



Master of Public Administration (MPA)

Student Handbook



Updated August 1, 2021

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Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at the University of West Georgia. The MPA program is a professional degree program housed in the Department of Political Science, College of Social Sciences. The MPA program is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA).

The Master of Public Administration Program at University of West Georgia is a professional degree program that relates academic study to administrative practice. The curriculum is designed for those individuals who are either now in the public service or who are seeking a career in government or nonprofit agencies. The MPA program is designed: (1) to augment the skills and knowledge of those already in the public service; (2) to provide a professional graduate degree program to meet the growing need for many additional skilled, knowledgeable public administrators; (3) to encourage students to pursue careers in government by providing public administration education; and (4) to equip superior students for research and study at the doctoral level.

This handbook serves as a guide to the policies, requirements, and expectations of students within the program. Students should take the time to read this handbook in its entirety as they begin their graduate school career and keep it as a reference for the future. Students should feel free to contact their faculty advisor or the MPA Director should they have any question that is not adequately addressed in the handbook.

No handbook or website can answer all students' questions, and certainly cannot replace contact with the faculty and staff who are here to serve students. In particular, the following faculty and staff may be helpful in answering student questions or providing assistance:

- Jessica Thurber, Department Office Manager, jthurber@westga.edu
- Dr. Paul Rutledge, Department Chair, prutledg@westga.edu
- Dr. Anthony Fleming, Political Science Coordinator, afleming@westga.edu
- Dr. Sooho Lee, MPA director, slee@westga.edu
- Dr. Karen Owen, MPA faculty, kowen@westga.edu
- Dr. Kathleen Barrett, MPA faculty, kbarrett@westga.edu
- Dr. Anna Fleming, annaf@westga.edu

Mission, Values, and Learning Outcomes

Mission

The mission of the MPA program at University of West Georgia (UWG) is to educate current (in-service) and future (pre-service) public service leaders with ethical behavior and professional competencies that promote public service values extending from UWG's values of achievement, caring, collaboration, inclusiveness, innovation, integrity, sustainability, and wisdom. The program prepares students with the knowledge and skills to advance the public interest through teaching, research, and service to the community. (Amended on April 8, 2016)

Public Service Values

1. Professional competencies
2. Service to the public interest
3. Diversity in the faculty and student population
4. Ethical behavior

