INTRODUCTION

The Applied Field Study is a particularly important component in the Master of Public Administration program. The task for the student in the applied field study is, simply stated, to undertake a rigorous applied analysis research project within the context of a responsible position in a public sector or non-profit setting. In carrying out this task, the student is afforded a wide range of opportunities for intellectual and professional development, including:

- the chance to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to actual work situations and problems, and to develop new or improved knowledge derived from the experience;
- the opportunity to conduct an extended study of a problem of interest to the student and to develop this into a significant written project that will be the basis of the student’s oral examination;
- the chance to build practical experience and accomplishments in ways that enhance the student’s professional credentials;
- the opportunity to develop new contacts and supportive references among professional peers.

These guidelines explain the procedures and requirements for undertaking the applied field study, and provide suggestions concerning the design and execution of the analytical project. The student should read these guidelines carefully and thoroughly since you are responsible for the various written requirements contained herein. Any questions may be addressed to the MPA Director or the student’s faculty advisor in the Department of Government.

BASIC PROCEDURES

The basic steps to be completed to carry out the Applied Field Study include:

- the student occupies or obtains employment in a responsible position which is directly related to the public or non-profit service and affords the student the opportunity to participate in or directly observe policy making and administration in public or non-profit programs. As part of this experience the student must develop a project in the public or non-profit sector agency in which they are employed;
the student registers for a total of three semester credit hours of POL 870, Internship, and three semester credit hours of POL 871, the Applied Field Study. The student generally registers for each of these courses in two different semesters but may, under certain circumstances, register simultaneously for both. Under certain circumstances to be explained below, the student may substitute POL 839, Cooperative Education in Public Administration for 3 hours of POL 871;

working under the supervision of a faculty coordinator, the student conducts a program of work and study related to his or her placement. The field study coordinator will require the student to submit a bi-weekly report on the experience. If appropriate, the student’s work supervisor may be contacted and asked to participate in the evaluation of the student’s performance, and the faculty supervisor may visit the work site for direct observation and to conduct liaison with the student’s work supervisor;

the student chooses a topic for concentrated analysis and develops a proposal for the topic. The development of the research proposal generally occurs within the POL 871 course; the research proposal must be approved by the POL 871 instructor (who will generally also serve as the chair of the student’s committee) and the student’s graduate committee before the student can proceed with the project. (Note: the student’s graduate committee is selected at the time he/she registers for POL 871);

the student prepares a major paper on this topic that has been approved by the student’s graduate committee. Suggestions concerning appropriate subjects for the study are made later in these guidelines.

SUBSTITUTING COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Some positions with public agencies may be formally designated as cooperative education positions, either because they have been budgeted as such or because the agency has registered them with the university cooperative education program for placement purposes. Cooperative education programs are conducted under national guidelines and administered through central cooperative education officers at universities.

A student who wishes to use a cooperative education position to meet the requirements of the Applied Field Study may request to do so, but only will be allowed to substitute 3 hours of POL 839 credit for POL 871. More than a total of 6 hours credit for POL 839 and POL 871 will not be counted toward the degree. The student would also be expected to meet the separate application and reporting requirements for cooperative education in addition to the normal requirements for the Applied Field Study. The reporting requirements for cooperative education are typically more modest, and may overlap with those for the Applied Field Study.
APPLICATION, ENROLLMENT, WORKLOAD AND FACULTY SUPERVISION

Application for the Applied Field Study follows normal course registration procedures, except that students must have prior approval from their graduate advisor to enroll in POL 870 and POL 871. Email the MPA Director about enrolling in the course. Please note that students will not be permitted to enroll in POL 870 or POL 871 until they have completed the MPA core courses or provided extenuating circumstances for enrolling early. Students must also have at least a 3.0 GPA to enroll in POL 871. The department sets enrollment in POL 870 and POL 871 at zero, in order to ensure that all students have received prior approval before registering. This means that students will need to secure an override into the course once permission has been received. The MPA Administrative Assistant, Teresa Howard, will give students overrides. Her email address is Teresa.howard@eku.edu.

