

# ***PORTFOLIO GUIDELINES***

*FOR*

**PADM 7900: capstone seminar  
In  
public administration**

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY**



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# **MPA PROGRAM**

## **Professional Portfolio Guidelines**

Valdosta State University, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Political Science, provides the following professional portfolio guidelines for completion of the Masters of Public Administration (MPA) portfolio requirement.

Each student in the Master of Public Administration program (MPA) is required to prepare and present a professional portfolio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MPA degree. The portfolio will normally be completed during the student's final semester of coursework, as part of PADM 7900 and PADM 7210. Students are encouraged to begin work on the portfolio upon entry to the program, however. An approved portfolio must be on file in the MPA Coordinator's office prior to graduation.

### **Portfolio Purpose**

One of the major purposes of a professional portfolio is to showcase in a single document skills, knowledge and competencies developed by an individual over time. The portfolio should reflect professional work experience, military service and any volunteer experience appropriate to the student's career field. In addition, all relevant academic work in the student's major areas of course work and internship experience should be included. Completing a portfolio provides the student with an opportunity to take stock of her/his professional development, assess where they currently stand professionally, and plan for their future development.

Another major purpose of a professional portfolio is to demonstrate skills, knowledge and competencies to a prospective employer. Completion of such a document and its presentation will allow faculty to observe the professional growth and development of students resulting from the MPA program; it will also allow prospective employers to assess the professional experience and capabilities of an MPA Program graduate.

### **Process**

A student is encompassing a significant portion of his/her life in a single document—it's inevitable that this will be a difficult and time consuming process. Key components of this effort are:

- Time—past portfolio developer's note that the effort has taken them more time than they initially expected it to.
- Skill—the technical aspects of presentation are important
- Thought—a portfolio involves self-assessment and reflection.
- Care—as your final MPA product and as a reflection of your professional & academic development, a portfolio must be clear, complete, consistent, accurate, and exercise all the conventions of excellent composition and presentation.
- Adherence to the guidelines—something expected of each public administration professional and MPA graduate is the ability to follow instructions. You will be expected to follow the portfolio guidelines.

A few comments on the process of developing a portfolio are in order. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of getting started early! It takes a lot of time to reflect on one's professional development, decide on the appropriate artifacts, produce those artifacts, organize them, present each item individually, summarize them, consolidate and organize them into an overall presentation (the portfolio), and write it to CD-ROM.

It is a good idea to seek input from colleagues, peers, loved ones, and faculty. Have folks you trust review your document.

Portfolios need time to rest—put the document together, let it rest, and come back to it after some time away. Then ask yourself, does this document look as good as it did? If not—why? Does it need some fixing up?

The portfolio is a representation of the pinnacle of an MPA experience, highlighting the best of one's professional and academic experiences—it must reflect the highest professional and academic standards.

Are you proud of it? This is the best predictor of a first-rate portfolio. We're not talking false pride—bravado, but rather the true internal satisfaction that one feels when the portfolio reflects one at her/his very best.

### **Portfolio Requirements**

Two basic types of material are included in the portfolio. First, each student will include a number of **productions**: documents prepared specifically for this portfolio. Examples include the student's professional goals statement and professional summary. Second are the **artifacts**: documents produced during normal coursework, in the course of one's job, or while engaged in relevant volunteer work. Examples would include a term paper from a class, a manual prepared for your workplace, or an award received from the United Way. The following guidelines should be followed:

- The portfolio shall include clearly captioned artifacts that demonstrate competency in all areas designated for the degree. Artifacts should be selected to reflect a cross-section of both professional and academic experience.
- It is recognized that a pre-service student may have few or no non-academic professional artifacts to include in her/his portfolio. In that instance, the student must make extra effort to relate the artifacts to professional career goals.
- Portfolio organization must be meaningful, original, and constructed to facilitate review.
- Portfolio documentation must be complete and consistent.
- The portfolio should demonstrate a thoughtful in-depth reflection on

- processes and products related to the student's professional field.
- The portfolio should include all required materials, prepared and presented according to the written guidelines in the Professional Portfolio Guidelines.
  - The portfolio must be presented to reviewers in the MPA Program in a timely and professional manner. Unless otherwise stated, all portfolios are due at least three weeks prior to the end of a semester.
  - Students are required to submit their portfolios on CD. Documents such as news articles, awards, etc. are to be scanned and included on the CD.