Overall Learning Outcomes

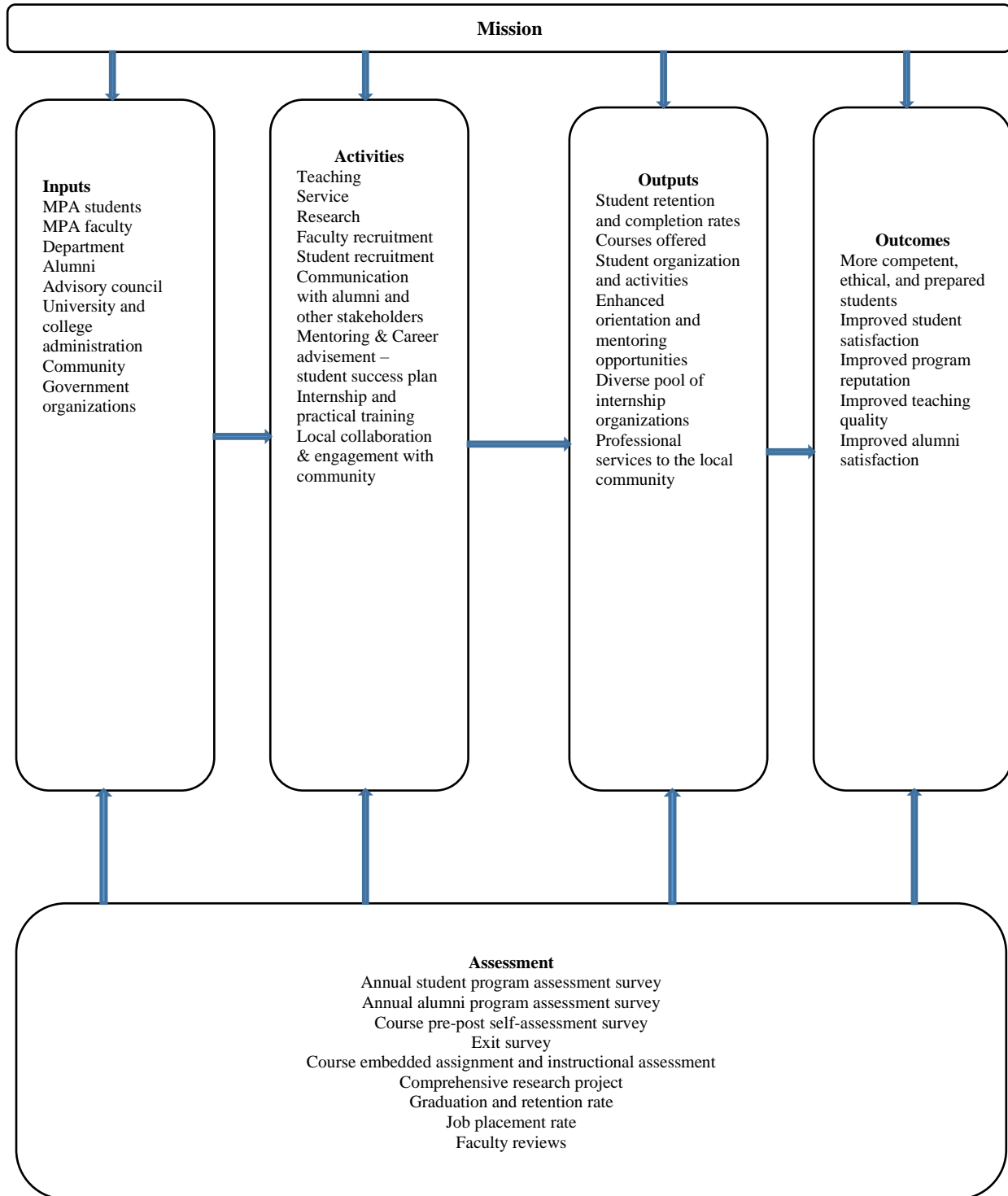
Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate effective leadership and management skills.
2. Assess the political, economic, and legal nature of the policymaking process and its implications on the work of public managers.
3. Synthesize, analyze, and apply theories and principles of public administration and management to solve problems in public and nonprofit organizations
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective
5. Apply qualitative and quantitative data analysis skills for public and community problem solving and decision-making
6. Communicate and interact effectively in an environment of changing demographics, evolving technology, and diverse perspectives.

NASPAA Universal Competencies

1. To lead and manage in public governance
2. To participate in and contribute to the policy process
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

The MPA Strategic Performance



Admission Requirements

This information is found at the admission website:

https://uwgonline.westga.edu/program_page.php?program_id=78

Guidelines for Admittance

- All graduate applicants must complete the [online Graduate Application](#). A one-time application fee of \$40 is required.
- Applicants should also review the Graduate Studies Website for individual program specific requirements and tasks that must be completed prior to admission. See [Graduate Studies Application Process](#).
- International applicants are subject to additional requirements and application deadlines. See [Procedures for International Students](#).
- Official transcripts from a regionally or nationally accredited institution are required and should be sent directly to the UWG Graduate Admissions Office.

Program Specific Admittance Guidelines

- A minimum total score of 291 (combining Verbal and Quantitative) on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). However, the following are eligible for a GRE Waiver (contact the MPA Director if you meet one of these criteria):
 - Applicant with an earned graduate degree from an accredited institution
 - Applicant with an earned undergraduate degree with an overall GPA of 3.0 or higher from an accredited institution
 - Applicant with an earned undergraduate degree with an overall GPA of 2.75 from an accredited institution and at least 3 years professional, full-time, public sector or nonprofit career experience
 - Applicant with a public or nonprofit work experience of at least 7 or more years in a full-time, relevant supervisory position
- Two letters of recommendation from former professors or from job supervisors.
- A minimum 2.5 cumulative grade average (GPA) equivalent on a 4.0 scale
- A personal statement of about 1,000 words that describes your work experience, professional goals, the reasons you have chosen this program, why you want to attend UWG, and how the MPA program will help you achieve your goals.
- A current resume

Application Deadlines

Specific Graduate Admissions Deadlines are available via the [Graduate School](#)

Registration for Courses and Financial Aid

Once admitted, students need to register courses and to check on financial aid programs if they need. Students should contact the MPA director for course registration and the Financial Aid Office (finaid@westga.edu) for financial programs.

The MPA director provides the course offering information and guide students what courses they will take. Students register courses on Banweb after login with a valid user id and password.