Enrollment for formal academic credit for POL 871 does not have to be contiguous with the field study work assignment. It is understood that the employment market does not operate on the academic calendar, and adjustments can be made to allow for that, within reason. Students often take 3 hours credit one semester and then 3 hours credit in the semester in which they plan to graduate. Student should understand that they are expected to comply with all course requirements for POL 870 (the major work assignments involve journal entries and a final portfolio), and students will receive an “IP” in POL 870 if they fail to complete these assignments within the semester. This grade will not be changed until the student has completed all requirements for the course. Students enrolled in POL 871 are engaged in their final research paper. They will receive a grade of IP until they have completed their research and successfully defended the research project in the oral examination.

Please note: The “IP” is good for a period of one year, so students should not sign up for the field study hours until they are within one year of graduation.

 Normally, the Applied Field Study is expected to take at least a full calendar summer or a full academic semester (15 weeks) to complete. Cooperative education guidelines (for POL 839 only) require a student to work eighty (80) hours for each hour of semester credit earned. The position the student occupies while conducting the Applied Field Study should be at least a half-time position, and preferably full-time. The actual number of hours worked, however, is not as important as the quality of the work experience afforded, and particularly the opportunity to participate in informative experiential and observational activities. A student will work under the direction of one member of the graduate faculty who serves as that student’s Applied Field Study coordinator.

PLACEMENT

Obviously, one of the great challenges to everyone associated with the Applied Field Study experience may be arranging an appropriate placement for the student. In some circumstances, students may be fortunate enough to approach the field study assignment with an appropriate placement already in hand. Students who are already employed in public or non-profit...
positions and wish to use their positions as the basis for the Applied Field Study and their research project are normally allowed to do so, if the job provides an appropriate range of work responsibilities or observational opportunities, and if an appropriate research project can be identified.

For students who do not have placements in hand, a job search must be conducted. The University, the department, and the MPA faculty all have an interest in good placements for the student and will assist as much as possible. The student must take the lead, however, and do so aggressively. For many students, this will provide the first experience with preparing a formal resume, identifying and making contacts with prospective employers, and participating in placement interviews. The University’s Career Services program has historically offered regular seminars in job hunting, writing a resume, and interviewing. The Cooperative Education Office also maintains files of available positions they have developed and can provide illustrative materials such as sample resumes. The student should energetically seek out and use these sources of assistance.

Finding jobs can be greatly aided by supportive personal acquaintances and contacts. Throughout their course of study, students should attend professional meetings, conferences, and celebrations, and pleasantly but aggressively build contacts with administrators and practitioners. The faculty of the MPA program make considerable efforts to arrange opportunities for students to attend professional conferences and meetings and students should take advantage of these opportunities.

**CONDUCTING THE FIELD PLACEMENT ASSIGNMENT**

The faculty instructor assigned to POL 870 in the semester you are enrolled should receive copies of all reports, should be kept constantly aware of current mailing addresses and telephone numbers, the current employment status of the student, and the name and contact information for the student’s work supervisor. The faculty member is available for counseling and consultation, including technical assistance to the extent feasible. The instructor will also establish any reading or analytical requirements appropriate to the field study so students are expected to comply with all instructions posted on the course Blackboard site.

**Analysis and Reports**

All students are required to submit a detailed research proposal, or prospectus, for the required final research project. This prospectus must be approved by the student’s three person faculty committee. This committee serves as an advisory body for the field study project and also is the oral examination committee that will examine the student’s final paper. This committee should be chosen by the student in consultation with the student’s faculty advisor. The instructor in POL 871 will normally be the chair of the student’s committee and will work with the student to finalize the research proposal. Once finalized, it is the responsibility of the student to distribute the proposal to his or her other committee members and to seek input and approval from the other committee members.
The basis for the final paper is a research effort which the student undertakes independently concerning a subject of relevance and importance for the work assignment. The methodological format for conducting and presenting the analysis must be adapted to the subject matter. Examples of basic methodological approaches include the following:

**Types of Research Projects**
Student research generally falls into one of four types of projects: policy or management evaluations, analysis, needs assessments, or systematic reviews. Below are examples of the kinds of projects that fall under these four categories.

**Evaluation of a specific public policy or management approach or issue**

- The impact of reductions in the cost of Head Start daycare on families’ economic and general well-being.
- Compensation in nonprofit organizations: A case study of internal equity.
- A study of ‘community created solutions’ seeking to improve access to health care services throughout the State of Kentucky.

