

GUIDELINES FOR FIELD STUDY, FINAL PAPERS, AND FINAL PRESENTATIONS

I. APPROACH TO THE SITE

You will most likely need to negotiate an agreement with the organization (you may use the Activity Schedule sheet provided). Mutual understanding is important for studying “back-stage” in a system, and for interviewing members of the organization.

We ask that you approach the organization in a spirit of caring and respect for the people there. At a minimum, you want to be sure that they do not feel harmed as a result of your presence. Even better is for members of the organization to feel that your presence was a positive experience for them. For example, some groups in the past have agreed to volunteer with the organization. All groups will be asked to provide a short summary of their analysis to members of the client organization. This summary will not be the same as the paper you write for A-021, since they serve different audiences and purposes.

It is important that you be clear with the organization about what you will or will not provide. We advise you not to promise to provide consulting help. A-021 groups often lack the skills and the experience to undertake such work. In addition, you are not doing a comprehensive study and will need to be open about the limitations of your “findings.” However, a discussion of your observations might be very useful if your study site is interested.

II. METHODS OF STUDY

There are three major ways to collect data for your study:

1. Direct observation of organizational events and behavior.
2. Analysis of documents (memos, reports, handbooks, publicity releases, etc.).
3. Conversations or interviews with participants in the organization (which might include managers, employees, clients, etc.).

We ask you to use some combination of these three methods, adjusted as necessary based on the organization and what you hope to learn. Observations should be recorded in field notes either during or immediately after your visit. Interviews can be audio recorded or summarized in field notes — if you want to record, please use a permission form, available on the Canvas, and delete the audio file after completion of this class.

Amount of observation: We expect every member of your group to visit the site at least once, enough to get a feel for the culture and environment. You can do this together or separately. If you go together, take advantage of having multiple people present in order to get the most data/info possible, while still respecting and not overburdening the site.

Number of interviews: You should do at least three interviews with people in different roles in the organization. We would like every person in the group to have been involved in at least one of the interviews.

Beyond that, you can decide amongst yourself how to divide up the data collection work.

III. FINAL PAPER

Given the limited expectations above, you cannot (and are not expected to) do an extensive study. Instead, the purpose is to learn as much as you can about an organization in a

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relatively brief scouting expedition, and to use organization theory to describe and interpret what you learn. You are also not *evaluating* the organization — the goal is understanding rather than judgment.

Your group's product will be a paper that uses organizational theory to describe and analyze **how the organization works**, and **why it is the way it is**. Your paper should present, develop, and substantiate a clear argument or line of analysis about what you found. You should structure the paper in the way that best communicates your analysis. Your paper should include a brief account of your methodology (observations conducted, individuals interviewed, documents studied, or interventions made). This may be included in the introduction or added as an Appendix.

Though the central argument of the paper should be your own, it will be important to include and clearly state the organizations' own "Theory of Change." A theory of change explains the goals of the organization, and the processes or mechanisms through which the organization intends to reach these goals. Theories of Change can be presented as "if, then" statements. For example, "If teachers work together collaboratively in designing curriculum, then they will improve their teaching practices in the classroom and student's test scores will increase".

V. PRESENTATIONS

In addition to the paper, your group will give a 10-minute presentation to your classmates on the final day of class. This presentation has the same goals as the paper, as noted above — to use the data you collected and the organizational theories in class to describe the organization you studied. Feedback from the presentation will be helpful in editing your final paper, but given how close the presentation and final paper due dates are, you will need to be close to finished with the paper by the day of the presentation.

V. PLANNING BENCHMARKS

Task	Suggested time frame & deadlines
Email TFs groups agreements/complete Qualtrics survey	Oct 3
Gather data	October - early November
Decide on theoretical frame and draft outline of the paper	Early - mid November
Fairly finished draft of the paper	End of November
Presentation to A021 (last day of class)	Dec 5
Make final tweaks based on feedback from the presentation	Dec 6-10
Hand in paper	December 11