

2019-2020 COMPETENCY LEARNING REPORT
CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MPA PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

For the 2019-2020 assessment year, the Covid-19 pandemic necessitated an attenuated competency assessment for the MPA program. For the first time, the program did not use multiple raters when reviewing capstone projects (i.e. the PAD 730 course artifacts) for competency learning. Additionally, the program could not complete its alumni and diversity surveys for the year. These assessments will either have to be revised or revisited in the 2020-2021 assessment year.

In 2019-2020, the program randomly selected ten PAD 730 course artifacts for assessment. The artifacts emerged from both online and face to face (i.e. the Mount Pleasant modality) course offerings of PAD 730. Five students were from the online modality and five students were from the Mount Pleasant modality. When analyzed for competency learning, MPA students still did an acceptable job of showcasing skills linked back to the five NASPAA required universal competencies. However, the lowest scores from students continue to be associated with the third NASPAA competency (analyze, synthesize, think creatively, solve problems, and make decisions). Rather than reflecting poor student learning on this competency, the continued low scores on this competency most likely reflect a lack of consistent data requirements associated with the capstone assignment.

It's recommended that the PA Council redesign the PAD 730 capstone course and include new requirements for data analysis that allow students to showcase their data analysis abilities. Additionally and to better capture competency learning across all indicators, it's recommended that an oral presentation for a diverse set of students, faculty, practitioners, and community members be required as part of the capstone experience. Aside from those findings, such a revision is necessary to fit into the new NASPAA standards regarding competency learning.

Background Information on the 2019-2020 Competency Assessment

During their time in the MPA program, NASPAA universal competencies as well as the program's own mission specific competencies are introduced and reinforced throughout all required MPA courses. Students then demonstrate mastery of all competencies (both universal and mission specific) via the MPA capstone course, PAD 730 'Public Service Competencies.' In this course, students produce an innovation analysis for a public sector organization and can also examine public sector cases to diagnose administrative challenges (the requirements for the capstone can vary slightly depending on which instructor teaches the course).

Data for the 19-20 annual competency assessment emerged from randomly selected online and Mount Pleasant (i.e. face to face) sections of PAD 730 offered during the 2018-2019 academic year. We used random selection for this reporting cycle to help make the annual NASPAA competency assessment more sustainable into the future, especially given the increase in enrollments the program has enjoyed over the last three years. In total, PAD 730 artifacts from ten students were analyzed with five students from the online modality and five students from the face-to-face Mount Pleasant modality. Due to the pandemic and the subsequent emergency, only one assessor was able to assess the PAD 730 artifacts in 2019-2020. That assessor, Thomas Greitens, has been trained in the program's assessment protocols.

As in previous reporting cycles, a scorecard system of analysis was used to help quickly identify data trends for public administration stakeholders. In the scorecard's performance ranking, students could score a 'superior' (which is quantified into a score of 4.0), an 'above average' (which is quantified into a score of 3.0), an 'average' (quantified into a score of 2.0), or a 'below average' (quantified into a score of 1.0). Students could also be given a 'not applicable' score which would translate into a score of 0.0. Note that all of these scores originate from a Likert-style scoring sheet identified as the 'mission specific competency rubric.' This rubric has been used by the program to assess competencies for MPA capstone projects since 2015.

Scores from the rubric were calculated according to the following process. The average score for each competency-based indicator, across all students in the PAD 730 courses, was calculated for the reviewer. This allowed for a color-coded scorecard system of data analysis in which PA stakeholders can quickly identify areas of excellence, as well as areas of concern, and then discuss appropriate responses that allow the Central Michigan University MPA program to engage in continuous improvement.

Results of the 2018-2019 Assessment

Table 1 presents direct assessments of the PAD 730 capstone artifacts. In total, ten students were assessed with five students being from the online modality and five students being from the Mt. Pleasant modality. Overall, the results reveal that students successfully applied most of the university competencies in their innovational analysis of a public sector organization. However, the one concern is UC3: the data analysis competency. Throughout the last decade, data analysis has usually been the weakness competency in terms of student performance.