**Analysis of a policy or management question**

- Identifying policies to improve Kentucky’s Bottle Bill
- Policy analysis of the Stage 2 Drinking Water Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts Rule in the State of Kentucky

**Needs assessment**

- Reproductive health care needs assessment for southeast Kentucky
- Therapeutic Communities in Prison: A review of the literature on prison-based therapeutic communities in the United States

**Systematic review of the literature on a new and important policy or management issue**

- Therapeutic Communities in Prison: A review of the literature on prison-based therapeutic communities in the United States

The final paper should reflect a concerted effort by the student to relate the field study experience to the theory, models, principles and techniques studied in the classroom. It is to be
expected that a student may find some things learned in the classroom to have been valid or
useful in his or her field study research, and that other theories and practices covered in class
may not be useful. The field study research project will give the student new information or
ideas which move beyond what was learned in the classroom, or interact with what was learned
in the classroom to produce a new and enhanced understanding of public administration.

FORMAT AND SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL PAPER

By the time students are working to complete their research paper, they are generally also trying
to graduate and deadlines for receipt of the first draft, revised draft, final draft, and oral defense,
can become problematic. In order to allow the committee adequate time to review the student’s
work, the following timeframe will be strictly enforced.

1. Determine the date by which all oral defenses must occur for the semester in which you
intend to graduate. This is done by contacting Dr. Beaty or Teresa Howard.

2. The first draft of the research paper must be submitted to your committee chair
(who will normally be the instructor of record in the second 3 hours of your POL
870 course) at least 60 calendar days prior to the oral defense deadline. If you miss
this deadline, or any of the following deadlines, it is unlikely that you will be cleared
for graduation in the semester you have indicated you wish to graduate. Your chair
will review your draft and offer suggestions as appropriate, but the chair will not edit
and proofread your paper so you must work to ensure it is as clean as you can make it.

3. At least 30 days prior to the oral defense deadline, you must submit your second
draft. If your chair believes the paper is ready to be reviewed by the rest of your
committee, you will be instructed to distribute copies to the rest of your committee and
to contact Teresa Howard to schedule the oral defense. This defense will occur within
two weeks, but in all cases it will occur at least two weeks prior to the oral defense
deadline. Refer to the oral examination section on page 9 of these guidelines for
information on the research defense.

4. When students defend their work in the oral examination, there are three possible
outcomes: the committee accepts the project (this is very rare); the committee accepts
the project but requires that the student revise certain parts of the research paper (this is
the most common occurrence); or the committee rejects the project (this is very rare and
will not occur if the student has been working closely with his or her committee chair
during the research process). In most cases the student will be asked to revise and
resubmit his or her paper prior to receiving a grade in POL 871 (and, of course, without
a final grade submission, the student will not be able to graduate). The student will
work with the committee chair on necessary revisions and will turn in a revised
and final paper at least two days prior to the oral defense deadline. The chair will
review the final paper and will be the final evaluator of whether the student has
successfully completed the assigned research project.
Please note the following paper submission requirements.

The first draft must be double-spaced, using a 12 point font, 1 inch margins, and must be complete, with the exception that - in consultation with your committee chair - you may omit appendices. This means all tables, charts, and graphs must be included and must be properly titled, numbered, and referenced (i.e. table or chart sources must be included), and the Bibliography or Works Cited also must be complete. This draft may be submitted on regular copy paper or may, if agreed to by your chair, be submitted electronically.

Subsequent drafts follow the same requirements as the first draft, with the exception that all appendices must also be included.

The final research project must be printed on good quality paper and must be attractively bound, with the project title, the date of submission, and the student’s name on the cover. The words “In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Applied Field Study, Master of Public Administration Program, Eastern Kentucky University” should also appear on the cover sheet. Only one copy of the final paper is required, and this must be submitted to the committee chair before the student’s grade in POL 871 will be changed from IP to a grade. Students should keep a copy of their final paper for their records.

The final paper should observe formal guidelines with regard to style for research papers. Any supporting literature which is used should be reported in a bibliography, and use of the literature to support the analysis should be appropriately referenced. Parenthetical citations are acceptable, with source page numbers to be provided for quotations or direct paraphrasing of material. Any additional material to be included should appear in an appendix, and be marked as such.