Degree Requirements

The program requires the completion of thirty-six (36) credit hours of graduate coursework. The coursework is composed of seven core courses, four elective courses, and comprehensive research project (Exit Paper).

Core Courses

The core curriculum of twenty-one credit hours of courses is required of all students. Students should take the core courses at the beginning of their matriculation in order to prepare them for the materials in their elective coursework and research projects. All MPA core courses are offered at least once during an academic year. The core courses are:

POLS 6200 Public Budgeting and Financial Management
POLS 6201 Theory of Public Administration and Ethics
POLS 6202 Research Methods for Public Administration
POLS 6203 Public Organizational Theory
POLS 6204 Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation
POLS 6205 Administrative Law and Procedures
POLS 6206 Public Human Resource Management

Elective Courses

Students must complete four elective courses. Public Administration Internship is one elective course and must be completed if not working as a full time in the public or nonprofit organization. Elective Courses are 5000 or 6000 level courses offered by the Political Science Department or other departments (courses from other departments must be approved by MPA Director). Elective Courses are offered in Fall, Spring and Summer Semesters.

Some popular elective courses are:

POLS 5209 Environmental Policy
POLS 5210 Public Management
POLS 5211 State & Local Politics & Administration
POLS 5213 Comparative Public Administration
POLS 5215 Management of Nonprofit Organizations
POLS 5216 Gun Policy
POLS 5217 Grant Writing for Nonprofit Organizations
POLS 5985 Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sector
POLS 5985 Public Health Administration and Policy
POLS 6211 Disaster and Emergency Management
POLS 6285 Special Topics in Public Policy/Administration

Public Administration Internship (POLS 6286)

Students not working in the public or nonprofit sector will do an internship (POLS 6286- Public Administration Internship). The internship must be approved by the Director. To register POLS 6286, please contact the MPA director. The student will also fill out the Internship Evaluation

Form and give it to their supervisor who will fill out the assessment of the intern section and return it to the Director by email, mail or in a sealed envelope to the student. In-service students will take another elective in lieu of the Internship.

- Some Examples of Internship Requesting Organizations (2020-2021)
 - Carroll County Humane Society
 - Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
 - ACCG
 - Secretary of the Senate’s Office, GA
 - City of Woodstock
 - City of Douglasville
 - Georgia County Internship Program (GCIP)
 - Coweta County – Public Works

Exit Paper

Students take POLS 6287 (Comprehensive Research Project, also called “Exit Paper”) in their final semester of the coursework. To register the course, students should contact one of the MPA faculty for the registration form. Students must select an Exit Paper Committee Chair from the MPA faculty and select two other committee members. Students work with the Chair to pick an appropriate topic and write a Research Prospectus explaining what they will study, how they plan to study it, and how they will analyze what they find. Then, students turn in the first draft to Chair. Students will rewrite and give second draft to Chair and other committee members. Finally, students rewrite again and give final version to all committee members. Please see Appendix A for more detailed guideline.

Oral Defense

Students must defend their Exit paper research before the committee. Students prepare a power point slide file and present for about 30 minutes. Then, they take/respond questions from the committee members. After presentations and Q&A discussion, the committee evaluate the student’s performance (both paper and oral defense).

Requirement Summary

Requirements	In-service Students	Not-in-service Students
Core Courses	21 Credit hours	21 Credit hours
Internship	Not required	3 Credit hours
Elective Courses	12 Credit hours	9 Credit hours
Exit Paper (Comprehensive Research Project)	3 Credit hours	3 Credit hours
Oral Defense	Required	Required
Total	36 Credit hours	36 Credit hours

Introductory Course (POLS 5200 Principles of Public Administration)

Students who are admitted in the program but do not have a background in Political science, Public Administration, or social sciences must take this introductory course. However, it doesn't count toward the elective course requirement and the degree required total credit.

Other Important MPA Degree Information

- **Deadline Compliance.** Failure to comply with Exit Paper and Graduation deadlines will result in graduation delays.
- **Schedule.** Schedule early with your major professor and discuss the role of your committee members in the process.
- **Six Year Rule.** You have six (6) years from the date of your oldest course to complete the MPA degree.
- **Transfer Hours.** Students may not transfer in more than six hours to the MPA program. Subject to Departmental and Graduate School office approval. Transfer hours count as campus hours. Courses taken during a period that would place a student beyond the six-year period for the completion of his/her degree are not transferable. Transfer of credit forms may be obtained in the Graduate Office.

