, natural resources policy and administration.

Master of Public Administration: Health Administration

The Master of Public Administration: Health Administration (MPA: HA) was established in 1985 in response to demands for a program to prepare students for careers in the health-specific public, private, and nonprofit sectors, primarily in Oregon. The MPA: HA leverages the capacity of the long-standing PSU MPA program, which was established in 1976 and has been continuously accredited by NASPAA since 1984. Consistent with the mission of the overall MPA program, the MPA: HA is designed to

provide early to mid-career students with the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for progressively responsible careers in health systems management and policy. Through their coursework, students develop a broad understanding of the health system, organizational dynamics, policy, research and leadership skills that are applicable to health services, and systems in the context of public administration and public management.

Master of Nonprofit Leadership

The Master of Nonprofit Leadership is for those who believe in the power of collective action for meaningful social change specifically through nonprofit, grassroots, and community-based organizations. MNL students are a part of the next generations of nonprofit leaders who work for the common good. In the MNL curriculum, we marry the best of theory and practice so that students gain critical insights into nonprofit leadership and management and the skills to affect meaningful change. Coursework focuses on four core areas: Foundations of the Nonprofit Sector and Nonprofit Leadership; the Fundamentals of Nonprofit Management; Analytic Skills; and Advocacy, Policymaking, and Community Change.

A combination of core, concentration, skill development, and elective courses offers students in all programs the flexibility to tailor a program of study that is specific to their personal career goals. Leveraging the extensive relationships between the Program and the local government, nonprofit, and health services communities, students in all programs are exposed to a wide variety of practice settings and administrative roles.

Program Competencies

Over the course of their graduate work, students are expected to master the following core competencies:

- Articulate and exemplify the ethics, values, responsibilities, obligations and social roles of a member of the public service [nonprofit] [health services administration] profession.

- Identify and apply relevant theories and frameworks to the practice of public service [nonprofit] [health services administration] leadership, management and policy.[*]

- Respond to and engage collaboratively with diverse local and global cultures and communities to address challenges in the public interest.

- Identify and engage with the key elements of the public policy process.

- Employ appropriate qualitative and quantitative techniques to investigate, monitor and manage resource use.[†]

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[*] Theories and frameworks could include economic, financial, legal, organizational, political, social, and/or ethical approaches.
[†] Resource use could include human, fiscal, technologic, information, physical, and/or other resources.

- Create and manage systems and processes to assess and improve organizational performance.

- Conceptualize, analyze, and develop creative and collaborative solutions to challenges in public service [nonprofit] [health services administration] leadership, management and policy.

- Assess challenges and explore solutions to advance cross-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional cooperation in public programs and services.

- Demonstrate verbal and written communication skills as a [nonprofit] [health services administration] professional and through interpersonal interactions in groups and in society.

- Think critically and self-reflectively about emerging issues concerning public service [nonprofit] [health services administration] leadership, management and policy.

The PA/H 509: Organizational Experience

The organizational experience (listed as courses PA 509 for MPA and MNL students and PAH 509 for MPA: HA students) is a culminating experience for our graduate students. The PA/H 509: Organizational Experience course typically involves a student working on an administrative or management issue confronting a public, nonprofit, and/or health services organization. Example projects have involved, *but are not limited to*, a program evaluation, the development of a strategic plan or marketing plan, a development assessment, an audit, or the development of organizational guidelines and operating procedures. The organizational experience is an opportunity for the student to relate their academic experience in the master's program to practice. Students are expected to conduct work that builds upon their professional experience to date and enables them to integrate and apply their academic preparation. Application of content and integration in practice are the core elements of the organizational experience.

Projects can be completed at any level of an organization. Students have worked with agency directors as well as frontline staff to complete a variety of projects to benefit both the organization and advance their own professional development. Each project is unique unto itself.

The nature of the project should be appropriately substantive. The PA/H 509: Organizational Experience is not intended to be an internship for students because, through their graduate career and learning, they bring a great deal of expertise to the field site. It is an opportunity for students to relate their academic experience in the master's program to "real world" practice.

What Does the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience Entail?

Students typically will spend 150 hours of actual work in the organizational experience over one-to-two quarters (PSU operates on a 10-week quarter system), with an additional 50 hours spent in research and writing, for a total of 200 hours. Students may not begin work at their field site until they complete a Learning Contract. The **Learning Contract** spells out the following:

- The student's career goals and aspirations;
- The nature of the student's field site, including the field supervisor;
- The nature and details of the project, including appropriate deliverables; and,
- How it relates to their academic experience as a graduate student in one of our degree programs.

The Learning Contract must be developed by students in collaboration with their field supervisor, their faculty advisor, and, finally, the PA/H 509 faculty advisor. <u>All four parties must sign off on the Learning Contract before work can commence.</u>

How Does My Organization Become a Field Site?

