

Master of Public Administration Program
Program Level Outcomes Assessment
AY2022 - 2023

Annual Program Assessment Reports should be based on program assessment plans; be approximately three to five pages in length; and provide the following:

1. Brief Program Overview (250 words max.)

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) is a professional management degree for individuals interested in public service careers. The MPA degree prepares students for leadership at all levels of government and in nonprofit organizations. It is designed for working professionals who seek to increase knowledge, competencies, workplace skills, and credentials in public administration. The MPA program creates a community of leaders who network across the State of Alaska and the Yukon Territory to address the organizational and managerial issues in the public and nonprofit sectors through the practical application of innovative problem-solving strategies.

Mission

The UAS Master of Public Administration program prepares students to be competent, ethical, and effective public and nonprofit administrators and leaders for a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. The MPA program is committed to practitioner-oriented instruction, flexible and convenient online learning, and offering courses relevant to students in the State of Alaska and the Yukon Territory.

Program Goals: Developing Workplace Competencies

UAS MPA program learning goals are based on the program mission, our public service values, and competencies required by professional standards (NASPAA – Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration). The MPA curriculum is developed to include required competencies in five domains, including the ability to:

1. Lead and manage in public governance.
2. Participate in and contribute to the policy process.
3. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective.
5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

2. Program Level Learning Outcomes (PLOs).

Program Level Learning Outcomes:

PLOs describe what we want our students to know or have learned by the time they finish the program. Upon graduating from the UAS MPA program, students will be able to learn, value, and demonstrate the following:

1. Identify and analyze a current public policy or public administration issue by integrating relevant theory and practice
2. Integrate knowledge across public administration areas and select and apply appropriate frameworks to identify and address public administration problems and or opportunities.
3. Integrate findings on democracy, including the political environment and civic engagement, using multiple perspectives and praxis as a framework to analyze a public program or organization.
4. Demonstrate professional writing skills, effective communication, and the ability to present, using best practices in public administration.

We have aligned the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for specific courses with the program-level outcomes

3. How the data is collected on the PLOs (rubrics, portfolios, etc.)

PLOs assessment has three dimensions:

1. Direct measures (observations) evaluating the capstone course, where PLOs are the grading rubrics and evaluation criteria framework.
2. Direct measures (observation) of major assignments (tests, case studies, reflection papers, final projects, presentations) in specific courses supporting PLOs. The final report has grading rubrics with assigned points.
3. Indirect measures (perception) of how students, employers, and alums feel about the learning experience and quality in the MPA program through anonymous student ratings, various surveys, focus groups, time to degree, job placement, and career advancement data.

4. The data collected on the PLOs during the previous academic year (assessment period)

The data collected in the Capstone course is subjective and difficult to quantify.

Most of the evaluation is based on their ability to identify problems and propose solutions to community or organizational problems.

Data is collected by observation and also by reviewing the rubric for grading. Students meet with me every week one-on-one to discuss where they are in their project. Through these meetings I am able to gauge where a student begins and where they end up in terms of the learning process. In the meetings we discuss what the student needs for that week. Sometimes we determine a direction for the next week and sometimes it is just a check in to keep them honest. There is no new material taught in the Capstone. I mainly point them in directions to go to obtain the information they need for their analysis.

The following are examples of a random sample from AY 22-23 Capstone papers:

Example #1: Recommendations for consolidating or not the city and the borough of Ketchikan

Consolidation in larger communities in both geographical area and population may not allow for the championed benefits of a consolidated government. Ketchikan is unique in both its isolated geographic location and relatively small population. There are approximately 14,000 residents within the community of Ketchikan, approximately 62% of the residents are represented by two governments with overlapping and different municipal powers. Consolidation would eliminate the duplication of services, streamline government processes while increasing efficiency and provide a more equitable government, representing all members of the community. Coming up with his recommendation. He has been hired by the city to look into the issue of consolidating the borough and the city.

Example #2: Recommendations for municipality initiative

Now, as the community faces less than 6 months until we re-establish operating control on our port, we face the problem of effectively utilizing the public process to establish departments and develop infrastructure when significant division exists. Through this paper, I will provide an understanding of what the Municipality of Skagway's role is within the community. Next, I will explore and discuss the public process used thus far in developing a plan and then review what was done and how the public has responded to the port development process thus far. Finally, supporting praxis, I will provide various recommendations that could be implemented to improve the public process when pursuing a major development effort by gaining public unity through the public process.

Example #3: Program review of a non-profit

The organization analysis of organization X addresses: organizational structure, behavior, leadership, diversity, culture, clarity, and approach to finances in keeping with essential elements in the theory of Public Administration. Recommendations are made in conclusion for the leadership to intentionally adopt "strategic doing," develop an effective program

evaluation, and perform a stakeholder analysis in order to further their work and positively impact the community of Valdez.

