



TIPS IN APPLYING FOR ADMISSION TO THE TROY MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM

January 19, 2011

These suggestions were developed by members of the MPA faculty to help applicants create a successful admission package. The purpose of this document is to provide advice and guidelines on the expectations for:

- A letter of recommendation that addresses the applicant's good potential for success in professional graduate studies and public service (page 2)
- A 500 word essay addressing the applicant's professional goals, readiness, and potential for completing the MPA program. (page 4)
- A resume listing professional experience, certifications and other preparation. (page 6)
- Official copy of GRE, MAT, & GMAT scores. (Page 7)

Suggestions on Letters of Recommendation

Letters of recommendation are an important part of the application process. It is possible that the letters of recommendation could be the deciding factor in the admission process. Strong letters of recommendation can strengthen your application and if there are deficiencies in your application, they can help to outweigh them. For the TROY MPA admission process, only one letter is required. Consider the following in asking for letters of recommendation:

- Choose someone who knows you well
- If you recently received your baccalaureate degree ask one of your key professors
- Someone with an advanced degree
- Your current supervisor
- Letters from family and friends are discouraged

You can help your letter writers write enlightening letters by giving each of them a portfolio that includes:

- What you would like emphasized in each letter
- The due date of the letter
- Any other information that is relevant
- Open and close your note with thanks and acknowledgement that the letter writer's time is valuable and that this letter is important to your professional future.

Since writing a letter of recommendation can easily consume 1 to 2 hours many busy managers or professionals may appreciate a draft or a proposed final letter. Ask before providing. The following are some considerations should you be asked to prepare a draft:

- Write from his or her perspective
- Follow the letter of recommendation format outlined below
- Address several personal dimensions. Obviously you want to emphasize your strongest points, but be aware that too much attention to one or two things is often perceived as a lack of breadth.
- Be honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses. Don't let overcompensation for weaknesses drive what you say.
- Unless asked to do otherwise, only deliver a complete, polished version of the letter -- one theoretically ready for signing. If the signer nevertheless wishes to add or delete something, accept his or her changes gracefully.

Suggestions on the Recommendation Format

Section	Length	Content
Opening	One paragraph.	<p>Sentence 1-- State the purpose of the letter, namely that you're writing a recommendation concerning the individual</p> <p>Sentence 2-- Explain how you know the individual. State from where and for how long you've known him or her. Be very clear about the working relationship involved. That is, explain whether he or she was your subordinate, co-worker, student, etc.</p>
Body	2 to 6 paragraphs of 2 to 4 sentences each	<p>Paragraph 2-- Ease into the specifics contained in the rest of the body. Use this paragraph to characterize the individual in general terms.</p> <p>Paragraphs 3 thru 6-- Address personal dimensions such as those listed above that you feel are pertinent and for which you have direct knowledge. Include anecdotes to back-up your assessments. Cover 1 or 2 dimensions per paragraph.</p> <p>Final paragraph of body section-- If relevant, explain why the individual is seeking a new assignment. For example, if he or she was laid off mention why.</p>
Closing	1 or 2 paragraphs of a couple sentences	Express your level of confidence in the individual. Explain the extent to which you believe he or she is suited to the job or program sought.

Guidance on Preparing an Admissions Essay in Public Administration

The 500 word essay should address your professional goals as well as your readiness/potential for successfully completing graduate school. Your essay should be organized by these two major areas:

1. The introductory paragraph should provide an overview of your essay. This is an important part of the essay as this paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the essay. In this paragraph you will gain or lose the readers interest.
2. The first part of the essay should list and discuss your professional goals as specifically as possible. These goals should relate to your interest in public service (non-profit, federal, state or local government). Some thoughts in preparing this discussion:
 - When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to this field?
 - What are your five year goals?
 - What are your ten year goals?
 - What is the historical background for choosing these goals?
 - Family influences
 - Work or volunteer experiences that influenced your choice?
 - How will this graduate program facilitate achieving these goals? (See the MPA Program Mission above)

The second part of the essay should address your readiness and potential for success in graduate studies. Some thoughts in preparing this discussion:

