

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

GRADUATE PROJECT 698S STUDENT HANDBOOK

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to guide students through the Graduate Project class. It contains resources as well as information every student should have in order to complete their Graduate Project within one semester (15 weeks).

1.1 Course Description

The Graduate Project offers each student the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the theory and practice of public administration by applying the knowledge and skills gained in the MPA program to a project of the student's choice. This involves completing a 25 plus page research project paper reflecting the cumulative knowledge gained from their academic experiences. Students will complete their project under the supervision of a Graduate Project Committee, consisting of their course instructor and two additional faculty advisors. Students are required to consult with the instructor and advisors on a regular basis. This course is to be taken only in the student's final semester. (Letter grades only.) Students who do not complete their paper for a credit or no credit grade may be awarded a RP grade to continue working on their paper. They may receive an RP twice before being awarded a letter grade. Once assigned an Incomplete, Graduate Studies policy for an incomplete will apply.

1.2 Graduate Project Committee

Students will complete their project under the supervision of a Graduate Project Committee. The committee consists of their course instructor and two additional faculty advisors assigned by the Program Director. Students are required to consult with the instructor and eventually with their committee members.

1.3 Student's Eligibility

MPA 698S is to be taken only in the student's final semester. The following conditions must be satisfied before a student can enroll for the MPA 698S:

- Student first enrolls or reapplies to the Program beginning Fall 2016 or any subsequent semester.
- Overall program GPA must be 3.0 or greater.
- Must be fully classified (a classified graduate status is a student status who met all University and departmental requirements as outlined in the current catalog at the time of graduation).
- Must have completed at least ten courses and have passed all courses.
- Have filed the graduation application form for the semester which they plan to graduate (a Graduation Date Change form is available to those who filed it before and did not graduate).
- Students must complete the Title IX Policy training for Fall 2019, a mandatory training about Preventing Sex Discrimination and Sexual Violence on Campus.
- Students who want to continue receiving financial aid must maintain four units minimum. Moreover, during the last semester, students must complete the [Department of Education Student Loan Exit Counseling webpage](#).

1.4 Eligible Projects

The Research Project paper may examine issues related to public administration (in general), research methods in public administration, public organizational theory, public budgeting, public finance, public policy, public human resource management, public strategic management, administrative ethics in the public administrative sector, public policy implementation, intergovernmental relations, and public program evaluation. In short, the Master of Public Administration's Graduate Project must be rooted exclusively within management public policy, and public administration.

The University retains an approved electronic version through Scholarworks@CSUN. This allows the work to be publicly available to other students, faculty, and outside researchers. The Graduate Project becomes a visible and permanent measure of the quality of scholarship expected of a graduate student.

1.5 Project Proposals

Online preparatory workshops are temporarily offered to guide students in their preparation of the project proposal. The purpose of the project proposal is to ensure that the topic of your Graduate Project falls under the realm of public administration and will serve as an executive summary of what you intend to do over the course of your MPA 698S class. This Research Proposal is the blueprint of your Graduate Project. As further described in Section 2, the class is a seminar, students are guided by the instructor of record through the steps they must take in order to successfully complete their self-led graduate project. The research project paper is a three (3) units graduate seminar. For more information, please visit the [CSUN Graduate Studies Thesis/Project/Dissertation Formatting Guidelines webpage](#)

Research project papers are formatted to include the following sections: Intro, literature review, research question and aim, background, research design, analysis and conclusion. Initially the class instructor reviews the project proposal. Following the creation of a first draft, the class instructor may refer the first draft to the class committee members for their review and feedback to students. Once the three-member committee has concluded that the paper is passable, they will communicate with each other to formulate a final decision of approval or disapproval. The instructor of record will submit a credit (CR), no credit (NC), or research in progress (RP) final grade. The students awarded a credit for the class will then be informed they passed the class after the three committee members have gone online and submitted their approval of the research project. Students who receive a "no credit" must reenroll in MPA 698S and are charged tuition for the course. Students assigned an "RP" must pay a \$250 fee to Tseng College and must enroll in A/R 601 to complete work on their research project

1.6 Academic Integrity

Each MPA student is to comply with the highest standards of academic integrity. Students must produce an original document over the course of their Graduate Project. Failing to produce an original paper jeopardizes a student's success in MPA 698S.