EVALUATION OF THE MPA PROGRAM

When you turn in the final, bound copy of your research paper you must also turning, under separate cover, an evaluation of the MPA program. There is no set format for the evaluation. It is designed to inform the faculty about the strengths and weaknesses of the MPA program as you perceive them. Topics which may need to be addressed can include classroom instruction, program administration, conceptual focus in the program, organization of the curriculum or any other topic which the student feels should be discussed. Both strengths and weaknesses should be identified and explained. The faculty cannot, of course, guarantee action on any particular suggestion, but are nonetheless extremely interested in having any evaluation and suggestions the student can provide.
FORMATTING AND CONTENT FOR THE FIELD STUDY RESEARCH PAPER

As noted above, the specific format of the paper will vary according to the nature of the research question, the research design, and the method of analysis. However, a general format (section names are in italics) that will be applicable to most field study reports is as follows:

Field Study Placement. In this section the student will document the nature of the field study placement (agency/organization name, mission, student’s position and responsibilities). This section will supply the context for the research because it will explain what the organization does and how the field study research relates to the organization, its mission, clientele, responsibilities, and the like.

Introduction. In this section the student will discuss the research question(s) or the organizational events to be analyzed. This section is generally fairly brief (about two pages), and it answers the question, “What is the subject of the research”.

Literature Review. Regardless of the type of analysis (case study, quantitative analysis, program evaluation, etc.), the student will draw on the research of others to assist in developing expectations or hypotheses about the student’s project. The student is expected to review scholarly and applied literature relevant to his or her research questions and/or subject. Depending upon the nature of the project, this section can range from five to 15 pages.

Hypotheses. If the student is conducting a quantitative analysis or program review, it may be appropriate to set forth what he or she expects to find when analyzing the data. If the paper is a case study it may also be appropriate to indicate expectations based on the literature. This is generally a short section of about a page or two in length.

Research Design and Data. In this section the student will describe how he or she has organized the project to address the research questions, events, or other areas or topics that will be analyzed. If the study involves quantitative research, the student will want to fully describe the dependent and independent variables, the nature of the statistical analysis (cross sectional analysis; panel study; etc.), and the statistical procedures to be used in the analysis. If the study is qualitative the student will describe the data gathered to support the analysis, and the methods used to study the research topic. Depending upon the nature of the research, this section can range from three to ten pages.

Findings. This section reports the results of the analysis. Students may include supporting tables and graphs here or may place them in an appendix and refer to them in the text in this section. This section can range between five and ten pages.

Discussion. It is in this section that students will link their findings to their hypotheses or expectations. Are the results in keeping with what the literature would suggest or are the results surprising? Why does the student believe he or she found these particular results? Suggested length for this section is three to five pages.
Conclusion and Policy Impact. The student has studied a specific question or questions in some area of public administration. In this section, the student will link his or her work to the broader field of public administration. How does this work relate to the work of public administrators? Are there lessons that can be applied to public administration? How does this work inform the discipline? Is there advice the student has, based on his or her research, for the organization for which he or she worked? This section may range from two to five pages.

Bibliography or Works Cited. Be sure to choose a style (MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, etc.) and follow it consistently throughout this section and the paper.

Appendix. Depending upon the format chosen by the student, there may be one or several appendices containing tables, charts and graphs and other material that supports the paper or informs the reader. In addition, students should provide information about data sources and summary statistics for all variables used in the analysis.

ORAL EXAMINATION

Students must orally present and defend their research to their committee and the larger MPA community. When your committee chair informs you that your research is ready to distribute to your committee and to defend, you must:

- Contact Teresa Howard to schedule a 1 ½ hour time block with your committee
- Work with Teresa Howard to reserve a room with a computer, projector and screen, and Power Point software.
- **At least one week before your defense**, prepare an abstract and presentation date/location for Teresa to send to MPA faculty and current students.

