

MPH for Health Professionals

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH
UCLA**

**GUIDE TO
FIELD STUDY PROJECT**

2002

Health Services 400- Field Studies

Fred Hagigi-

Office (310) 206-1185; 41-295 CHS;

Home (310) 828-6763

Fax (310) 828-7773

e-mail hagigi@ucla.edu

TIME LINE / DUE DATES		GRADING*
3/16/02	Introduction	NA
4/19/02	Forming teams- assigning presentation dates for Fall 2002	5
5/17/02	Proposals due- (first draft- 2 pages)	(15)
6/7/02	Organization / issue analysis Problem definition, research question, hypothesis formulation	(20)
7/12/02	Progress report; via e-mail (Revisions / modifications)	(10)
8/16/02	Progress reports; via e-mail	(10)
9/20/02	Final Reports- 15 to 20 pages	(70)
9/20-12/16	Project Presentations- 20 min + 10 min Q&A	(40)
9/20-12/16	Participation- discussion and presentation evaluation	(30)
Total Points		<hr/> 200

* Late work will be graded down.

Welcome to the Health Services Field Study Project

The field study program is intended to give you the opportunity to spend time practicing newly acquired skills and knowledge through the program, as well as to explore new or different areas of your interest in health services.

The Mission of the Program in Health Policy and Management is to advance the health of populations through improving the effectiveness and efficiency of personal and other health services in private and public health organizations. The Program seeks to also improve organizations through the career activities of graduates, sponsored research, and community services. The educational aspect of this mission is expressed in the goal of the program: to prepare executives through professional education with the knowledge skills and values necessary to manage organizations effectively in a socially responsible manner.

The Field Study project is an essential component in the achievement of these mission and goals. It is a required course, combining practice in the field with a written report based on analysis / evaluation of an organization, program, policy issue, or other topics approved by the faculty, and your proposed solution / modification for improvement.

All students must complete a field study in an appropriate health care setting and write an analytical paper focused on an operational problem or decision identified by the students and the preceptors. Health care settings may include hospitals, managed care organizations, medical groups, government agencies or departments, consulting firms, community health organizations, advocacy programs or other related health settings.

The following is a guide to the successful completion of your field study. Please refer to them for the process in which the objectives should be fulfilled.

OBJECTIVES

- To gain management and policy analysis experience in a work setting;
- To apply the theory, knowledge, skills, and techniques obtained in the classroom
- To learn organizational dynamics in a different arena;
- To polish and enhance management, planning, and policy analysis skills;
- To give students opportunities to explore a particular health care arena or topic as it might relate to future career decisions.

THE FIELD STUDY COURSE

The Field Study course include four components:

Match with an Executive Preceptor/Mentor.

The demonstrated or potential excellence of the preceptor is a significant factor in the selection of a Field Study. The Program hopes to match students with preceptors or mentors who are open, interested, available and possess an educational philosophy compatible with that of the Master of Public Health program objectives. Preceptors must have an inclination and ability to complement students' learning experience. In addition, the sites should be commensurate with the students' interests and career objectives in terms of location, scope of services provided, operating philosophy, and level of task challenge to make it a worthwhile effort for all involved.

The Use of Research and Data Analysis.

There is an incredibly large body of published research about virtually all aspects of the health care system. A manager or policy maker in health care can gain a significant advantage by being a good consumer of research. This project will not only provide you with an opportunity to explore the management-related research literature, but also provide you with an opportunity to do some original work.

Consideration of the Financial Impact of the Problem and Proposed Solutions.

It is imperative to recognize the realistic financial impact this problem currently exerts on the organization under study. The project must, therefore, take into consideration not only the current financial situation but the ramifications of the proposed alternative solutions and final recommendation found in the Problem-Solving Report. These should be properly researched and noted in the document.

The Use of Clear Recommendations and Associated Steps to Implementation.

Based on the foregoing analysis, you must recommend a course of action for its solution. The recommendation(s) must be tied to the analysis and should be specific and realistic. It is acceptable to include a discussion of alternatives, but you must choose the one course you believe to be the best set of recommendations.

Your solution must be monitored to make sure the issue is resolved and someone is accountable, Conclude with a specification of how your recommendation(s) can be evaluated and implemented. Be specific.

GETTING STARTED

You will be asked to study a research or management question proposed by your team in collaboration with your preceptor, relevant to health policy or management. You must be able to access data to address the question and draw relevant findings and conclusions. Your team may frame the question(s) based on an issue raised in any of the class sessions. Team projects are allowed (up to a maximum of three students per team). In forming your team (two members), the mix of skills is highly recommended as an important consideration, although it is not a requirement.

Some questions you may want to start considering are:

Who would be your potential partner ?

What would be your group's area of interest for your project?

Are you more interested in doing a management consultation report or a data analysis incorporating a statistical research design?

Things To Do

Fill out the "Field Study Project Planning Form" and submit it with a current resume.

Stay in close contact with the Field Study Coordinator to ensure you are getting the help you need and we are not overloading any professionals in the field with multiple contacts by students.

Start discussing the parameters and expectations of the Field Study with other students, and colleagues.

REPORT FORMAT

Your report format may be based upon a database and be structured as a research project; in the form of a management consulting report; or a policy recommendation. The reports should include a clear background literature search and industry review, strength and weakness findings from your on-site exploration, a section of possible alternative solutions and your final conclusions and recommended course of action. The report must ask and answer a clearly stated question or issue and use as much supportive information as possible.

DATA ANALYSIS REPORT FORMAT

I. Introduction/Background of Project

(This section should include the formal research question and project's objectives.)

