

**GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**  
Political Science 4931 / Public Administration 9930  
**Guidelines for the DPA/GPDA Research Report**

Revised March 2017

**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 particular 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, comprising about 4,000-5,500 words. 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 at <http://www.lib.uwo.ca/services/styleguides.html>. Proper citation of sources will avoid plagiarism, a serious academic offence. A bibliography at the end of your report should list all relevant material consulted during its preparation.

**PROPOSAL AND FACULTY ADVISOR**

At the first stage of your research report project you should prepare and submit to the Program Director a three to four page proposal which: 1) outlines your proposed topic and briefly

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discusses its significance; 2) identifies a research problem or question that will be the focus your work on the proposed topic; 3) identifies some relevant academic and/or policy literature and outlines an analytical framework; 4) outlines the method(s) you intend to use to study the problem or question; and 5) provides a brief reference list of sources that you have consulted so far, and/or that you intend to consider.

The Program Director will provide you with brief feedback on the proposal and, if it is sufficiently well developed, the Director will 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.

When you send your proposal to the Program Director, please also copy [localgov@uwo.ca](mailto:localgov@uwo.ca) so administrative staff can track it.

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 use opinion surveys or personal interviews outside the municipality/organization that you work in. 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 (G)DPA research report. You *can* use such methods *within* the organization that employs you, provided that you obtain and submit to the Local Government Program Director a written letter of approval from a relevant superior.

**DEADLINES**

*Enrolled in MRP to complete Fall Term*

Proposal Due Date: July 30<sup>th</sup>

Final Report Due Date: November 30<sup>th</sup>

Graduation: February (In Absentia)

*Enrolled in MRP to complete Winter Term*

Proposal Due Date: November 30<sup>th</sup>

Final Report Due Date: March 30<sup>th</sup>

Graduation: June

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*Enrolled in MRP to complete Spring/Summer Term*

Proposal Due Date: March 30<sup>th</sup>

Final Report Due Date: July 30<sup>th</sup>

Graduation: October

Extensions beyond these deadlines will be granted only in extenuating circumstances, and requests must be made in writing to the Program Director.

**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](mailto: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.