The experiences are *student-driven*. That is, students are responsible for identifying and developing a suitable placement in collaboration with their faculty advisor while taking into account their career goals

and aspirations. Students often find their sites through faculty contacts, fellow students, informational interviews, and postings on our listservs.

The PA Department is happy to publicize such opportunities for students on our student listservs. Any organization with a potential placement is welcome to submit information about it. Helpful information includes a brief description of the project and a few other details—organization name, program description (or link to website), specific project, expertise and skills required, timing, anticipated deliverables, compensation (if there is any, this is not required), and any other expectations (standing meetings, travel, etc.). It does not have to be a full-blown position description, but enough information that it can be posted on program listservs and potential students can then contact you directly (or whomever you designate).

Project information and materials may be sent to Megan Heljeson at heljeson@pdx.edu. If a student becomes interested in your position or project, then the student generally will contact you directly.

What is My Role as a Field Supervisor?

Initially, you will work with the student to develop the Learning Contract, which includes a description of the site, the work to be done, appropriate learning objectives, a list of deliverables (called "evidence" in the Learning Contract), and a discussion of how the student will apply their academic work to the project. Subsequently, you will provide mentoring, supervision, and support to the student, as appropriate. This typically includes providing the student with guidance on the direction and scope of the project; providing access to information and people, as needed; and, providing the student with the resources needed to complete the project. At the end of the project, students will present their work to the faculty and to their peers, and all field supervisors are encouraged to attend this presentation. Finally, field site supervisors are asked to complete a brief questionnaire regarding your experience during the project, including working with the student. A link to this online questionnaire will be emailed to you at the close of the student's placement.

What are "Learning Objectives" and "Evidence"?

Learning objectives describe the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies that the student will develop or enhance through the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience. The learning objectives define priorities and expectations for the student in the context of their learning.

Students must produce evidence that these learning objectives are being met during the course of the project. In general, these are all the materials prepared for the field site during the course of the project. The format and content of these materials is dependent upon the nature of the work and the needs and expectations of the organization. For example, if a student conducted a survey as a part of their project, a copy of the questionnaire utilized is, in part, an appropriate form of evidence, and should be submitted to their PA/H 509 faculty advisor as a part of their final materials for evaluation.

Can Our Employee, who is a Student, Do Their PA/H 509 with Us?

In some circumstances, a student can complete the PA/H 509 with their current employer. However, the nature of the project must be outside the scope of their normal duties and their current position. Students must complete their written Learning Contract and have it approved by both their faculty advisor and the PA/H 509 faculty advisor, prior to commencing work in their employment setting.

How Flexible is the Timing of the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience?

Once a project has been approved and a Learning Contract has been signed by all concerned parties, then a student can begin working at the field site and on the project. In some cases, this may be mid-quarter, with a student not registering for PA/H 509 course credit until the following quarter, although the work and time on-site has already begun. So, there is some flexibility in coordinating the on-site experience with course registration, by quarter. However, if it is important for the student to both begin the project and register for PA/H 509 course credit in the same quarter, then it is important to be mindful of the general start and end times of each quarter at PSU. They are, generally:

- Winter quarter: beginning of January – mid March
- Spring quarter: beginning of April – mid June
- Summer quarter: late June – early September
- Fall quarter: late September/early October – mid December

What if Difficulties Arise During the PA/H 509: Organizational Experience?

The PA/H 509: Organizational Experience is intended to be a "real life" experience for the student. As in real life, sometimes problems arise while working on a project in an organizational setting. Students are encouraged to contact their PA/H 509 faculty advisor immediately, if they experience any difficulties with the project, their field supervisor, or the field site, in general. Working closely with the field supervisor and the faculty advisor, most problems can be resolved if they are addressed early on. In rare instances, it becomes necessary to locate another, perhaps more appropriate placement.

A Checklist for Potential PA/H 509: Organizational Experience Field Sites

In an effort to provide our students with the best possible experience, potential field sites and supervisors are asked to consider this checklist in determining whether the field project and site will be suitable for a master's level student.

○ We are able to integrate the student into the appropriate work team. In other words, the student will be able to attend meetings; appropriate introductions will be made with key stakeholders or partners; and, so on.

○ If the student is working primarily off-site (i.e., not at our physical location), we are able to make arrangements to integrate them into the appropriate work team and to mentor them in their connections with stakeholders and partners, as appropriate.

○ We are able to provide necessary and applicable organizational information, documents, and records throughout the course of the project. These might include financial documents, organizational charts, meeting minutes, strategic plans, and so on, as appropriate.

○ We are available on a regular basis to provide ongoing communication, mentoring and supervision for the student with a single supervisor.

○ We understand that the student is not intended to act as administrative support or to take on a more basic, intern-level project, but rather, is intended to be engaged in a professional-level project.

○ We can provide the student with a dedicated workspace or appropriate remote access capabilities.

○ We are able to complete a brief questionnaire regarding the student and our field experience with them.

Contact Us

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