## **Portfolio Presentation**

The portfolio, on CD-ROM, must be user friendly. Accessing the portfolio and/or its contents must be simple and straightforward. Authors are advised to employ the minimum numbers of files possible.

KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) is a good rule of thumb. An author should employ the technology and level of that technology with which she/he is comfortable. Portfolios are usually presented in MS Word®, MS PowerPoint®, or as an Adobe Acrobat® pdf file. Authors are advised NOT to employ unnecessarily complicated templates, backgrounds, and/or bells and whistles. These only serve to distract from the real intent of the portfolio, i.e. to showcase an author's achievements. (If one wants to demonstrate his/her prowess with a program, say PowerPoint, he/she can do this within the context of an artifact.)

## **Required Portfolio Materials**

### **Introduction**

The introduction should provide a brief description of the portfolio and its organization. A student should think of her/his introduction as the executive summary of the portfolio. It should address the time span covered in the portfolio; the fact that the document reviews professional, volunteer and academic experiences; the balance between professional, volunteer, and academic contents; where the author is at in her/his career; where the author intends to be in the future, reason for inclusion/exclusion of materials, and/or other matters.

### **Table of contents**

The table of contents must include each artifact, etc. contained in the portfolio, along with file names to assist finding them on the CD.

### **Professional Goals Statement**

The goal statement is a narrative that specifies individual short-and long-term goals in the student's field of study (300-500 words). It might include:

- A brief statement of what brought you to the present point–e.g. why you chose to pursue a MPA degree.
- Professional values you might care to share with readers.
- Career path–will you continue the present path or change? Why?
- Short-term goals–within the next year or two.
- Long-term goals–five years or so.
- Other statements that describe and explain how you intend to pursue the future.

## **Current resume**

The resume must conform to an acceptable format, and include all academic experience, with the anticipated date of award of the MPA degree. Valdosta State University's Office of Career Services can provide assistance in preparing an acceptable resume.

## **Captioned Artifacts (10-15 recommended)**

A detailed list of artifacts should be provided for each portfolio. See below for some examples and descriptions of general artifacts and their captioning.

### **Presenting Portfolio Artifacts**

#### **Artifacts**

Portfolio artifacts are papers, reports, documentation of presentations, projects, instructional materials, in print or other media forms, reflecting examples of work experience, military service, or other professional activities. It should also include materials generated during academic study, such as coursework and related professional experiences occurring during a formal program of study from an accredited institution. These artifacts may have been designed, developed or conducted either by the student as an individual or as a member of a team; in either case the material should be clearly captioned.

#### **Captions**

A caption is a standardized attachment to the artifact. Captions should be approximately one page in length, and should include:

- Artifact number and descriptor(s)
- Title of artifact,
- The job (name/address) or professional experience during which the product originated,
- The course (name/number) in which the artifact was created or which course(s) the professional experience artifact relates to,
- Approximate date when the product originated,
- A **rationale statement** that briefly describes the artifact, elaborates on demonstrated competencies, states why it is included, and reflects on what was learned from the experience represented by this artifact, and whether it was developed individually or as a

member of a team.

A few guidelines for captions follow:

- Be consistent in format—all captions, where possible, should follow the same format.
- A caption appears on a sheet prior to the artifact it introduces.
- A reasonable way to present the captions is:
  - Artifact #
  - Title/name of artifact
  - Where the artifact originated (e.g. Course number or workplace)
  - date of artifact
  - description, a paragraph or two (*make certain to specify the skills, capacities, characteristics demonstrated by the artifact*)

### **Full and Honest Captions**

Captioning is difficult. First of all, you have to toot your own horn, to show off, to strut your stuff—all things we've been taught we shouldn't do. We have to get over the politeness we were taught and practice frankly stating our strengths, our good stuff. But, we can't oversell—remember when the prosecution had O.J. try on the glove, and it didn't fit—case closed—end of story. We only cite in the caption what the artifact documents.