II. Literature Review

(As currently published in peer reviewed journals and industry magazines. This will give you the opportunity to discuss alternative strategies others may have employed while tackling this issue.)

III. Project Methods

(Data description, type of analysis chosen)

IV. Results

(Objective findings of Analysis, presentation of statistical results)

V. Conclusions

(Inferences drawn from Results, Financial Impact, Discussion section including Limitations/Areas for Further Study)

MANAGEMENT CONSULTATION / POLICY FORMAT

I. Introduction/I Background

(May contain formal problem statement if it was a directive for your project.)

II. Blend of Literature Review and Industry Comparisons

(i.e, "...Cincinnati [or hospital X] has developed CABG report cards that adjust for the following risk characteristics of its population ____, ____, ____, while Dallas [or hospital y] has adjusted the following patient dimensions ____, ____, ____." This should obviously be more thorough and properly cited, but it should give you an idea.)

III. Presentation of the current situation at your institution with supporting data

(May place the problem statement here if you "discovered" the heart of the issue due to your diligence in Sections II and III..)

IV. Possible Alternative Solutions with Feasibility and Consequences.

(One should always have as one of the options "Do nothing" and consider the ramifications of that decision as well as various possible interventions or changes to the current environment.)

V. Conclusions

(Should identify the preferred solution to the problem issue and supported by findings as best as possible. Recommended course of action with defined, measurable objectives and time frame)

In the Management Consultation Report, it is important that you remain focused on **the problem statement** to keep you clearly focused on the project. The goals, objectives or standards to be achieved should be identified separately from the problem issue, but can be specified in the problem statement as well. A sample problem statement is as follows:

"How can University Hospital respond to HMO contract price competition so to best achieve its financial and teaching objectives and facilitate recruitment of residents to the satisfaction of the hospital's CEO, COO, Chief of Staff, and HMO management?"

In the above example the report identifies the action necessary to address the problem (...responding to HMO contract price competition..., or the "means") under the confines or standards of excellence and measurement (...to best achieve its financial and teaching objectives and facilitate recruitment... or the "ends") while being consciously aware of the stakeholders and politics of those involved (...to the satisfaction of the hospital's...)

PRINCIPLES OF PROBLEM-SOLVING

The following information is an introduction to the principles and practice of the problem-solving and decision-making roles of health services executives. Students should demonstrate competence in the solution of management problems requiring:

Rigorous analytical thought;

Sound judgment in ambiguous and difficult management situations and the courage to have conviction;

The application of social, organizational and personal values;

Performance of individual and group roles of senior executives; and,

Persuasive communication of results.

In addition, the process of studying and solving real operational problems, individually preparing a professional report and experiencing professionally-critiqued field work will increase the students' knowledge of how to address managerial problems, organizational operations, public policy issues, the opinions and values of key stakeholders and varying management styles.

CONTENT

The problem solving thought process is critical to both anticipatory and reactive management styles and when performing either line or staff management roles. Managers as leaders are problem generators as well as problem solvers. And leaders are change agents if they are truly professionals. As change agents, leaders create difficulties by advocating that the organization continually achieve new goal and objectives, and new paths in which to meet these challenges.

Other essential reasons for developing problem solving skills include the need to:

Improve the quality of managerial decisions.

Develop a systematic approach to solving problems when choosing among competing and apparently equal choices.

Improve the "hit rate" of good decisions during tight decision making cycles.

Reduce managerial stress in the problem solving/decision making cycles.

Develop a common language and consistent approach among the company's managers for solving problems.

Develop the ability to teach problem solving and decision making processes and techniques to other company managers.

Incorporate decision making perspectives into the company's management information systems.

PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS AND TECHNIQUES

Problem solving is both a prospective (strategic planning), retrospective (correcting difficulties) and a concurrent (TQM) process in which managers analyze situations and make decisions to bring about change so that actual results more closely approximate desired results. The reason problem-solving is often synonymously compared with strategic

planning is because of the influence the situational analysis and external environmental opportunities and threats have on the problem-solver and the problem itself.

There are many styles of problem-solving that have been developed, tested, and applied in various managerial decision making situations. Basic problem solving skills

include:

Problem Formulation:

Evaluate the situation, notice, interpret, structure.
Make minimal, *valid* assumptions.

Problem Definition:

Separate the difficulties into problem areas.
Specify their causes and prioritize.

Generation of Tentative Alternative Solutions:

Evaluate alternatives for problem areas.
Apply decision criteria; costs, benefits, feasibility.

Solving the Problem

Choose the best alternative solution.
Select appropriate implementation strategy.

Evaluation of the Results

And if necessary, take needed corrective action.

Skill in the problem solving thought process does not necessarily equal problem solving competence, however. Problem solving competence by a managerial leader requires planning and implementing skills; both these activities require general interpersonal skills and knowledge, professional and ethical judgment, and solid leadership.

Name: _____

Please indicate your interest (1= little, 5 = high) in the areas below.

FISCAL FUNCTION

- _____ Budgeting/Financial Planning
- _____ Accounting
- _____ Reimbursement

MARKETING

- _____ Product Development
- _____ Market Analysis
- _____ Competitor Analysis

RESEARCH

- _____ Surveys
- _____ Questionnaire Development
- _____ Interviewing
- _____ Data Collection and Analysis

POLICY

- _____ Drafting Legislation
- _____ Lobbying/Negotiation
- _____ Position Papers

PLANNING

- _____ Strategic
- _____ Design/Implementation
- _____ Evaluation

WORKING WITH GROUPS

- _____ Staffing Committees
- _____ Team-Building
- _____ General Management

Please indicate three public health or health services issues that interest you.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____