- Your readiness for graduate schools could include the following:
 - Your professional, volunteer or intern experiences that provided the foundation for understanding the government or non-profit operations.
 - Progression in your current or past work environment (promotions, special recognition, etc.)
 - Your personal characteristics (for example. integrity. compassion. persistence) that improve your potential for success in the field of public administration or non-profit management.
 - Try to document that you have these characteristics.
- Your potential for success in graduate studies could include the following:
 - Success in undergraduate studies, training programs, internships.
 - Discuss your time management skills
 - Discuss your employer support and emphasis on graduate studies
 - If appropriate, discuss family support
 - Discuss any research you've been involved in.
 - What were the outcomes?
 - What are the ramifications of the research?

- What skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) do you possess?

Summarize your essay. One consideration: You could use the summary to convince the reader that you would be a stronger candidate for graduate school and more successful and effective in public administration or non-profit management than other applicants.

Proofread your essay. Review your essay to eliminate grammatical or spelling errors, as these types of errors will lower your chances for admission.

Troy University MPA Mission

The educational philosophy and mission of the Troy University MPA program is to develop professional competency and leadership in individuals associated with public and nonprofit sectors by providing quality graduate professional education through a standardized curriculum and a network of campuses utilizing traditional, nontraditional, and emerging electronic formats.

The MPA program educates students in public administration, developing and enhancing professional competency and leadership by:

1. Encouraging students to develop sound intellectual foundations;
2. Enabling students to build skill competency required for success in administrative, managerial, analytical, and leadership roles;
3. Fostering an understanding of values and ethics emphasizing diversity and democratic principles;
4. Promoting the professional development of students;
5. Facilitating an appreciation for interdisciplinary approaches and cooperative relationships; and
6. Requiring research and service activities that apply public administration knowledge.

There are Web based resources that could help you format your essay:

The Online Writing Laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/>

The Writing Center at Rensselaer:
<http://www.ccp.rpi.edu/gradapp.html>

Resume Listing Professional Experience, Certifications and Other Preparation

The resume is used to determine whether or not you qualify for an internship waiver and as a factor in determining your potential for success in the program. Students with less than one year work experience in a paraprofessional, technical, or supervisory position that involves relevant service to the profession and/or public service are required to complete PA 6694. If you have this work experience it should be written in such a manner that your position and levels of responsibility are clearly stated.

The chronological resume will work best for determining whether or not you qualify for an internship waiver. The following is an example of a chronological resume.

John B. Student
300 East Oak Street
Chesapeake, VA 21456
919-967-1212
jbstudent@cox.com

EDUCATION

University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA

B.S. Social Work, May 2001

GPA 3.56

Honors:

- Dean of Student Affairs Scholastic Achievement Award
- Phi Alpha Phi: Honor Society

Activities;

- Student Council President
- Debate Club

EXPERIENCE

Department of Children & Family Services, Iowa City, IA

Student Intern – Oct 1999 – Aug 2000

- Assisted in the preparation and filing of cases for administrative hearings

Department of Children & Family Services, Cedar Rapids IA

Social Case Worker – Sep 2001 – Oct 2005

- Prepared home assessments (often with medical staff), which meet specified standards and timescales;
- Conducted interviews with service users and their families to assess and review their situation;
- Offered information and counseling support to service users and their families;
- Organized and managed packages of support to enable service users to lead the fullest lives possible.

Department of Social Services, Chesapeake, VA

Senior Social Services Worker – Nov 2003 – Present

- Determine the need for basic social services required by clients in accordance with well-defined policies and procedures;
- Develop and carry out individualized service plans;
- Provide information about available services and arrange for referral of clients to appropriate departmental or community human services resources;
- Provide training and mentoring for seven social services workers.

CERTIFICATION Certificate in Domestic Violence Preventions – Cedar Rapids Community College – June 2002

Association of Social Work Board (ASWB) certified – 2005

You will find examples of other resumes at the Troy University Career Services Sample Documents page

Admission Tests

As part of the admissions process students are required to take one of three entrance exams. These are the Graduate Records Exam (GRE), the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). For unconditional admission the following scores are required: GRE 920 (verbal plus quantitative), GMAT 490 or MAT 400. **Most prospective MPA students take the MAT** rather than the GRE to capitalize on their verbal skills.

