MPA Capstone Project Rules
Fall 2013 Version 2.0

1.   Purpose

The purpose of the PAD 771 Capstone seminar is for students to demonstrate that they have successfully mastered skills developed during studies in the MPA program. The student develops a term project on a policy-related problem in a specific jurisdiction. The problem selected must be related to the student's area of specialization. The project submission consists of three components:

- the project essay which is in the form of a 12-page memorandum,
- a 2-page executive summary in memorandum format, and
- twelve (12) presentation slides to support a presentation of your cover memorandum.

Students are expected to choose a topic for their capstone projects during the initial weeks of the course, according to a schedule specified in the syllabus for the course section. (The general parameters for the schedule are set out in the section on "Course Timetables" below.) The student completes a "Project Definition Worksheet" which the section professor must review and approve before the student proceeds with further development.

2.   Prerequisites

Completing the MPA Qualifying Examination (MPAQE) is a prerequisite to enrolling in the Capstone Seminar. For information about the MPAQE, see the MPAQE Student Guide, which is accessible from the MPA Newsletter or the MPA section of the college website. For MPA-PPA students PAD 715 and PAD 739 are required prerequisites or co-requisites, and for students in MPA-IO, PAD 715 and PAD 758 are required prerequisites or co-requisites.

3.   Learning Objectives:

2.2 Understand the influence of politics on policy choices and the practices of policy analysis.
3.1 Demonstrate reading, writing and analytical skills necessary for decision-making.
3.2 Be able to define and diagnose decision situations, collect and analyze data, develop and implement effective courses of action, and evaluate results.
4.1 Identify how the values of diversity, equity, integrity, ethical conduct, efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism shape the formulation and implementation of public policy.
4.3 Understand how to incorporate professional codes of ethics in public service decisions
5.1 Be able to organize and communicate information to a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry by means of oral presentations, written documents and digital media.
6.1 Demonstrate the ability to complete a public policy analysis.
6.2 Demonstrate the ability to apply professional knowledge and skills in public administration.

4. **Waiver Based on Scholarly Article Accepted for Publication or Major Presentation**

If a student completes a scholarly article which is accepted for publication in any peer reviewed journal in public policy and administration the student is entitled to a waiver of the requirement to complete PAD 771 and the capstone project.[1] The following journals are encouraged: any official journal of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, the American Society for Public Administration, or the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management . The Journal of Public Inquiry is also encouraged. Other journals are accepted at the discretion of the Program Directors in consultation with the Capstone Seminar faculty.

Students may also become eligible for a waiver through acceptance of a scholarly paper at a national conference of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, the American Society for Public Administration, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management , or the Association of Inspectors General.

Students seeking to satisfy the capstone requirement though this option should contact one of the Program Directors as soon as possible, particularly if the student has not yet undertaken or submitted the paper or article.

5. **Instructional Resources**

Instructional resources for the capstone course are available at http://capstone.jjconline.net. The resources include updated version of the rules, medialectures, templates, grading rubric, as well as links to internet-based resources for students.

6. **Technical Requirements for the Projects**

- The submission consists of the executive summary memorandum, the primary memorandum, and printed versions of the Powerpoint slides. The project must be submitted as a set of files in a Microsoft Word or Powerpoint format.
- The executive summary is to be no more than 2 pages long. The primary memorandum is to be no longer than 12 pages long. The presentation submission is to consist of no more than 12 slides.
- No appendices or attachments are allowed, except for appendices that are included within the 12-page limit of the primary memorandum.
- The memoranda must be in Times New Roman 12-point font, single spaced within paragraphs and double spaced between paragraphs.
- The two memoranda must meet memorandum specifications as specified below.

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[1] A waiver eliminates the requirement of PAD 771 for the student, but not the requirement of 42 credits of graduate coursework.

