Mission of MTSU

Middle Tennessee State University unites the closeness of a small college with the opportunities of a large dynamic public university where students explore their intellectual potential and realize the promise in their futures. Grounding students in the arts and sciences, the University offers an integrated, technological, innovative education that prepares leaders for the economic, political, civic, and social life of the region and beyond.

The University is dedicated to promoting openness and educating a diverse student body from across the nation and around the world through comprehensive undergraduate and select masters and doctoral programs. MTSU prepares students to live productively and to become lifelong learners; to employ scientific knowledge and an understanding of culture and history; to think logically, critically, and creatively; to communicate clearly; to make sound judgments; to acquire working knowledge of a discipline or group of related disciplines; and to participate as citizens in the global community. The MTSU community creates knowledge through research and uses scholarship to enhance teaching and public service.

The University fosters an environment conducive to learning and personal development; recruits exceptional faculty and maintains support services to assist instruction; provides resources to encourage research, creative activity, and service; develops individual, corporate, and public support; encourages excellence in athletics and recreational activities; establishes academic partnerships that support student-centered learning; works continually to strengthen and enhance the academic core; and supplies resources to accomplish its mission.
**Introduction**

The Master of Professional Studies (MPS) program requires every student to complete a Professional Project as the culminating experience in earning the degree. Please carefully read each section of this syllabus and follow its guidelines.

**Purpose of the Professional Project**

The Professional Project is the capstone course for the Master of Professional Studies Degree, serving as the integrative culmination of your program of study. The Professional Project should be a substantial piece of independent research or a significant professional project that is logically consistent with the content of your program of study. Your work should demonstrate familiarity with and understanding of a body of professional literature related to a specific topic. The Project should grow out of your program of study and should demonstrate your ability to incorporate the knowledge from the MPS courses you have taken. As a “culminating experience,” the Professional Project should demonstrate the student’s use of the knowledge gained in the program.

**Prerequisites**

As the culminating experience of the MPS program, the Professional Project should be done in the last semester of a student’s program. The project relies on the content learned in PRST 6300 Research Methods which should be taken early in the program. You also should have complete and have had approved your Project Proposal.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, the student will have produced and presented a professional project and/or original research which demonstrates the use of knowledge gained throughout the program.

**Assessment**

The professional project and/or original research will be assessed by feedback and reflections submitted by the student, the instructor and those present at the presentation. A matrix will be provided to guide both feedback and reflections.
**Step 1: Submit Your Proposal to the Human Subjects Research Review**

All students who propose to engage in any research activity involving the use of human subjects must have prior approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB is responsible for safeguarding rights and welfare of all persons participating in research projects. If you plan to do research with human subjects, please check with your MPS Program Director or your Project Class Instructor. Most survey research may be submitted for “exempt review” (http://frank.mtsu.edu/~irb/faq/Exempt%20Review.pdf). You should submit your IRB request through your Project Class Instructor. For the required forms, go to: http://frank.mtsu.edu/~irb/. *You must obtain IRB exemption within 2-3 weeks of the beginning of the semester.*

Additionally, any project that discusses MTSU’s physical plant, including campus buildings, lighting, landscaping, security, ADA or fire code compliance, GIS mapping, publishing information about the physical plant, etc. must be approved by Campus Planning.

**Step 2: Conduct Research and Complete the Project Paper**

*Once the semester begins you will have only two full months to complete the research and write the project paper reporting your findings and conclusions.* By mid-term, submit a draft of the complete project paper to your Project Class Instructor. Your Project Class Instructor will provide you feedback. You should incorporate the feedback from your Project Class Instructor and submit the final draft of your project at three weeks before the presentation.

**Step 3: Formal Presentation/Defense of Your Professional Project**

The presentation of your project to the Evaluation Committee should be scheduled no later than a week before Finals. You should contact the MPS Director for dates available to schedule your presentation. Presentations of the project can be made in person or via telephone conference or video conference.

The Evaluation Committee for the Professional Project presentation consists of the student’s Professional Project Instructor as well as other members assigned by the MPS Program Director. In the presentation of the project, the student will be asked to: (1) present a summary of the project, (2) explain the way the project was organized and carried out, and (3) explain the relationship between the Professional Project and the content of the MPS program. Then the members of the examination committee will ask the student questions about the Professional Project and share their feedback.

**Step 4: Submit the Final, Bound Copy of Your Professional Project**
Incorporate the final recommendations of your instructor, print and bind two copies of your project. The final copy must include a cover page, abstract, table of contents and bibliography.

**Follow APA Style Guide in Preparing the Written Component of Your Project**

The citations and bibliography of the Special Project must follow a standard style guide, the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA). The paper should be typed, double-spaced and size 12 point type. See the *Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association* for guidelines for formatting your paper. The paper will include a signature page for the Project Class Instructor and additional committee members (if any) to sign. Your final project must be bound and include a cover page, signature page, abstract, table of contents and bibliography.

The paper will include an abstract of one page or less. The abstract should be informative and contain the following sections:

- § Purpose: A brief statement of research questions/objectives;
- § Methods: A concise statement of methods;
- § Results: A clear presentation of results.

Because of the range of approaches possible for Professional Projects in the Master of Professional Studies, defining minimal standards for project papers is difficult. However, if you are following a traditional approach to a Professional Project, a report of original research or policy study, the paper documenting your research including the literature review should be at least 30 pages.

**Avoid Academic Misconduct**

In preparing your Professional Project, avoid academic misconduct. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other forms of academic dishonesty is subject to discipline as stipulated in your university’s Student Code of Conduct. Cheating includes “the misrepresentation of papers, reports, assignments or other materials as the product of a student's sole independent effort.” (See: [http://www.mtsu.edu/englta/documents/WPA_statement_on_plagiarism.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/englta/documents/WPA_statement_on_plagiarism.pdf); [http://www.rodp.org/current-students/student-affairs](http://www.rodp.org/current-students/student-affairs); and, [http://www.mtsu.edu/gcat/10_12/2010-12_Glossary.pdf](http://www.mtsu.edu/gcat/10_12/2010-12_Glossary.pdf).)

**Grading**

The Project Class Instructor will evaluate your work on the Project. Your Project Instructor will assign a grade reflecting the quality of the Professional Project. The project will be assessed for
quality of writing as well as the adequacy in addressing the proposed purpose of the project. *Grades of A-F, or I will be given.*

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

Below 60 = F

Note that at the graduate level, courses in which a D or F is received do not count toward successful completion of the degree. Only six hours of C work is allowed toward the degree.

A Grading Matrix will be used. A copy of it is in the Course Section.