The test score is only one of several factors that will be considered by the MPA admissions committee. A low test score will not automatically derail your chances for admission. Other factors such as the statement of purpose such as your essay will also be considered. High-potential students with low test scores are sometimes admitted on a conditional basis.

MAT: The MAT cost varies between testing locations. To find the nearest location please see:

http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/NR/rdonlyres/113FD684-15F4-465C-87C3-092822402F39/0/MAT_CTC_List.pdf

As the name implies, the MAT test is strictly about analogies, or things that are alike in one or more ways, often obliquely. It has a very simple format - you'll have 50 minutes to complete 100 partial analogies. The vast majority of them will be verbal, but there will be a few mathematical analogies on every test. To do well on the MAT, you'll need a good grasp of how words relate to and complement each other, as well as a familiarity with the liberal arts - history, art, literature, philosophy, as well as math and science. There are many study guides available both on-line and in book stores. It is strongly recommended that you visit the MAT Home page at:

<http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/site/Community/PostSecondary/Products/MAT/mathome.htm>

We recommend purchasing two or three practice MAT workbooks from your local bookstore and going through them to prepare. You can purchase online MAT prep courses or books, such as:

1. <http://www.kaptest.com/GRE/Prep-for-the-MAT/mat-online-course.html>
2. <http://www.mo-media.com/mat/>

Note that we are not endorsing any particular company but rather providing examples of resources.

There is a free online MAT practice exam at the MAT official website:

<http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/haiweb/Cultures/en-US/Site/Community/PostSecondary/Products/MAT/subpages/Introduction.htm>

Here are some free MAT resources, though they are general tips rather than study guides:

1. <http://www.ivyleagueadmission.com/matindex.html>
2. <http://www.kaptest.com/GRE/Prep-for-the-MAT/Explore-the-MAT/mat-strategy-session.html>
3. <http://www.studyguidezone.com/mattest.htm>
4. <http://www.testpreppractice.net/MAT/mat-test-preparation.aspx>

GMAT: The GMAT consists of two main sections; a written section with two essays and a quantitative and verbal section. The GMAT cost is \$250 US dollars (USD) and is offered at various test centers. To find the nearest location, please see:

<http://www.mba.com/mba/thegmat/scheduleagmatappointment/findatestcenter.htm>

The written section of the GMAT, the Analytical Writing Assignment (AWA), is made up of two essays. In one, the test taker is asked to examine and analyze an argument, and in the other, the test taker is asked to consider and analyze an issue.

The quantitative section of the GMAT is made up of 37 multiple choice questions, which mostly test for an understanding of data presentation and problem solving. The test taker is given 75 minutes to complete this section of the test. The verbal section of the GMAT has 41 multiple choice questions, which test comprehension of reading blocks, analytical reasoning skills, and ability to correct sentences for grammatical mistakes. This section is also to be completed in 75 minutes.

Both the quantitative and the verbal sections of the GMAT are taken on a computer, and the questions adapt themselves to the skill level of the test taker. This means that if the test taker gets the first question correct, the next question is of a slightly increased difficulty level, while if the test taker answers incorrectly, the following question is slightly easier. Final scores on the test range between 200 and 800 points, and the questions start somewhere in the middle of this range of difficulty.

Test preparation courses are available on-line

GRE: The Graduate Records Exam is composed of Analytical Writing, Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections, and takes approximately 3 hours to complete. The fee is \$160 and is available at testing centers. To find the nearest location please see:

<http://etsis4.ets.org/tcenter/tcenter.jsp>

The Analytical Writing section of the GRE General Test measures your ability to:

- articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively
- examine claims and accompanying evidence
- support an argument with relevant reasons and examples
- sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion
- control the elements of standard written English (this factor plays a role only to the extent that poor writing skills impede readers' understanding of the argument)

The Verbal Reasoning section measures your ability to:

- analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it
- analyze relationships among component parts of sentences
- recognize relationships between words and concepts

The Quantitative Reasoning section of the GRE® General Test measures your ability to:

- understand basic concepts of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis
- reason quantitatively
- solve problems in a quantitative setting

Test preparation courses are available on-line.