

## Guidelines for UNCP MPA Professional Paper

1. When a student feels prepared to begin work on the Professional Paper, he or she should seek a principal adviser for the project from among faculty with whom the student has worked and/or who can offer expertise for the proposed topic. Typically, those most appropriate will be faculty from the student's concentration, but prior class experiences and topics beyond conventional subject boundaries may suggest other faculty members as potential advisers. *It is the student's responsibility to secure a faculty member's agreement to serve as principal adviser.* To facilitate this process, students should produce a one to two page summary of the paper topic and potential research questions to receive attention in the project; students should make this summary available to faculty the student contacts upon request. Students should remember this initial summary is a "work in progress" with the topic, research questions, and approach likely modified from this initial summary.
  - a. The topic should provide an opportunity for the student to utilize skills and analytical techniques learned during the MPA coursework. The project may reflect a traditional research study, or may incorporate analytical techniques such as program evaluation or financial analysis to address a managerial or policy issue. The project should require skills, knowledge, and tasks beyond those possessed by the student upon entry to the program. The final product will naturally include an extended narrative, incorporating qualitative or quantitative analysis, an extensive literature review, and discussion of relevance to those interested in management and administration.
2. When a faculty member has agreed to serve as principal adviser, the student will complete a Professional Paper Topic Approval form. The form indicates the name of the professor who will serve as the principal adviser for the project and will include a copy of the initial topic summary produced by the student. The form must be signed by the academic adviser, who will forward a copy to the department office.
3. Upon receipt of the Paper Topic Approval form by the department office, a faculty member (other than the principal paper adviser) from the PA faculty will be assigned randomly to the student's project. Those two faculty members will serve as the oversight committee for the student's project. Students may request additional faculty to serve on the committee to provide additional expertise, with the approval of their adviser; it is the job of the student to secure these additional faculty members' approval for participation in the committee.
4. After consulting with the members of the committee, the student will prepare a Professional Paper Proposal, following the guidelines listed on the form returned to the student by the MPA Office. Essentially, this will include a narrative of 8-12 pages (double-spaced) explaining the project, its relevance to the student's preparation, and discuss briefly key questions regarding any methodological issues. The proposal will have at least one appendix – a proposed timeline for project completion. Members of the committee may require additional discussions or topics are included in the proposal as a condition for their approval of the proposal.

5. As a student nears completion of a complete draft of the Proposal, he or she is responsible for meeting with the committee collectively or individually to seek feedback for the draft. Upon receiving feedback, the student will continue to revise the project, incorporating the feedback into the Proposal.
6. Once the Proposal is completed by the student, it will be submitted to all committee members. The student will meet with committee members collectively (in person or via conference call) to discuss the proposal. Students should anticipate revising and resubmitting their proposal if the committee feels additional work is necessary to produce a clear guideline for the project. Additional meetings between the student and committee members may be necessary to secure approval of all committee members. The review process will continue until all faculty members sign the Proposal form, with a completed copy sent to the MPA Office. Students intending projects necessitating Human Subjects Review should secure approval at this stage of the process.
7. No student will be allowed to submit an Application for Graduate Degree until successful approval of the Project Proposal.
8. Students should continue to communicate with committee members after completion of the Proposal during project development. They are strongly encouraged to submit drafts as they develop the project, and the principal adviser may require formal submission of drafts according to the proposal timeline. The complete draft submitted to the faculty committee prior to a defense should NOT represent the first draft of the project.
9. When the student and the committee members agree the preliminary drafts have been sufficiently revised, the student may request a formal defense of the paper through the PA Department. Students will find a time agreed upon by all members of the committee and submit that proposed meeting time to the PA Department, who shall announce the scheduled meeting. Students will submit their most recent revised drafts to the PA Department, to be distributed to the members of the committee. Faculty members MUST have a complete draft three weeks prior to the scheduled meeting, so failure to submit the draft by that deadline will result in cancellation of the defense and may delay graduation. All faculty members must participate in the meeting, at which the student will briefly present the paper and spend the majority of time answering questions about the project. The complete draft cannot be submitted in any "bound" fashion indicating completion prior to the meeting.
10. The student is responsible for completing all revisions requested by the committee within UNCP deadlines for grading and evaluation or a grade of T will be issued and the student's graduation will be postponed until the following semester.
11. Beginning Jan. 1, 2011, all professional papers will follow APA citation formats, as will be required in MPA classes for all assignments.

## Professional Paper Topic Approval

Form prepared by student with signatures obtained by student for submission to MPA Office.

**Student name:** Click here to enter text.

**Current adviser:** Click here to enter text.

**Preliminary title for project:** Click here to enter text.

**Proposed principal project adviser and paper committee chair:** Click here to enter text.

**(Optional) Name(s) of other requested members of committee:** Click here to enter text.

*Attach a one to two page summary of the paper topic and potential research questions to receive attention in the project.*

X

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Signature of adviser and date

X

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Signature of principal paper adviser and date

*When you have the above approval signatures, submit a signed copy AND an electronic copy of this form to the MPA Office.*

**To be completed by the MPA Office:**

**Additional faculty member assigned to project committee by MPA Office:** Click here to enter text.

X

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Signature of MPA Director and date

## **Professional Paper Advising Committee notification**

Form prepared by MPA Office.

**Student name:** Click here to enter text.

**Principal paper adviser and committee chair:** Click here to enter text.

**Other committee members (optional):** Click here to enter text.

**Preliminary title for project:** Click here to enter text.

**Effective date:** Click here to enter text.

**Alterations to committee membership after initial formation (and date of alteration):**

Click here to enter text.

*If you have not agreed to participate on this project and serve on this committee, please notify the MPA Office immediately.*

## Professional Paper Proposal Approval

Form prepared by MPA Office, sent to student and Advising Committee Chair, with signatures obtained by Advising Committee Chair and returned to MPA Office.

**Student name:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Principal adviser/committee chair:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Assigned committee member:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Other committee members:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

*Attach a proposal narrative following these guidelines: The narrative should be a minimum of 8-12 pages (double-spaced). It should include discussion of the topic, the approach to be used in the project, its relevance to your professional preparation, and discuss briefly key questions regarding any methodological issues. The proposal should include some portion of the project's literature review, and an initial bibliography. It may include at least one appendix – a proposed time line for project completion; others may be added as needed or requested by the advising committee. Format, citations, etc. should follow APA format guidelines.*

*Develop the proposal in consultation with your advising committee!*

*When you have completed a draft of your proposal and your advising committee agrees, schedule a proposal defense with your committee members (either in person or by conference call). Notify the MPA Office about the date and format for the defense. Based upon the discussion in the proposal defense, you may be asked to revise the proposal, and may be asked to schedule an additional defense. Regular communication with your advising committee can reduce revisions and may eliminate the need for an additional defense.*

*After a successful defense, your principal paper adviser will secure the below signatures and submit the completed form to the MPA Office.*

**Date of final proposal defense:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Format for defense (telephone/in-person):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**IRB (Human Subject Review) status -- please indicate:** [Choose an item.](#)

X

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Signature of principal paper adviser and date

X

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Signature of assigned member and date

X

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Signature of additional member and date

X

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Signature of additional member and date