

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN BERNARDINO

PA 999: Culminating Activity for the Master of Public Administration (MPA)

Course Purpose

PA 999 is the final course for the Master of Public Administration degree. Its purpose is to:

- 1) Assess whether potential graduates have achieved satisfactory competence in public administration knowledge
- 2) Assist graduates in their career development
- 3) Assess the MPA degree program

This zero-unit course assesses your knowledge of public administration and enables the MPA faculty to evaluate the effectiveness of its program. It requires you to reflect on and write about how the degree program changed you and your understanding of public administration. The course will also develop your career and professional aspirations via a selection of career development activities. You must have completed ALL core classes before you can take the Comprehensive Exam.

There are four components to the course which you must complete:

1. Comprehensive Exam
2. Reflective Essay --- emailed directly to Dr. Anderson
3. Exit Survey
4. Career Development Activities --- while the exam, survey and essay are to be completed during the quarter you are enrolled in PA 999, you may complete the career development activities earlier in your program.

NOTE: You must complete all 4 parts of the course in order to graduate. You must turn in the last page of this handout with the required signatures.

1. Comprehensive Exam

The comprehensive exam is the culminating activity of the MPA program. It has two purposes. The first is to judge whether you have a basic understanding of public administration. You must pass the exam to attain your degree. The pool of questions for MPA students for 2015-16 has been revised. Because students have foreknowledge of the questions being asked, essays are expected to be (a) very well organized and well written, (b) fully discussed, and (c) highly focused. Please review the advice provided on point 12 of the 27 Points advising letter found on the program website <http://mpa.csusb.edu/advising.html>.

The MPA Comprehensive Exam consists of two parts; a core course section and an integrative section. On exam day you will be required to answer two core questions and one integrative question. There are four possible questions for each core course. One question for each core course will be on the exam. You will select which two questions you will answer.

After the core questions are a list of five integrative case study questions. **For the exam you will be randomly assigned ONE of the integrative questions to answer.** That means you need to prepare for all of them. We provide you a grading rubric for each question to assist in your preparation.

Format of Exam

The test is closed-book. You will type your answers in a computer lab but you will not have access to the internet. Typing is preferred but you may handwrite the exam. The exams go to PA faculty graders without your names or identification. Two readers independently read exams and assign a grade of high pass, pass, or fail. Disagreements go to a third reader.

NOTE: If there is any question of cheating or test security whatsoever, your exam will be marked as a Fail.

Grades

Grades for PA 999 are either credit (CR) or no credit (NC). The department assigns grades of High Pass, Pass or Fail to the Comprehensive Exam and these results will be mailed to you. Typically, about 85% of students pass the exam. The reasons for students not passing are usually because of lack of preparation, organization or neglecting to answer parts of the questions (see the 27 points). Because there are only three questions, failing one question results in failing the exam. Students who do not receive a passing grade may repeat the examination, one additional time only, with the written approval of the MPA Graduate Coordinator. This is not automatic. If you wish to take the exam a second time, you must fill out a "[Petition to Repeat the MPA Comprehensive Examination](#)."

NOTE: Students desiring to do the Graduate Research Project must have pursued that option early in their program. Students who fail the comprehensive exam may NOT petition to undertake the Graduate Research Project.

2. Reflective Essay

To complete your degree you took nine core classes which addressed general public administration areas and at least three (five for Cyber Security) additional courses. Your academic journey has changed the way you look at public administration. In this Essay you are asked to reflect on your experience and how it changed you, your understanding of public administration and your approach to public service. These changes are not simply about gaining academic knowledge, but about changing the way you look at the world and think about it. Please take some time to think about this. Please include your understanding of the goals of public administration and public service values. While good writing is important, this is not a graded exercise. It is where we, as faculty, hear what you felt you learned during your time with us.

Please follow this format for your Reflective Essay:

- 2 pages long minimum, and can be longer if you want
- Single spaced with 1" margins
- 12 point scale in Arial font
- Email this in a Word attachment directly to Dr. Anderson

3. Exit Survey

The third component to the course is an exit survey in which you evaluate the MPA program and provide feedback to improve the program for future students. This survey is administered online via Qualtrics and is anonymous. Please complete this as soon as you receive the link.

4. Career Development Activities – With Dr. Abell

You returned to school to advance your career. You probably are looking to either secure a public administration position or get a promotion. To do this you will need a resume, interview skills and an understanding of where you want to go with your career.

To fulfill the requirements of this portion of PA 999 you must complete all three sections of the PA 999 Blackboard course (full instructions and details are on Blackboard PA 999):

1. Portfolio –complete all 3
 - a. Career Readiness Plan
 - b. 1 page resume
 - c. 3-5 page resume
2. Quizzes – complete all two
 - a. Resume Skills Quiz
 - b. Interview Skills Quiz
3. Career Activities – complete 3 out of the 9 choices
 - a. Career webinars
 - b. Online interview practice
 - c. Pymetrics job strengths
 - d. Strong Inventory job strengths
 - e. Myers Briggs Assessment
 - f. Attend 2 Toastmasters meetings
 - g. Attend a resume webinar or workshop
 - h. Attend an interview skills webinar or workshop
 - i. Career appointment

NOTE: If you are unable to complete these items, please make a phone appointment with Dr. Abell immediately to discuss other options.

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