

University of South Carolina
Master of Public Administration Program
Poli 779: Public Administration Internship

Internship Paper Guidelines

All students enrolled in Poli 779 (public administration internship) must submit a satisfactory research paper to the Internship program director. Academic credit for POLI 779 will not be awarded until all of the internship requirements—including the submission of a satisfactory paper—have been met. In the past, there has been some confusion surrounding the internship paper requirement. Several MPA students has asked, “What am I supposed to include in my internship paper?” Other students have raised concerns about the required length for their papers. The following guidelines should help to clear up questions such as these.

First, you should think of your internship paper in the same terms as you would for a paper requirement in any other MPA class. That is, the paper should be thoughtfully organized, neatly written, an appropriate length (approximately 10 to 20 double spaced pages), and properly cited. The paper should be organized into the following 3 major sections:

- 1) A brief narrative component, describing the internship agency and the nature of your internship responsibilities
- 2) An analytical component, relating your internship experiences with the curriculum of the MPA program
- 3) An overall evaluation of the internship

For example: If your internship was with the S.C. Department of Social Services (DSS), you might:

- briefly describe the mission of DSS and your role within the agency;
- explain a significant project or development at DSS and relate that to the curriculum of the MPA program. Suppose, for example, that DSS undertook a “Total quality” government initiative. You might: describe TQM as presented by Deming (1986) etc.; discuss the problems associated with adapting TQM to government as identified by Swiss (1992) and Cohen and Brand (1993) ; and relate these arguments to what you observed at DSS.
- provide an evaluation of the internship (Was it a good learning experience? How does the theory of public administration differ from what you experienced in practice? Are there aspects of public administration that must be learned “on the job?” etc.).

The underlying idea, which is probably obvious, is for students to reflect upon what they have learned in the classroom and to compare that with what was learned in the organizational setting.

Finally, students should take the paper seriously. Poli 779 carries three academic credits, so it definitely should not be taken lightly.

1 Deming, W. Edwards. 1986. *Out of the Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: MIT.

2 Swiss, James E. 1992 “Adapting TQM to Government.” *PAR*, vol. 52 (4), pp. 356-362

3 Cohen, Steven, and Ronald Brand. 1993. *Total Quality Management in Government*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.