For your defense you should prepare a Power Point presentation. The presentation will be **no more than 15 minutes**; there should be no more than 12 slides. (The presentation time limit will be strictly enforced.) The presentation should mirror the organization of your paper, with slides on:

- Background & rationale
- Research question and methods
- Results
- Implications and conclusions

After your presentation your committee will ask you questions about your research, followed by audience questions. Once the question and answer session is finished, everyone will be asked to leave the room so that the committee can discuss the project. One of three outcomes results from the studentss oral review:

- The committee accepts the project
° The committee requests that you revise certain parts of the project. This is a common outcome.
° The committee rejects the project. This seldom occurs if you work closely with your committee.

You will be invited back into the room to discuss the committee decision and the necessary changes.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SENSITIVE MATERIAL

The bound copy of the final paper will be housed in the Department of Government as a part of the permanent student files, and as such will not be a public document. The faculty will consider the contents of the paper to be confidential unless otherwise specifically instructed by the student.

Nonetheless, in the normal course of analyzing policy-making or administration in which they themselves are participants, a student may encounter highly sensitive information or situations which must be included in their paper for the sake of full and accurate explanation. The student should not assume that sensitive information can simply be expunged and ignored. Information which is incomplete or deliberately censored is likely to be invalid and to encourage inaccurate interpretations of the findings.

If a student feels that inclusion of such information in the final paper is a greater risk than he or she is prepared to take, appropriate means of adjusting the filed study to address the information should be discussed with the faculty advisor as soon as the student recognizes the need. A variety of strategies might be used to compensate for the sensitive material. The information might be addressed in a separate addendum to the final paper which is not left on file with the department. The information may be appropriately covered through a verbal report to the faculty committee, either in a private meeting or in the oral examination. It may be possible to design the paper so that the specific content of the sensitive information is not required, and a more generalized explanation of the problem it represents is provided instead.

Finally, students should maintain a balanced perspective when interpreting the potential sensitivity of events. Interpersonal conflict, failures to achieve idealized purposes, and representations tailored to fit particular audiences are common features of public policies and work organizations. Students with limited work experience may consider controversial and dangerous events of a type which more experienced employees regard as an ordinary part of organizational life.

GRADING OF ASSIGNMENTS

POL 870, POL 871 and POL 839 are graded on the standard letter grading system used by Eastern Kentucky University. The criteria used for grading a student’s performance in POL
The quality of the paper submitted for the final project in the field study.

The quality of the defense of the project presented at the student’s orals.

The responsibility, diligence, and effectiveness with which the student addressed the needs of the employer.

Timeliness, neatness, and thoroughness in preparing and submitting required materials and in addressing the other responsibilities of the field study.

If a work assignment reasonably requires a student to work beyond the end of a term to complete the assignment, or if the terms of employment specify that the student will work beyond the end of the enrollment term to complete the necessary credit hours, the student should discuss the situation with the POL 870 or POL 871 instructor. Under appropriate circumstances, faculty may assign a grade of “IP” until the assignment can be completed. Under no circumstances will a grade be assigned for POL 871 until the student has successfully defended his field study project in an oral examination and until the final paper has been accepted by the student’s committee chair.

Tardiness or violations of ethical standards for the applied field study are subject to the same disciplinary regulations as any other course. The faculty may set penalties for infractions, subject to University guidelines and regulations. Unless the POL 870/871 instructor otherwise specifies, deliberate dishonesty, fabrication of data or misrepresentation by a student in carrying out the responsibilities of the field study will normally result in a failing grade in the course, and subsequent disciplinary action as provided for in University guidelines. Tardiness in the completion of assignments for POL 870 may result in deductions from the overall grade for the assignment, but the penalty will be based on the judgment of the instructor as to the seriousness of the situation. The deadlines for POL 871 have been set to allow students to graduate according to their own schedule. If you miss deadlines in the completion of your research paper you will risk missing the deadline you have set for yourself.

CONCLUSION: THE FIELD STUDY AND YOU

For you as a student, a well-executed field study will become one of the important events in your career. The encounter between your classroom studies, your work experiences, and your personal values and experiences will provide you with insights and perspectives that cannot be achieved separately from any of those sources. It will provide you with a specialized understanding of a problem or situation that you will carry with you forever. And you will continue to build on that understanding for the rest of your career. It will require dedication and energy. You will probably have to work nights and weekends to bring it to a successful conclusion. In the end, the investment you make should result in a sense of pride in accomplishment, and the permanent possession of a new professional understanding.