*Table 1: 2019-2020 Direct Measures of Capstone Classes (n=10 students)
(data is from just one reviewer: Thomas Greitens)*

	PAD 730 Online Modality (5 students)	PAD 730 Mt. Pleasant Modality (5 students)	Average Results Across the Two Modalities
Written Communications			
1. Abstract/Executive Summary includes the important details of the case under study (UC 3)	0	0.8	0.4
2. Introduction presents succinctly important details about the issue (UC3)	3.6	3.8	3.7
3. Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as specified in APA style, are used throughout the report (UC1, UC5)	3.8	3.8	3.8
4. Submission of report is on-time (UC1)	4.0	3.4	3.7
5. Synthesis/integration of collected data/information occurred (UC3)	1.6	3.0	2.3
Analysis			
6. Analysis is clear and understandable for a wide audience of citizens (UC2, UC5)	3.6	3.8	3.7
7. Analysis reflects public service value(s) under study (UC4)	3.6	3.8	3.7
8. Analysis links public service theory to practice (UC4)	3.6	3.8	3.7
9. Analysis demonstrates academic honesty (UC1)	3.6	3.8	3.7
10. Analysis demonstrates professional integrity (UC1)	3.6	3.8	3.7
11. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding accountability issues (MSC2)	3.6	3.8	3.7
12. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding transparency issues (MSC2)	3.6	3.8	3.7
13. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding collaboration issues (MSC3)	3.6	3.8	3.7
14. Analysis integrates appropriate international, societal, or economic trends (MSC1)	3.6	3.8	3.7
15. Analysis establishes the appropriate role of nonprofit and other intergovernmental and intersectoral partners (MSC 4)	3.6	3.8	3.7

- Green: Superior/Above Average Results Achieved (Group 1 = average 4.0-3.0)
- Yellow: Average Results Achieved (Group 2 = average 2.9-2.0)
- Red: Below Average Results Achieved (Group 3 = average 1.9 and below)
- Gray: No Data Available

Recommendations

Based on assessment data, it is time for the PA Council to revise its capstone course. The program now has multiple years of data indicating a weakness in student's ability to demonstrate data analysis in the capstone course. In previous years, this report recommended changes to courses emphasizing data analysis. However, the capstone course does not consistently mandate a data analysis requirement as part of the course. It's recommended that such a requirement be a part of the course.

Through the work of faculty teaching the capstone, most notably Larry Adamitis, the capstone has moved toward the completion of an innovation analysis for a public sector organization, and away from a case diagnostic approach. Over the years, this change has improved student learning on NASPAA competencies. The PA Council should build on this approach and integrate a more research focused, analytical perspective to the capstone requirements.

Additionally, the capstone course needs to do a better job at capturing students' performance on other competencies. While written analysis can provide a snapshot of performance on all competencies, being able to lead and manage; participate in the policy process; and communicate with a diverse workforce and population also requires oral skills as well. Thus, it's recommended that students in the PAD capstone also be required to communicate their findings orally to a diverse audience consisting of students, faculty, practitioners, as well as community members.

The revision of the capstone course is needed anyway as NASPAA standards regarding competency learning recently changed. The new standards include the following and need to be integrated across the MPA program and curriculum.

- *to lead and manage in the public interest*
- *to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process;*
- *to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment;*
- *to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective;*
- *to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.*

Appendix A: CMU Mission Statement with Competencies

Vision Statement

The Masters in Public Administration (MPA) program at Central Michigan University offers a nationally accredited applied professional degree that seeks to be an internationally recognized program for enriching public service and educating practitioners and pre-service students to lead and manage in a variety of public sector settings.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Public Administration program at Central Michigan University is to provide practitioners and pre-service students enriching learning experiences that prepare and advance their intellectual growth, ensure effective and accountable decision-making as they lead, manage, and serve in the public sector, and increase the likelihood of successful public governance via respect for citizens and clients in a variety of public service settings, from government organizations to non-profit agencies and international bodies.