- The Primary Memorandum must also be submitted through Turnitin. The Turnitin settings for this course will permit the student to submit a project in advance of final submission for an assessment that is reported only to the student.
- The three files are not to include any identifying information relating to the student. The student is to select a 6-field number consisting of:
  - the right digit of your birthday (if you were both on December 16, the digit is 6;
  - the last two digits of your social security or number;
  - the last two digits of the phone number you use the most;
  - A letter associated with your specialization. The specialization letter codes are :

    a. Court Administration
    b. Criminal Justice Policy and Administration
    c. Emergency Management
    d. Human Resources Management
    e. Law and Public Management
    f. Management and Operations
    g. Urban Affairs
    h. Fiscal Policy and Oversight
    i. Forensic Accounting
    j. Organizational Assessment and Monitoring
    k. Investigation and Operational Inspection
    l. Law and Public Management
    m. Justice Policy Analysis
    n. International Inspection and Oversight
    o. Independent Inspection and Oversight

- The memoranda should identify you as Student ######, using the number generated as specified above.
- The files should follow this naming convention, where ##### refers to your number:
  a. Executive Summary: ######_exec.doc
  b. Primary Memorandum: ######_memo.doc
  c. Presentation: ######_presentation.ppt
- Projects must be submitted in Acrobat PDF format, which provides for greater format control by the student.
- The student must also submit the Primary Memorandum to Turnitin.com in Word format so that it can be evaluated for compliance with JJCCJ integrity policies.
- The student should separately inform his/her faculty member by email of his/her student number. The faculty member will retain the number confidentially.

Guidance About the Memorandum Format: Memos are a primary form of internal communication in most organizations, so it is vital that the student understand how to draft these important documents effectively. Unlike conversations, memos leave a "paper trail," so the company can use directives, inquiries, instructions, requests, recommendations, policies

and other reports for future reference. Unlike term papers, these documents are intended not only to be broadly informative, but also to guide specific decisions and actions in a practical and immediate context.

For this assignment, each memo must begin with the following heading:

TO: (Insert the title and name of the official to whom the memo is addressed.)
FROM: (Insert your 6-field code, and do not include your name)
DATE: (insert the date that the memo is submitted for grading)
SUBJECT: (Insert a 5-6 word title explaining what the memo is about.)

The primary memorandum must be no more than 12 pages long and the executive summary memorandum must be no more than 2 pages long. Paragraphs must be single-spaced, with paragraph separations and headings double spaced. The document should be written in a 12-point font. All margins should be one inch.

Guidance About the Presentation Slide Format: The twelve-slide presentation can be created using a presentation program such as Powerpoint, or can be created with any other application that produces an image that can be projected in a presentation. For example, a conventional word processing program could be used with the paper in landscape mode.

The purpose of your slides is to assist a brief presentation of the results of your project. The student should assume a presentation that generally supports the content of the 2-page cover memorandum. An operationalization of the assignment is: If you were reading your executive summary to a small group, how would us use twelve slides to reinforce and support your presentation?

7.   Project Topic Specifications

Students are to complete a policy analysis. The following guidance relates to the selection of a topic.

- The project must involve a real agency or organization in a real jurisdiction.
- The project must respond to a problem that can be related to a policy deficiency – a policy that is incomplete, insufficient, missing, mistaken, unworkable or inappropriate.
- If the policy exists, it must be precisely identified in the primary memorandum. If it does not exist, the student must identify how the policy would be adopted and codified.
- The topic of the project must be related to the student's specialization. The faculty member for the section makes this determination.
- The memorandum must be addressed to a real official, although the official involved should not be personally named or contacted. For example, a memorandum might be addressed to a county commissioner, city councilor or state legislator without naming the person involved.