Directed Readings and Independent Study Courses

Students may take directed readings and independent study courses depending on their needs and faculty availability. Students should inform their faculty advisor of the study goal, purpose, and scope before the faculty advisor sign a registration form.

Wolf Watch

Wolf Watch (Degree Works) is a web-based tool designed to help students and advisors monitor students' progression toward degree completion. Wolf Watch tracks degree progress, prepares for registration, and plans for graduation. This degree audit system combines UWG's degree requirements and students' completed coursework in a user-friendly worksheet. Wolf Watch is an effective tool that aids academic advising, but it is not intended to replace face-to-face advising sessions.

*** When students take elective courses, the record on Wolf Watch does not automatically show the courses in the elective course section. Students need to notify the MPA director that they have completed taking three or four elective courses during their final semester. The MPA director will place a petition on Wolf Watch to move the courses to the proper elective course section. Then, the record is updated soon.

Course Syllabi

The course syllabi of all the MPA program are available on this site:

<https://www.westga.edu/academics/courses.php>

Study Plan and Course Loads

Although we suggest the following examples for planning, students still may take courses based upon their preferences and needs. These are simply suggested, not required.

MPA Curriculum Map (Full time)

Year	Term	Suggested Courses	Credits	Accumulated Credits
1	Fall	6201-Theory of Public Administration and Ethics	3	3
		6202-Research Methods for Public Administration	3	6
		6203- Public Organizational Theory	3	9
	Spring	6200- Public Budgeting and Financial Management	3	12
		6204- Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation	3	15
		6205- Administrative Law & Procedures	3	18
	Summer	elective	3	21
elective		3	24	
2	Fall	6206- Public Human Resources Management	3	27
		6286- Internship	3	30
		elective	3	33
	Spring	6287- Comprehensive Research Project	3	36

MPA Curriculum Map (Part time - If you take two courses per semester)

Year	Term	Suggested Courses	Credits	Accumulated Credits
1	Fall	6201-Theory of Public Administration and Ethics	3	3
		6202-Research Methods for Public Administration	3	6
	Spring	6203- Public Organizational Theory	3	9
		6204- Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation	3	12
	Summer	elective	3	15
elective		3	18	
2	Fall	6206- Public Human Resources Management	3	21
		elective	3	24
	Spring	6200- Public Budgeting and Financial Management	3	27
		6205- Administrative Law & Procedures	3	30
	Summer	6286- Internship	3	33
		6287- Comprehensive Research Project	3	36

Certificate Programs

The MPA program has three certificate programs. Students may choose to use their elective courses toward completing one of the certificates that the program offers. If MPA students complete the requirements, they can receive the certificate with the MPA degree.

Certificate on Management of Nonprofit Organization and Community Development
Certificate on Public Management
Certificate on Disaster and Emergency Management

Certificate on Management of Nonprofit Organization and Community Development

The Nonprofit and Community Development certificate is designed for students who want to learn how to establish, administer, or work for non-governmental and non-profit organizations. While conventional certificate programs have an exclusively managerial focus, our program supplements managerial training by also equipping students with the theoretical and practical skills to engage in grassroots advocacy.

Total semester hours required: 15

Maximum Hours Transferable into program: 6

(See the Political Science Department website or College Graduate Catalog for required and elective courses needed for the Certificate.)

Certificate on Public Management

The CPM is designed to meet the needs of practicing public administrators who already have a bachelor's degree and who desire to: broaden their understanding of the concepts and techniques of public management; or pursue the certificate with the goal of career advancement but do not find it necessary or feasible to complete the MPA degree; or continue their education with the goal of earning a graduate degree in public administration (MPA).

Total semester hours required: 12

(See the Department of Civic Engagement and Public Service website or College Graduate Catalog for required and elective courses needed for the Certificate.)

Certificate on Disaster and Emergency Management

This an embedded certificate program.

Academic Integrity

The UWG Honor Code

“At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the Honor Code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to plagiarism, cheating*, fabrication*, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing.”*

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s work, including the work of other students, as one’s own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge.