Public Service Values

To achieve our mission and realize our vision, the MPA program at Central Michigan University emphasizes the following NASPAA public service values:

Students and alumni from the MPA program at Central Michigan University will:

- Pursue the public interest with accountability and transparency
- Serve professionally with competence, efficiency, and objectivity
- Act ethically so as to uphold the public trust
- Demonstrate respect, equity, and fairness to dealings with citizens and fellow public servants

Universal Competencies

To implement its Vision and Mission statements, the MPA program at Central Michigan University has adopted the following set of NASPAA required competencies in its curriculum.

Students in the MPA program at Central Michigan University will develop and enhance their ability:

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

Mission Specific Competencies

In addition to the universal competencies from NASPAA, the program has adopted the following mission-based competencies.

Students in the MPA program at Central Michigan University will develop and enhance their ability:

- i. To integrate social, economic, political, and global trends in the management of public organizations
- ii. To apply relevant systems of accountability, performance management, and transparency in the management of public organizations
- iii. To define the challenges of intergovernmental and intersectoral relations in public organizations
- iv. To recognize the importance of regional partners, nonprofit organizations, private sector organizations, and other units of government in the delivery of public services

Appendix B: Mission Specific Competency Rubric

Class, Semester and Cohort _____

MPA Mission Specific Rubric

Name: _____

	Superior	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Not Applicable
Written Communications					
1. Abstract/Executive Summary includes the important details of the case under study (UC 3)					
2. Introduction presents succinctly important details about the issue (UC 3)					
3. Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as specified in APA style, are used throughout the report (UC1, UC5)					
4. Submission of report is on-time (UC1)					
5. Synthesis/integration of collected data/information occurred (UC3)					
Analysis					
6. Analysis is clear and understandable for a wide audience of citizens (UC2, UC5)					
7. Analysis reflects public service value(s) under study (UC4)					
8. Analysis links public service theory to practice (UC4)					
9. Analysis demonstrates academic honesty (UC1)					
10. Analysis demonstrates professional integrity (UC1)					
11. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding accountability issues (MSC2)					
12. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding transparency issues (MSC2)					
13. Analysis demonstrates correct diagnoses regarding collaboration issues (MSC3)					
14. Analysis integrates appropriate international, societal, or economic trends (MSC1)					
15. Analysis establishes the appropriate role of nonprofit and other intergovernmental and intersectoral partners (MSC 4)					
Oral Communications					
16. Presentation has a clear central message (UC2)					
17. Presentation is understandable for a wide audience of citizens (UC2, UC5)					
18. Presentation uses some type of visual aids (e.g. charts, handouts, powerpoint, etc) (UC2, UC5)					
19. Presenter effectively responds to the audience (UC5)					
20. Presentation demonstrates professionalism (UC1)					
21. Presentation demonstrates effective time management (UC2)					
Team-Based Behaviors					
22. Team exhibits a positive 'esprit de corps' (UC1)					
23. Team effectively solved problems (UC3)					
24. Team demonstrates open, inclusive communication (UC5)					
25. Team produces a quality product(s) (UC1)					
26. Team effectively worked toward specific goals (UC1)					

MPA Mission Specific Rubric

Name: _____

- **Public Policy Processes Course**
- **Foundations of PA Course**
- **Internship Course**
- **Public Service Competencies Comprehensive Course**

	Superior	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Not Applicable
Integration of social trends into analysis (MSC1)					
Integration of economic trends into analysis (MSC1)					
Integration of political trends into analysis (MSC1)					
Integration of global trends into analysis (MSC1)					
Identification of the role of accountability mechanisms in analysis (MSC 2)					
Identification of the role of performance management systems in analysis (MSC 2)					
Identification of the role of transparency in analysis (MSC2)					
Identification of intergovernmental challenges in analysis (MSC3)					
Identification of intersectoral challenges in analysis (MSC3)					
Identification of regional partners in analysis (MSC4)					
Identification of nonprofit partners in analysis (MSC4)					
Identification of private partners in analysis (MSC4)					