



RICHARD & RHODA GOLDMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

2607 HEARST AVENUE
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720-7320
TEL: (510) 642-4670
FAX: (510) 643-9657
URL: <http://gspp.berkeley.edu/>

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To: Potential Advanced Policy Analysis (APA) Clients

From: The Dean and Faculty of the Goldman School of Public Policy

Re: What students and clients should expect of each other

Second-year students at the Goldman School of Public Policy are required to write a high-quality professional paper (Advanced Policy Analysis, or APA) in order to complete the Master of Public Policy degree, during the Spring of their second year of study. With faculty supervision and advice, each student conducts a thorough analysis of a major policy question, applying interdisciplinary methods, approaches, and perspectives studied in GSPP's core curriculum. This paper must meet not only the academic standards of the School's faculty but also the standards, and the needs, of a "real world" practitioner who acts as a client for the work.

Students meet once a week with their faculty advisor in a seminar setting, which supports the students as they are conducting the project. The seminar also provides an opportunity for peer review and criticism of the student projects, together with continuing evaluation by the faculty advisor.

EXPECTATIONS

Topic: Ideally, the topic should be *well bounded but, within those bounds, relatively complex*. Because the School emphasizes analysis, whether of policy or management issues, the ideal topic forces students to deal with:

- (1) Projecting the consequences of alternative courses of action, adjusting for uncertainty;

and/or

- (2) Confronting tough trade-offs.

Projects that entail only data collection are not suitable, nor are projects that involve marketing or fundraising, unless these activities would somehow raise interesting issues of analysis.

One example is a project done some years ago on sewer service charges in Oakland. Students were obliged to estimate user demand at different price levels, budgetary relationships between fee revenue and other revenue sources, and to understand the engineering involved in sewer maintenance cycles. They also had to think about philosophical issues of fairness, since different user groups were to be charged different fees. Neighborhood and interest-group politics was part of the analysis. So too were relationships among the Public Works Department and other city agencies.

Another example is a project done for the Natural Heritage Institute, a nonprofit organization. It started with the premise that natural underground reservoirs in the San Joaquin Valley could simultaneously provide: new water storage capacity for the East Bay Municipal Utilities District at a very low cost to the District, financial benefit to Valley farmers, and environmental benefits linked to preventing salt water intrusion. The paper analyzed the formidable psychological, cultural, and legal barriers to implementing what appears to be a very logical technical solution to a number of problems.

Of course, a national-level or state-level issue would look and feel quite different from a local or regional issue. But the principle of complexity within boundaries would still apply.



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Client participation: Successful working relations between students and clients vary greatly in detail. But at their core they all have a client who sets high expectations for quality of analysis and presentation, and who is responsive to a student's needs for access, data, and timely feedback. Regular meetings with the client are recommended to ensure that the project stays on course.

Schedule:

August-December	Student defines topic and establish an in-principle relationship with client
January	Student begins research during the third week of January, but this can occur earlier depending on the needs and timeline of the client
January-May	Students attend weekly seminar with a faculty advisor and another 10-15 students doing their own projects. Depending on the advisor, students might also work in small buddy-groups of two or three persons.
Mid-April	Draft paper is due to the faculty adviser (client usually receives a copy as well)
May 5-12	Final paper due to faculty advisor and to client

Student work effort: The APA project represents three-fourths of a student's full-time workload in the spring semester. It is to be a major effort.

Compensation: Most students are paid by their clients, typically in the range of \$4000-6000 for the project. However, students are sometimes paid considerably more than this. The market is at work here as elsewhere, and projects offering higher compensation tend to attract more student interest and talent. If the student is not paid, reimbursement for incidental expenses such as travel, phone calls, and copying is expected from the client.

The academic aspect: The analytic work and argumentation must meet academic standards, but we expect a written product to be intelligible to lay readers. Academic stuffiness is strongly discouraged. (No bureaucratic-practitioner obfuscation either!)

Sometimes a product that works for the client does not quite work for the faculty adviser, and vice versa. In such cases the student might write two versions of the analysis. These cases are unusual, however.