- A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgment.
- A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge indebtedness whenever:
 - a. directly quoting another person’s actual words, whether oral or written;
 - b. using another person’s ideas, opinions, or theories;
 - c. paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;
 - d. borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or
 - e. offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment

Graduation

To graduate, students must submit the Online Graduate Application for Graduation and an application fee (\$40.00) prior to the deadlines. The detailed graduation information is found at the Registrar's Office website. The current year deadlines are:

Spring Graduation: October 1

Summer Graduation: March 1

Fall Graduation: August 1

Career Service

The Career Services department offer a multitude of resources and services that will help students find their jobs. The services include career counseling, resume workshops, mock interviews, and more. Also, they often hold events such as career fairs, panel discussions, recruiting meetings, etc.. Please access their website: <https://www.westga.edu/student-services/careerservices/>

Student Needs and Faculty Mentoring

Faculty Mentoring

Each year the program assigns a faculty mentor for all MPA students in the department. The purpose of assigning a faculty mentor is to help guide students, answer questions about the curriculum and program, and to help students with opportunities during their time in the program and beyond. The program also strongly suggests that students get to know the entire faculty in the program. Each faculty member has a different scholarly focus, teaching interests, and personality with which students might connect. This mentor does not automatically become chair of exit paper committee. Students may choose their committee chair based upon their degree plan. The program strongly encourages students to actively communicate with the faculty members.

Student Learning Portfolio

Student Learning Portfolio (SLP) is a tool by which faculty advises students more adequately, by letting them know about resources in the larger university community that can facilitate students' educational success, and both students and faculty track and assess students' progress throughout the program. SLP will help students detail the capacities, skills, competencies, abilities, and accomplishments they have acquired or developed over their professional and educational career.

Student Annual Program Assessment Survey

Students are the main stakeholders of the program and the program needs students' inputs to assess the program performances and quality, and to develop the program's new direction and strategy. The survey is conducted every spring.

Appendix

Exit Paper Guidelines

(POLS 6287 Comprehensive Research Project)

(August 28, 2018 – revised
November 28, 2017 – approved)

I. Overview and Learning Outcomes

The exit paper is the MPA program’s capstone research project that analyzes issues in public administration, public policies, and nonprofit sector. The exit paper is a cumulating experience and demonstrates in a concrete and summative way the analytic, policy, organization, and writing skills of the student. Students should review relevant theories and previous studies to frame their own research questions and hypotheses. Students may use quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods for collecting and analyzing data. Exit papers should be student’s original work. In addition, students should orally defend their paper before a three-member committee (two of them should be the current UWG MPA faculty).

This course has four student learning outcomes: (1) the ability to properly research and compile a manuscript that clearly analyzes a public policy, public organization, or nonprofit sector (NASPAA Competence 1, 3, 4), (2) thorough knowledge of research procedures (NASPAA Competence 1, 3, 4), (3) verbal abilities that clearly convey their research objectives and findings (NASPAA Competence 1, 3, 4), (4) the advanced ability to present their research orally (NASPAA Competence 1, 3, 4, 5).

II. Choice of Topic

Students can choose any topic in the areas of public administration, public policy, governmental issues, and nonprofit organizations/management. Topic should be approved by student’s committee chair. The Program strongly recommends that students should initiate a discussion with MPA faculty for a topic as early as possible, at least before the semester for which the POLS 6287 is registered. Once a topic is decided, students should prepare a short synopsis (about 500 words) that describes a background, key question(s), and a plan to conduct the research.

III. Content

The content of Exit Paper could vary depending on the nature of the research. Here is a common structure of research paper. However, the section titles could be changed. Also see more information in V. Style and Format section below.

- a. Cover page:
 - Topic

- Author Name
 - “Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of West Georgia in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Public Administration degree”
 - Committee members
 - Date
 - University of West Georgia
- b. Abstract
It should include a short background description, research question(s), method and data, and major findings. The recommended length is between 300 and 500 words.
- c. Table of Contents
Section titles and page numbers
- d. Introduction
It typically includes a background description, research question(s), significance, and organization of the paper
- e. Literature review
It should critically review relevant previous studies – major issues, findings, implications, or problems
- f. Conceptual framework and hypotheses
Based on the literature review and the research question, hypotheses are proposed through deductive and inductive reasoning. Not all papers are required to form hypotheses.
- g. Data and method
To test the hypotheses or the framework (research questions), data are collected. Describe the method of data collection and analysis of the data.
- h. Findings
Provide results (findings) with analysis of quantitative and/or qualitative data/information
- i. Discussion
Provide the interpretation of the findings (for specific context) and discussion major implications. Also, provide recommendations for policy or organizations.
- j. Conclusion
Short summary of the paper and recommendations for future study
- k. References

At least 20 different sources are required. Among them, at least 10 sources are from academic journals/books.