Instructors will use software-supported techniques to ensure that the students refrain from re-submitting work already graded, with the exception of a project proposal they would have

developed in MPA 620 (Research Methods for Public Administration). As a general guideline, an acceptable Turnitin.com similarity rate should be less than 15%.

Plagiarism, fabrication, or violation of academic integrity policies may lead to academic sanctions, and could lead to termination of a student's enrollment in this program. In addition to complying with the principles of academic integrity, students will be expected to uphold the highest ethical standards and respect the universities' academic policies.

2.0 GRADUATE PROJECT'S CONTENT AND CLASS SCHEDULE

2.1 Graduate Project's Content

MPA 698S is a seminar, where students write a research informed, public administration focused paper that can be:

- A case study
- An evaluation of a program
- An examination of a policy issue
- An organizational study
- An extensive discussion of public administration history
- A policy implementation study
- A discussion of the application of research methods in an organization
- A focus on management of human resources in public and nonprofit organizations
- A thorough examination of the application of financial and budgetary processes in public and nonprofit organizations

Additionally, the Graduate Project may represent the analysis of a work unit, department or program. It may focus on deficits or challenges to performance management, to ethical decision-making or a persistent problem, such as the fight against homelessness, drug addiction or poverty. Students may tailor their research paper to their individual interests, experience, and their expertise.

2.2 What Data Can I Use for My Project?

An important aspect of the Graduate Project is that students cannot collect data from human subject's participants and therefore, must use secondary data exclusively. Secondary data sources are publicly available documents and prior published research in the public domain.

2.3 Class Duration

The Graduate Project class is 15 weeks, except during a summer session, when it is 12 weeks. Course delivery options include face-to-face meetings, online, or hybrid formats.

The requirements are the same independent of course delivery options.

2.4 Responsibilities

Your instructor of record will guide you through all the steps involved in this culminating experience from start to finish. The instructor is responsible for consulting students regularly to help keep the project on track.

- Assist in narrowing the scope of the student's project.
- Guide the student's project to meet objectives.
- Insure that the student understands all of the guidelines for the preparation of the Capstone Graduate Project.
- Discusses with the committee whether the student has met the requirements. In cases when the decision is to make revisions, the appropriate Graduate Project committee member will work with students to ensure that revisions are completed.
- The class instructor will confer with committee members to make sure that a research project is acceptable before recording a final grade.
- Each committee member will go online and approve the final research project.

2.5 Grading

- Students enrolled in MPA 698S will be assigned a CREDIT (CR), NONCREDIT (NCR) or a Research in Progress (RP) Grade. A CR grade means that the students has successfully completed his/her research project. A NCR means that the student has not passed MPA 698S. A Research in Progress (RP) grade means that a student's research project is in progress.
- Students enrolled in MPA 698S for a third time who was assigned a RP twice in two other classes, will not be assigned a third RP. Instead, the student will be assigned an NCR grade.

3.0 PROJECT SUBMISSION GUIDE AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

3.1 Submitting Your Graduate Research Project

Electronic Thesis and Dissertation System (ETD) is a web application designed to replace the project/thesis paperwork students must file with Graduate Studies. ETD also eliminates the need for students to print and bind copies of their projects/theses.

- Students must register through the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation \(ETD\) website](#) to use the system.
- Use ETD **only as directed by your instructor**. You will receive permission to register with ETD after you have been assigned your Committee by the MPA Program Director.
- ETD student projects/theses are submitted to the Oviatt Library's online repository, ScholarWorks.
 - Once submitted to ScholarWorks, the projects/theses will be available and searchable online.

3.2 Important Deadlines

Check the [Office of Graduate Studies](#) website for project submission deadlines. Note: The Office of Research and Graduate Studies deadlines will not be extended for any reason.

- Deadline dates will be reasonable and not arbitrarily changed.
- All research project papers should be submitted at least 24-hours before the Graduate Studies deadline. You may create a deadline that is before the 24-hour period.
- **If you fail to meet a deadline your graduation date will be delayed by one semester and you will be required to complete the class in the next upcoming semester.**

3.3 Office of Graduate Studies Resources

- The Office of Graduate studies has a number of helpful resources, including
 - [Thesis/Project/Dissertation Formatting Guidelines \(webpage\)](#).
 - [Graduate Project Guidelines \(.pdf\)](#)
 - Note: The MPA program does not allow for joint projects.