- The student must frame the project in a question that asked by the official involved, and the project should produce a response to the question. The question should be included in the introduction.
- The analysis must be based on real information or data relating to the agency or organization in the jurisdiction involved.
- The sources of the information or data must be cited. If the information or data is unpublished, such as information provided based on an interview or information request, the student must make the information available to the faculty member for the section involved.
- Students may create original information or data by gathering it. For example, the student could conduct interviews or measure distances or rate attributes of locations, or the student could construct estimates of information based on comparable jurisdictions. The primary memorandum must explain how the information is developed.
- The project must be at a scale that one person with the skills of an MPA student, working alone, could complete in several weeks. For example, the elimination of the national debt or the reversal of global warming are projects out of scale for this assignment. In most cases, projects, issues and programs that are encountered in a local government in a specific agency or local organization are preferable.
- The student must understand the data and the techniques of analysis involved. For example, comparing methods used to assess the presence of water on Mars would be beyond the capability of most MPA students based on what the student has studied.

8.   Guidance for Projects

Policy analysts must often define problems for, and recommend solutions to, their superiors. A policy is a high level statement or plan that defines goals and acceptable approaches to the achievement of goals. A policy analysis evaluates the goals or the approaches to the goals. A policy analysis project should include the following elements:

- Introduction
    - Identify the action-forcing event.
    - Identify the policy question asked by the official you are working for.
- Assessment of the Problem
    - Provide an historical background and timeline.
    - Define the policy problem.
- Literature Review
    - Complete a literature review that includes scholarly articles, professional and best-practice reports and articles, and reports and articles about how the policy and problem has been managed in other jurisdictions.
- Stakeholder Analysis
    - Develop an environmental scan table that identifies 4-5 people who are official decision makers, experts and advocates. These are people whose views should be considered by your client.
    - Include at least one stakeholder representing the public interest.

- Options Specification
  - Identify the policy strategies and options to be assessed.
  - Develop an options specification table.
- Options Analysis
  - Explain the analysis to be conducted.
  - Collect the information or data.
  - Identify legal, ethical, operational and financial constraints that limit strategies and options.
  - Identify legal, ethical, operational or financial implications of your recommendation.
  - Present and explain the results of your analysis in an options analysis table.
  - Include at least the following criteria: public interest, ethical compliance, political feasibility, administrative feasibility, financial feasibility, equity, and effectiveness.
- Recommendation
  - Recommend, based on the analysis, a policy strategy or option.
  - Identify arguments for and against the policy strategy or option advocated.
  - Defend the policy strategy or option advocated.

9. Course Format and Timetables

PAD 771 is a hybrid class, meeting partially in classroom settings and partially online. The reason for the online component is that a substantial portion of the course is the drafting of the capstone project, during which there is considerable one-on-one interaction between the faculty member and each student. The online format facilitates the interaction while assuring that the faculty member can also offer general advice and announcements to the entire class as circumstances warrant.

Each course section will have a specific timetable set out in the syllabus for the section involved. However the following general guidelines apply according to the format of the course. Campus courses are typically in the 15-week format. West Point program courses are typically in the 10-week format and summer courses are typically in the 8-week format and never in the 5-week format.

Project Deadline	15-Week Format	10-Week Format	8-Week Format
Topic and Method Selection	2	2	2
Project Definition Approval	4	3	3
Detailed Outline and Tables Submission	6	4	4
Pre-Final Draft Submission	8	5	5
First-Round Project Submission	10	7	6

Second-Round Project Submission	13	9	8
Portfolio Review	14	10	9
Third-Round Project Submission	16	12	10

Students are encouraged to complete preliminary version of the tables for the stakeholder analysis, options specification and options assessment when the detailed outline is submitted.

10.   Grading

Capstone projects are graded blind, using a standard rubric in which points are assigned or deducted based on specific criteria. The grading rubric is made available to students during the semester, and is generally available on the Capstone Project Website at http://capstone.jjconline.net.

While use of the rubric is intended to promote consistency in grading, there will be variations in grading decisions by the faculty members grading the submissions. These variations are appropriate in the review of a complex policy analysis, and are consistent with the variations in decision-maker support that a policy analysis would achieve in a real-world project.