1. Appendix

If necessary, provide appendices

IV. Length

Exit paper should be at least 33 pages long (except Cover Page, Abstract, Table of Contents, References, and Appendices).

V. Style and Format

Exit paper should be typed by New Time Roman 12 font, double-spaced, 1 inch margin (top, bottom, left, and right). In terms of style, the Program highly recommends APA.

VI. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

If a student wants to use a survey or interviews in their Exit Paper and the results will only be used for the paper, the chair of the committee should submit the Classroom Research Form to the UWG IRB. If there is any possibility that the research will be used for purposes other than just the paper (such as publication or a policy recommendation), IRB review is necessary. Students can obtain an IRB certificate through CITI Training (<https://about.citiprogram.org/en/homepage/>) via online. Please check on this site for more details (https://www.westga.edu/academics/research/orsp/assets/docs/UWG_IRB-Guidelines.pdf)

VII. Oral Defense

When a submitted paper is qualified, the committee allows students to schedule oral defense. Oral defense should be conducted before the committee members. Students present their research for about 30 minutes and take/answer questions from the committee members and audiences. At the end of the oral defense, the result is notified to students by the committee.

VIII. Deadline

Students should keep the deadline to complete their papers and defense. If any of the components does not meet the deadline, students cannot graduate in the semester. The table shows the deadlines in both Fall and Spring semesters. However, for summer, the deadline intervals are much shorter.

Components	Deadline	Approver(s)
Topic	By the end of the 2 nd week of the semester	Committee Chair
First Draft	By the end of the 10 th week of the semester	Committee Chair and Members
Revised Draft	By the end of the 12 th week of the semester	Committee Chair and Members

Oral Defense	Depending on the Registrar's schedule (About by the end of the 14 th week)	Committee Chair and Members
Final Draft	By the committee recommendation	Committee Chair and Members

Virtual Oral Defense Guideline for MPA Exit Paper

MPA, University of West Georgia

(drafted Oct 24, 2019)

The guideline intends to assist MPA students to better prepare their oral defense for their exit paper. Before or during working on their exit paper, MPA students must read this guideline and plan the necessary steps accordingly.

I. Scheduling a defense date

When you are close to completion of your exit paper, you should schedule a defense date with advice of your exit paper committee chair. Each semester the final deadline for graduation requirement is notified by the MPA director or your chair (see the approximate date in the MPA student handbook). The oral defense must be completed before the final deadline.

II. Virtual communication set-up

You and your chair may select the best networking tool/venue for presentation, which include Skype, Google Hangout, Blackboard Collaborate, etc.. Selection of a venue would depend on familiarity and availability of students and faculty members. The bottom line is that the venue should allow both audio and visual functions so that the committee could properly evaluate your presentation content and quality.

III. Power Point Slides

You must prepare a file of ppt for presentation and email it to your committee before the presentation. The length of ppt is a maximum of 12 slides without including cover and reference slides (If you need more slides, ask permission to your chair). It should be professionally formatted and properly highlighted the main points of the exit paper.

IV. Presentation time and manner

Student's oral presentation should be completed in 20 minutes. Emphasis on research question, hypothesis (if you have), theory, methods, major findings, and implications (recommendations). Although you can present at home, assume that you are presenting the paper before the public. During your presentation, you should control the environment – "no noise." The goal of the presentation is to demonstrate mastery of the topic, not a simple reading of the Power Point slides.

V. Response to the committee members' questions and comments

Committee members could ask question anytime during your presentation. But most questions are made after the presentation. You should fully respond to your committee members' comments and questions. Poor response could be understood as lack of understanding of your own research.

VI. Committee decision

After the presentation and Q&A, the committee members have their own evaluation meeting for about 10 or 15 minutes. During this time, the network connection stops and returns as soon as the meeting is over. The meeting determines the defense result.

VII. Notification of result and comments for revision

The committee chair notifies you the result right after the committee meeting is completed. Normally the committee provides detailed comments for further revision of the exit paper. If the committee requires a revision, you must complete the revision within the date that the committee sets. Otherwise, graduation would be delayed.

VIII. Exit interviews

The final step of the oral defense is to take exit interview. This interview has nothing to do with the result of the oral defense or any other requirement. Simply the program wants to collect feedback from students so that the program could improve its performance and student support. Thus, the committee members will discuss various issues with students. Just enjoy the discussion and provide your thoughts for us.