3.4 Common Errors on Graduate Projects

- Entire Manuscript
 - Incorrect margins
 - Page numbers not printed below the margin line
- Title Page
 - Incorrect capitalization of title
 - Wrong degree and/or major listed
 - Name does not match University records
 - Inaccurate degree conferral date
 - Printed page number (title page does not have a page number)
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining

- Copyright
 - Name does not match University records
 - Missing page number (Copyright page requires a roman numeral)
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining
- Signature
 - Name does not match University records
 - Missing page number (signature page requires a roman numeral)
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining
- Acknowledgments/Dedications
 - Body is not double spaced
 - Page number missing or is not lower-case Roman numeral
 - Acknowledgment and Dedication are not on separate pages
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining
- Table of Contents
 - Not included
 - Page number missing or is not a lower case
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining
 - List of Figures/Tables/Illustrations:
- List of Figures/Tables/Illustrations
 - Lists are not on separate pages
 - Page number missing or is not a lower case
 - Roman numeral
 - Bold/Italics/Underlining
- Abstract
 - Abstract title does not match title page
 - Incorrect capitalization of title
 - Wrong date/name/degree listed
 - Landscape pages not oriented, correctly
 - Page number is not portrait style
- Appendices
 - Page numbers do not continue
 - Incorrect margins
- Common error information on graduate projects is also located on page 20 of the [Graduate Project in Abstract Form Guidelines \(.pdf\)](#).

3.5 Sample Formatting for Thesis/Project/Dissertation (Appendices A-G)

- [Appendix A: Sample Title Page](#)
- [Appendix B: Sample Copyright Page](#)
- [Appendix C: Sample Signature Page](#)
- [Appendix D: Sample Acknowledgement Page](#)
- [Appendix E: Sample Table of Contents Page](#)
- [Appendix F: Sample Abstract Page](#)
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Appendix A
Sample Title Page

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Graduating to Success in Life: How to Improve Foster Youth
High School Graduation Rate

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Public Administration in Public Sector
Management and Leadership

By
Jamie Goodgrade

June 2020
(Official end of semester)

Appendix B
Sample Copyright Page

Copyright by Jamie Goodgrade 2020

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Appendix C
Sample Signature Page

The graduate project of Jamie Goodgrade is approved:

Dr. Rhonda Franklin

Date

Dr. Henrik Minassians

Date

Dr. Mylon Winn, Chair

Date

Note: You should check with your committee members to find out how they wish to be referred to on your signature page- Professor, Dr., and so on. Committee Chair is last on list and noted as chair.

Appendix D
Sample Acknowledgement Page

I would like to thank...

(OPTIONAL)

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Appendix F
Sample Abstract

Graduating to Success in Life: How to Improve Foster

Youth High School Graduation Rate

By

Jamie Goodgrade

Master of Public Administration in Public Sector Management and Leadership

Foster youth are graduating high school much lower rates than their peers (Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, & Fogarty, 2012). The percentage of foster youths that do not graduate has been reported as high as forty-five to fifty percent (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Shea, 2010). This research study explores if mentorship programs can help graduation rates. Foster alumni that are currently in College have stated that an adult mentor greatly assisted their successful movement from primary to secondary education (Neal, 2017). This study examines multiple stakeholders to identify if there is a correlation between mentorship and high school graduation rates. The results of this research shed light on whether mentorship program improves foster youth graduation rates.

Appendix G

Sample Introduction

The current population of foster youths in the foster care system currently is over 400,000 children. (Children's Bureau, 2017). There are over 20,000 foster youths exiting the foster care system every year (Children's Bureau, 2017). The year following their transition there are elevated levels of homelessness and incarceration (Kinarsky, 2017).

The ratio of foster alumni going to college far below that of their peers (Clemens, Helm, Myers, & Thompson, 2017). The absence of collegiate degrees affects foster youth more than their peers (Kinarsky, 2017). The problem starts earlier than college and exiting of the foster care system. The question arises while foster youth are in high school. The graduation rate for foster youth is around fifty percent. Mentorship and adult intervention have positively affected foster alumni that have graduated and continued to college. This research is attempting to test the correlation if any of the success rate of foster youth graduating from high school.