The following grading rules and processes apply:

- The course is graded on a PASS/FAIL/IN basis, based on the scores assigned in the assessment of the project submissions.
- A conventional IN grade can be assigned by the faculty member. The rules for satisfying an IN are explained in a subsequent section of this policy.
- Capstone projects are to be graded by MPA faculty members who are not teaching the section in which the student is enrolled. Generally, the faculty members who grade projects are teaching the other capstone sections during the semester involved, or have taught the capstone course at least once.
- The projects are graded on a 100-point scale, where the primary memorandum can receive up to 60 points and the other two components each receive up to 20 points. A total of 60 points is necessary to pass the overall project.
- If, during the first-round first-reader grading, the student's project does not achieve at least 60 points, the project will automatically be assigned to a first-round second-reader second faculty member will then grade the project. If the second-reader faculty member assigns 60 points or more, then the student passes. If the second-reader faculty member does not assign 60 points or more, the student will be informed by the faculty member teaching the students course section, who will also share both sets of grading sheets with the student. The student then has the opportunity to make revisions to the project and resubmit the project for a second-round grading.

- The second-stage grading works like the first one. A second-round first-reader faculty member grades the project, and it if does not pass a second-round second-reader faculty member grades the project.
- In summary, for a student to fail at this stage of the course, there will have been two project submissions and four separate unsatisfactory gradings of the project.
- When a student has failed the first and second rounds of grading, the faculty member for the student's section has the discretion to initiate two additional review options: portfolio review and third-round grading. However, the faculty member must determine that the student has consistently attended class in accordance with the attendance expectations set out in the course syllabus for the section, and that even though the second-round submission failed, that the student made material revisions intended to be responsive to the comments on the first submission. Students are not automatically entitled to the additional review options.
- In particular, a student with a very high GPA may not bypass participation in the course and bypass submission of the project, intending to pass the requirement based on the portfolio review process. The opportunity for portfolio review must be earned through effort and attendance.
- The portfolio review process takes into consideration the student's achievements in the entire MPA Program curriculum. A designated faculty member who administers the portfolio review process calculates an alternate score for the student based on the following rules:

  - **Primary memorandum:** The highest score achieved based on the following: The highest of the first-round and second-round gradings for this section of the project, or, up to 3.5 points of the student's MPA Program GPA, multiplied by 10, as of the end of the prior semester. For example, a student with a 3.0 GPA could have a primary memorandum score raised to 30 points out of 60.
  - **Executive summary and presentation:** The highest scores achieved based on the following: The highest of the first-round and second-round gradings for these section of the project, or, the student's MPA Program GPA, multiplied by 2.5, as of the end of the prior semester. For example, a student with a 3.0 GPA could have the executive summary and/or the presentation score raised to 7.5 points out of 20.
  - **Portfolio Review Passing Score**: The minimum passing score on portfolio review is 55 points.

- The grade of IN should be assigned to students who receive failing grades in the first and second grading cycles, do not meet the portfolio review eligibility criteria or fail the portfolio review, and failed the third grading cycle.
- A grade in F should be assigned when a student has plagiarized substantial parts of a submission.
- For students who are taking PAD 771 the first time, an alternative option which the faculty member can initiate for a failing student is the third round of the grading cycle.

This option is also not an entitlement and requires the same level of substantial participation as explained above for the portfolio review. The faculty member offer the student two weeks to resubmit the project for a third reading. The grading is based on the standard two-faculty-member process, and the portfolio review criteria also apply.

- If the student's project still receives a failing score, including the portfolio review scores, then the student receives an IN grade for the course. If the student passes the course, then the student receives a P.
- If a student receives an IN in the course, the student will be permitted to informally attend and complete the capstone course one more time, and resubmit the capstone project to a subsequent class section as explained in the "Incomplete Grades" section that follows. In either case, the result of the grading in the informally-attended class section is the basis for resolving the IN in the prior section of PAD 771.
- If the student does not complete the course on the second attempt within one year following the year following the end on the semester when the IN was assigned, the student will not be permitted to take the course again and will be dismissed from the program due to failure to complete the capstone requirement on a timely basis.

