Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

Local Government Program • Department of Political Science

GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Public Administration 9930
Guidelines for the GPDA Research Report

Revised April 2022

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the research report should be to apply something of what you have learned in your Diploma courses to an analysis of: 1) some aspect of the political and administrative process in a given municipality; or 2) possible responses to a particular municipal policy problem.

You could, for example, analyze how and why a particular decision, or set of related decisions, was made (e.g., approving a new subdivision, implementing new purchasing policies, organizational restructuring, adopting a new administrative process). You might then want to evaluate the outcomes, or suggest possible improvements in the decision-making process. Alternatively, you could choose a problem facing a municipality (e.g. disposing of solid waste, the need for better financial controls, assessing and rewarding staff, improving council-staff relations), describe possible solutions, and then justify your own conclusion as to the desired alternative. As background to your report, some description of events and/or procedures is inevitable; but the prime requirement is to demonstrate your skills as a critical analyst.

Regardless of your topic, you are expected to be sensitive to the opportunities and constraints posed by the political and administrative environments in which municipal decisions are taken. Here is where the course materials should prove particularly useful, both in providing theoretical or conceptual frameworks, and in facilitating your analysis of the topic you have chosen. Good reports will show evidence of theoretical or conceptual material beyond that provided in the course texts. Your resources for your research report should include academic as well as practitioner-oriented books, articles, and reports.

FORM

The report should be about 20 to 25 double-spaced typewritten pages in length. Language should be direct and concise, avoiding jargon related to particular professions or specialties. It should be carefully edited to ensure proper English usage, including paragraph and sentence construction, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Sources of direct quotations, borrowed ideas, and specific facts should be properly acknowledged in footnotes or citations. Guides for citing sources are available here: https://www.lib.uwo.ca/essayhelp/index.html the Chicago, APA, or ASA styles are preferred. Proper citation of sources will avoid plagiarism, a serious academic offence. A bibliography at the end of your report should list all the sources cited in your paper.

PROPOSAL AND FACULTY ADVISOR

The first stage of your research report project involves preparing and submitting a proposal through a standardized online form, which is available here:

https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_es2ryuKWrLN5X8x The proposal must include the following elements: 1) proposed title; 2) proposed research question or problem; 3) a brief outline of your proposed paper, including discussion of relevant academic concepts and theories, your planned strategy for gathering and analyzing data (i.e., research design, methods, and techniques), and any empirical evidence that you have uncovered so far (max 3000 characters or approx. 500 words); and 4) a brief reference list of sources that you have consulted so far, and/or that you intend to use. These are the same instructions that appear in the standardized online form. It is recommended that you also save a copy of your proposal offline. We have compiled a few sources on research design and methods in an OWL site, which you may find helpful. You can request access to this site by contacting the Local Government Program at localgov@uwo.ca (for administrative purposes, please send this email from your @uwo.ca account).

The Program Director will review and provide brief feedback on your proposal and, if it is sufficiently well developed, pair you up with a faculty advisor (chosen from among current LGP or Political Science teaching faculty) who will work with you on the project. If you have a preferred faculty advisor in mind, please note so in your proposal; however, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to pair you up with your preferred advisor.

You are expected to consult with your advisor regularly, particularly at the planning stage of your project. It is important to have your advisor's guidance in order to ensure that your research question is well focused, your method of studying the question is appropriate, you have a workable outline of your final report, and the readings and other source materials you are using are sufficient and appropriate. If you and your advisor agree, you are encouraged to submit a draft of your report well before the time you plan to submit the final version for evaluation, so that your advisor can make suggestions for improvement, both in form and content. You should allow at least two weeks for your advisor to return comments to you, and additional time to make revisions based on his or her suggestions.

A Note on Research Methods

The choice of research methods employed to gather and analyze information for your report is up to you and your advisor, and will be shaped by the nature of your topic and question. That said, please do not plan to conduct your own research involving living human participants. Some examples of the methods used to conduct this type of research include surveys, focus groups, or interviews that are more than just informational (i.e., you are asking about recollections and opinions, rather than just collecting factual information/data). Use of these methods now requires approval from the University Research Ethics office – a lengthy and complex approval process that does not fit well with the timelines and workload expectations for the GDPA research report. You can use research like this as a secondary source, providing the information is non-identifiable and/or publicly available.

DEADLINES

Students must enroll in the GDPA Research Paper course (PA 9930) at the start of the term of their final course or the term immediately following their final course. The latter is the most common approach.

Note that the proposal is due **BEFORE** the term in which the paper will be completed.

Enrolled in Final Paper (9930) to complete Fall Term
Proposal Due Date: July 30th
Final Report Due Date: November 30th
Graduation: February (In Absentia)

Enrolled in Final Paper (9930) to complete Winter Term
Proposal Due Date: November 30th
Final Report Due Date: March 30th
Graduation: June

Enrolled in Final Paper (9930) to complete Spring/Summer Term
Proposal Due Date: March 30th
Final Report Due Date: July 30th
Graduation: October

Extensions beyond these deadlines will be granted only in extenuating circumstances, and requests must be made in writing to the Program Director. Students who do not meet these deadlines will receive a fail. At the Director's discretion, you may be allowed to enroll in one more term to complete the paper. This will cause another term of tuition. If you do not successfully complete the second time, you will be withdrawn from the Program.

SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT

ONE digital copy of the final version of the report must be emailed to the Local Government Program at localgov@uwo.ca.

GRADING

The report will be graded by your faculty advisor. The grade and comments will be returned to you no later than two weeks after your chosen submission deadline (see above). As with your courses, you must achieve a minimum of 60%, but your average over all courses (including the report) must be at least 70% in order to graduate.

After receiving a grade and feedback from your faculty advisor you *may* (if you so choose) within a maximum of three business days request a second reading by another faculty member. The second reader will be chosen by the Program Director from among current LGP/Political Science teaching faculty. The grade assigned by the second reader will be averaged with the grade assigned by the advisor to produce the student's final grade.

Marks are not recorded on the student's transcript. Transcripts note the Final Paper as "Completed" or "Not Completed" (the latter designation applies if the student fails the Final Paper).

COMPLETED REPORTS

Unless we are advised to the contrary by the author, all successfully completed research reports are available for general consultation from the Local Government Program.

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Invitation to members of the Local Government Program at The University of Western Ontario:

Municipal World magazine would be pleased to consider submissions from students or graduates of the Local Government Program at Western. Highlighting research undertaken as part of the program and/or issues of interest to Canadian municipalities, article submissions should be approximately 1200-1500 words in length. Please note that Municipal World does not accept articles that have been previously published or accepted for publication elsewhere. Editorial guidelines are available online at https://www.municipalworld.com/editorial-guidelines/ Editorial inquiries or submissions may be made to Scott Vokey at scott@municipalworld.com.