Guidelines for Policy and Management Briefs  
Master of Public Administration Program  
School of Public Policy and Administration, University of Delaware

Beginning in fall 2010, those admitted into the MPA program must complete the capstone requirement of a policy or management brief during their second year of study.

A policy brief is a concise written statement submitted to policymakers or directed to the public to inform them of a problem or issue that should be addressed by policy decisions at some organizational level. While formats vary, policy briefs usually include an executive summary, a description of the problem (that may include the history and status, magnitude, implications, and impact of the issue), a discussion of alternative policies and criteria for evaluating them, a review of research on the strengths and weakness of the alternative policies, an analysis of possible results from pursuing each alternative, a conclusion that includes a recommended policy or management action, and a listing of the resources used to write the brief.

While policy briefs are aimed at policymakers and the public, management briefs are targeted at organization leaders and address organizational issues, problems, and initiatives. Management briefs may consider how to improve organizational structure, operations or productivity, how to increase institutional effectiveness, responsiveness and efficiency, or how to enhance organizational planning, leadership capacity, or service performance. The structure and requirements of a management brief are the same as a policy brief. Eugene Bardach’s *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving* is a good reference for either a policy or management brief.

In fulfilling the capstone requirement, students must complete the following steps:

1. Attend a policy/management brief informational meeting in their first semester of study.
2. Complete an initial policy/management brief in the *Seminar in Public Administration* during the first semester of study. Length, format and content requirements will be set by the instructor.
3. Enroll in and complete at least one of the following specialization courses (or another course approved by their academic advisor and MPA program director) that requires analysis of a policy or management issue suitable for a policy/management brief and results in a written product that reflects such analysis.
   - Public Management Specialization: UAPP 668 *Government Budgets and Fiscal Federalism* or UAPP 684 *Performance Management*
   - Nonprofit Management Specialization: UAPP 673 *Governing Nonprofit Organizations*
   - Policy and Program Development Specialization: UAPP 701 *Public Policy*
   - Student-Designed Specialization: To be determined by academic advisor and student
4. Enroll in the 1-credit *UAPP 699 Management or Policy Brief* capstone writing activity in the second year of study and attend related class sessions conducted by the course instructor. Also, select a brief advisor and second reader to guide completion of a brief that will typically be 10 to 16 double-spaced pages - excluding figures, tables, and references.
5. Make an oral presentation on the policy brief to the course instructor, brief advisor and a second reader; others may attend the presentation with the instructor’s approval. Grade will be awarded by the instructor in consultation with the brief advisor and second reader.
6. Earn a standard of “competent” or “exemplary” for the policy/management brief as determined by the instructor in consultation with the brief advisor and second reader and following guidelines of the *Policy/Management Brief Evaluation Rubric*.