11.   Resolving Incomplete Grades

The Graduate Bulletin states the following concerning incomplete "IN" grades: "*A grade of INC is given in lieu of a grade only in exceptional circumstances for students who have been doing satisfactory work and have been unable to complete course requirements. Students who receive an Incomplete must fulfill their academic obligation within one calendar year of the end of the semester in which the grade of Incomplete is given. In extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies or the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management, the time limit may be extended one additional year. Incompletes unresolved in the above-mentioned time period become permanent entries in students' records as an Incomplete (no-credit) and may not be changed thereafter*."

Consistent with this rule, students in PAD 771 who have been doing satisfactory work and who become unable to complete course requirements may be given an IN grade. The student must then submit the completed project and submit the project for grading during the regular cycle of grading in course sections taking place within one year following the year following the end on the semester when the IN was assigned. The student should contact the faculty member who assigned the IN grade to arrange for the particular course section in which the project should be submitted for grading.

For example, if the students receives the IN during the Fall semester, the IN must be resolved during the next Spring, Summer or Fall semester or the IN grade becomes permanent. A student may not submit the project to more than one course cycle of grading. For example, the student receiving an IN in a Fall semester may not submit the project for the first cycle of grading in the Spring and the second cycle in another course section during the Summer. The student must pick a course section and resolve the IN within the grading cycle of that course section.

The result of the grading in the second cycle is the basis for resolving the IN in the prior section of PAD 771. For example:

- If the student is not enrolled in a new section of PAD 771, and the student passes the second cycle of gradings, the IN in the prior section of PAD 771 is resolved to a P.
- If the student is not enrolled in a new section of PAD 771 and the student fails the second cycle of gradings, the prior IN is resolved to an F.
- If the student is enrolled in a new section of PAD 771 and receives a grade of P or F in the new section, the prior IN becomes a permanent IN because the student cannot receive credit for taking the same course twice.
- However, if the student in enrolled in a new section of PAD 771 and does not receive a P or F, the IN in the prior course is resolved to an F due to failure to pass the second cycle of grading.
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Students whose projects fail to pass within one year following the year following the end on the semester when the IN was assigned are subject to dismissal from the program.

If the student does not submit the capstone project to a second grading cycle within one year following the year following the end on the semester when the IN was assigned, the IN becomes permanent and the student is subject to dismissal from the program due to failure to complete the capstone requirement on a timely basis.

12.   Plagiarism

The CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and the John Jay College Policy on Academic Integrity apply to the project submissions in this course. The John Jay policy describes plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is the act of presenting another person's ideas, research or writings as your own. The following are some examples of plagiarism, but by no means is it an exhaustive list:

- *Copying another person's actual words without the use of quotation marks and footnotes*
  attributing the words to their source.
- *Presenting another person's ideas or theories in your own words without acknowledging the*
  source.
- *Using information that is not common knowledge without acknowledging the source.*
- *Failing to acknowledge collaborators on homework and laboratory assignments.*
- *Internet plagiarism includes submitting downloaded term papers or parts of term papers,*

> *paraphrasing or copying information from the Internet without citing the source, and "cutting and pasting" from various sources without proper attribution.*

The primary memorandum must be submitted by the student to the college's Turnitin.com service, at the same time that the memorandum is submitted for grading. For PAD 771, the Turnitin settings will permit a student to independently submit the memorandum more than once to assure that inadvertant plagiarism is not inaccurately detected.

In the Capstone Seminar, it is permitted to use your own work from previous courses. For example, you may use a literature review that you previously developed for a term paper in another course. However, if the work is from a course you are currently enrolled in, be sure you have permission from the professor in the other course.

Cases of suspected plagiarism in capstone projects submitted for grading, the faculty member will follow the reporting procedure in the <u>John Jay College Policy on Academic Integrity</u>.