For example, let's say you include as an artifact a budget analysis from class. And, let's say this paper received an A, with glowing comments from the professor. The caption might note that the artifact demonstrates:

- Ability to understand and analyze a budget.
- Ability to analyze quantitative data.
- Capacity of conduct interviews (you interviewed the budget director and mayor).
- Knowledge of the literature on budgeting (you cited 15 sources).
- Capacity to bring information from numerous sources to bear on a particular subject (as evidenced by your discussion of H.R. impacts of budget cuts).
- Excellence in written communication (the paper was flawlessly written).
- Skill at presenting data graphically (as evidenced by the nine figures in the paper).
- Proficiency in oral communication (as evidenced by the professor giving your oral presentation 98 out of 100).

### **Summary Statement**

Provide a summary statement that ties your portfolio together. Indicate why the collection of artifacts provides a good representative overview of your current professional development. Your summary should be no more than one page.

## **Check Yourself for Success**

Your portfolio should be a unique document, one that represents you well as your skills, knowledge, and experience. The portfolio checklist includes some general characteristics of good portfolios that may help you to plan and evaluate your own document.

Look at your artifacts, captions and rationales and review them to make sure they fully reflect your professional development.

## **Portfolio Review and Presentation**

A student completing the portfolio as part of the requirements for PADM 7900 is to turn his/her portfolio in to the course instructor. A student who submits a portfolio deemed unsatisfactory by the instructor will have one opportunity to resubmit the portfolio. Portfolios will become the property of the MPA Program, and will not be returned. Each student, therefore, should make a personal copy of his/her portfolio.

### **Portfolio Review**

During this review period, the instructor will evaluate the portfolio according to the Criteria Checklist. In order to merit a passing grade, the physical portfolio must meet or exceed minimum standards in **each** of the areas described in Portfolio Requirements.

- Minimum standards are met if the portfolio conforms to the Guidelines in the judgment of the supervising faculty member.
- If the portfolio does not meet minimum standards in each of the areas, the Criteria Checklist will so indicate. A list of required additions/changes and due date for completion of the portfolio would be given to the student. A copy of the Criteria Checklist will be placed in the student's permanent folder. Following the formal review process, portfolios will be available for review by the MPA Program Advisory Committee and others as deemed appropriate for each MPA Track.

### **Appeal of an Unsatisfactory Grade**

If the portfolio is deemed unsatisfactory, the student may appeal the decision, in writing, to the Head of the Department of Political Science. In some instances, the Head may be the reviewing faculty member. In those instances, the written appeal must be made to the MPA Coordinator. The Head or the Coordinator will appoint a committee of three faculty members not involved in the original review to hear the appeal. The student has the right to appear in person before that committee. Further appeals will follow the guidelines established by the Graduate School at Valdosta State University.

Good luck with your portfolio.

**Portfolio Check Sheet**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Rating: Satisfactory (S): \_\_\_ Unsatisfactory (U) \_\_\_ Reviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name)

Reviewer's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Portfolio Criteria Checklist**

\_\_\_\_ Exceeds minimum standards

**I. Portfolio includes clearly labeled artifacts that demonstrate competency in all areas designated for the program.**

**V. Portfolio includes all required materials:**

- \_\_\_\_ Does not meet minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Meets minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Exceeds minimum standards

- \_\_\_\_ Table of contents
- \_\_\_\_ Professional Goals statement
- \_\_\_\_ Current resume
- \_\_\_\_ Captioned Artifacts

**II. Portfolio organization is meaningful, original, and constructed to facilitate review.**

**VI. Overall Physical Portfolio**

- \_\_\_\_ Does not meet minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Meets minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Exceeds minimum standards

- \_\_\_\_ Does not meet minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Meets minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Exceeds minimum standards

**III. Documentation is complete and consistent.**

- \_\_\_\_ Does not meet minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Meets minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Exceeds minimum standards

**IV. Portfolio demonstrates thoughtful, in-depth reflection on processes and products.**

- \_\_\_\_ Does not meet minimum standards
- \_\_\_\_ Meets minimum standards