Example #4: Case study of two incentive programs for university employees

As shown below, this paper focuses on the growing issue of the lack of equitable employee compensation in higher education. The University of Alaska is used as a specific example in considering whether employee pay equity gaps can be helped through salary incremental increases due to individual academic achievement, and further whether this represents an equitable solution for all University of Alaska employees. The research approach included a comparison of compensation studies conducted at the University of Alaska and California State University to assess education benefits as a cost-benefit solution. A key result is that while employee tuition benefits are a useful incentive for recruiting and retaining talented employees, this incentive does not resolve pay inequity nor compensate for current employees nor is it inclusive of all employee classifications. It is recommended that UA conduct an internal equity comparison to establish a fair and robust compensation plan for all employees. This recommendation is determined to be essential not only to attract and retain dedicated and knowledgeable employees, but to ensure the competitiveness of the university.

Example #5: How to solve a local problem while involving the public

Started in 2017 and continuing today, the Denali Borough Street Addressing Project, despite the best efforts of staff and leadership to guide the direction and timeline, took on “a life of its own”. This paper will examine the public administration theories and principles of leadership, organizational development, public policy, accountability, and finance in relationship to this new and complex public administrative project. Lessons learned will be shared and recommendations provided for the benefit of others who may need to re-address or for the many Alaskan areas lacking official street addresses. The State of Alaska currently offers no guidance for local governments or directions for street addressing.

Example #6: Program evaluation recommendations of a non-profit

The following recommendations are offered to GVBC to further increase organizational efficiency and enhance outcomes:

1. Clarify organizational processes by offering training to all Committee Chairs, Committee Members, and holders of named positions in the church so everyone understands the role of Committee, Church Council, named positions, and the process by which decisions are made.

2. Conduct a review of the committee and named position structure that exists at GVBC with the aim of reducing committees/positions and seats to reduce organizational complexity and increase efficiency and agility.
3. Conduct a review of the Constitution and Bylaws to ensure they are meeting the organization's needs and are in alignment with the organizations structure.
4. Officially adopt a mission and vision statement and fully adopt them into the organization for broader use and guiding purposes.
5. Develop succession and transition plans for the Pastor and other key leaders to prevent organizational struggles and destabilization.
6. Develop and implement a succession plan to transition a small number of longer serving and highly influential members out of official roles and into informal coaching roles so as to keep their organizational knowledge yet grow and develop newer members into members who can effectively run and lead GVBC into the future.
7. Audit the financial record, by convening a team or hiring an outside auditor to review the financial records.
8. Develop and implement a systematic and church wide records retention strategy for the capture and archiving of church records, attendance data, member data, meeting decisions, major milestones, and other records that can be readily accessed and used by the organization.

5. An evaluation/analysis of the data collected

The information collected from the AY22-23 cohort demonstrates that most students fall in the "exemplary" category of the rubric. Through their capstone projects they are able to demonstrate their ability to integrate the theory and practice when applying what they have learned to their real-world environment. Students showed that they had a grasp of the theory and the other concepts of the public administration curriculum, and they are able to provide not only an analysis of a particular policy or program but also recommendations for future progress.

The examples above reveal how students approach their projects. They are to identify an issue or a program that they would like to investigate. This can be an issue or a program to review and requires an in-depth analysis of the topic. From there students are required to provide recommendations for going forth with the project or the program. This additional step requires them to integrate the learning and come up with innovative solutions to problems that their organizations see daily.

The main weaknesses seen in the observations of the student's work is that they often have a difficult time integrating the principles of democracy into the work that they do. Civic engagement is one of the most democratic sides of government. Students are encouraged to create solutions to problems that engage the public as well as provide an avenue for participation. This is something that we need to integrate more fully into the program. Transparency and providing an avenue for input is the ethical way to approach public problems. More reliance on having to show how they would include the public (or employees) in the decision-making process would provide for better decisions.

6. Conclusions and plans for program improvement

The MPA program has continued to put out quality graduates who meet all the outcomes of a successful MPA graduate student. Students are charged to demonstrate their ability to identify problems in a world where "wicked problems" are a daily occurrence. From the identification comes an analysis which includes a review of theory but mostly best practices in the various fields covered in the MPA curriculum. Through this analysis students are able to see where they can directly apply the things they are learning to problems or evaluation that occur in their own organizations. From there they are to provide recommendations for further action. These most likely involve steps for continuous improvement.

Areas where the MPA program can improve

- Curriculum, new electives, certificates.
 1. Analyze the public sector needs, students' interests, and national trends in course offerings in Master of Public Administration programs.
 2. Move from Concentrations to Certificates. The latter provides for students to come in and acquire information about a particular area (Higher Education, Leadership) in a shorter amount of time. Students who get a Certificate can also choose to go onto the full MPA degree if they choose and the Certificate credits will all apply to the degree.

- Surveys and Advisory Board
 1. Use research data, surveys, and the MPA Advisory Board suggestions to consider the curriculum enrichments, adding new elective courses and special topics
 2. Add an exit survey to the Capstone course to gauge where students are when they leave the program. They can help us to understand everything from the curriculum we deliver to our online delivery model. All of these are important for the learning experience of the students.