**PLA Guide**

**Administrative Services**

**How to Use this Guide**

This guide is meant to help you understand the knowledge and skills typically expected of someone who has a college-level understanding of Administrative Services.

This guide is also meant to help you go through the process of thinking about your learning and writing your Prior Learning Request by answering the following questions, which will be explained more fully in the section Writing your PLA Request:

1. Describe what you do.
2. Compare a real and hypothetical situation in this field.
3. Identify informal “rules” in this field.
4. Examine the role of a professional in this field.
5. Apply your knowledge in a problem-solving situation.
6. Identify critical issues in the field.
7. Teach others.
8. Offer additional information or evidence of your learning.

**Typical Learning Experiences**

The following list is not all inclusive; you may have learned in other ways.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Secretary | Administrative Services Manager |
| Administrative Assistant | Purchasing Manager |
| Clerk | Mail Manager |
| Receptionist | Facilities Manager |

**What is Administrative Services?**

The diagram below identifies many aspects of learning in this field. Your learning may fall within some areas and not others, based on your personal experience, and that’s o.k. You can consult other guides or use the general guide, if they are more appropriate to your learning.

**Writing your PLA Request**

Answer all eight questions.

1. Describe what you do (answer a – d).
2. What tasks do you regularly perform in this area?
3. If you were to write a book on this subject based on your personal experience, what would the chapters be titled?
4. What training did you receive for your position?
5. Choose a real situation you’ve encountered in this area, or choose a task that you had to complete, and explain how you dealt with it.
6. Choose a hypothetical situation or task that’s different from your real one. Explain how you would deal with it. What’s the same and/or different about how you approached the actual vs. hypothetical tasks?

*Use one of the scenarios below or offer your own:*

* Talk with two employees you supervise about their over-use of break time.
* Gather and prepare background materials to brief one of the administrators on an upcoming discussion on changing policy related to vacation leave.
* Coordinate everything needed (meeting space, computer access, refreshments, etc.) for a day-long meeting with a group of consultants on a special project.

1. What informal “rules” have you developed for yourself when you’re given a task to complete?

*Use one of the scenarios below or offer your own:*

* How do you determine what to do when?
* How do you determine what tasks are appropriate to delegate to another employee, and how do you determine to whom and how to delegate?
* How do you prioritize when you have multiple competing demands?
* What systems and strategies have you used for creating and maintaining records and forms? How would you describe the strengths and weaknesses of those systems/strategies?

4. What is the role of an administrative services professional, in relation to a supervisor and in relation to the larger organization?

5. Using your informal “rules” you developed for yourself plus your understanding of the role of an administrative services professional, apply your knowledge in a hypothetical problem-solving situation to explain *what* you would do and *why*.

*Use one of the scenarios below or offer your own:*

* You’re given three days’ notice from the three administrators you support that you have to do the following tasks on the same day: 1) meet with a new hire in a similar position to yours to provide background on the scope of the job and training on your company’s computer system, 2) gather and prepare background materials to brief one of the administrators on an upcoming discussion on changing policy related to vacation leave, 3) coordinate everything needed (meeting space, computer access, refreshments, etc.)for a day-long meeting with a group of consultants on a special project. How would you proceed and why?
* Your supervisor asks you to plan a day-long meeting involving many departments. Identify the categories you’d need to consider in planning, the steps you’d need to take, and how you would measure the success of the event.
* As the administrative support person, you know of upcoming layoffs, including your brother-in-law. Rumors are circulating and he has asked you specifically if he’s on the list. What would you do and why? What issues are embedded in this example?
* How might a top manager who is often absent affect the office environment, and how does that in turn affect the role of the administrative manager?
* You have a manager who is vague in his directions for tasks, and then usually requires staff to re-do them in order to complete the tasks to his liking. How would you proceed and why?

6. Identify issues critical to an administrative services professional.

*Use one of the scenarios below or offer your own:*

* What is the effect of technology on today’s office manager? How might technical innovations impact administrative duties?
* How do you recommend dealing with continual change in an office? What is a situation that showcases the role of the administrative services professional in the 21st century?
* How can administrative services professionals be used creatively in organizations?

7. What would you teach others – what training would you focus on – to teach a new administrative services professional? What are your top 4-6 priorities for this training?

8. Offer any additional information or thoughts on this topic that you would like to discuss as part of your PLA evaluation.

**Information to Help You Decide on Credit Specifications for your Request**

College-level learning means that you can talk about what you know in some detail, come up with some general insights and “rules” about the topic, and apply those insights and rules to new situations.

* **Introductory/Advanced:** Administrative Services typically is considered introductory but may be advanced, depending on the learner’s knowledge. (Advanced learning is often based on experience with hiring, training, composing documents, managing and analyzing accounts, managing records, etc.)
* **Liberal/Non-Liberal**: Administrative Services is typically considered Non-Liberal
* **General Education**: Administrative Services typically does NOT fulfill General Education.

**Number of Credits**To determine the number of credits to request, think about your experience using this guide. If you answered most of the questions easily, and feel that you can confidently discuss areas related to this topic, you may want to request 3-4 credits, which is the equivalent of one college course. After your discussion, your evaluator will have the opportunity to recommend fewer or more credits based on his/her evaluation of your learning.

**Level of Credits**To determine the level of your request think about your comfort level answering the questions. Did you feel confident answering the questions that asked you to interpret, analyze, compare, or generalize? Reflect on your learning in light of the information below to help you determine whether to request introductory or advanced-level credit. If you aren’t sure, discuss this with your mentor.

**Introductory college-level learning** (freshman/sophomore) means that you understand:

* Basic concepts, theories, and principles of a topic.

**Advanced college-level learning** (junior/senior level) means that you understand the topic more broadly and deeply. You may understand:

* What the broader field is about, based on your experience.
* Why something is done in a certain way.
* What you, yourself, think about the topic or field, as a result of blending others’ perspectives with your own understanding and judgment.
* How to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information more abstractly, applying methods usually used in that field.

**Examples of General PLA Topics and Level of Learning**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PLA Topic – Building** | **PLA Topic – Project Management** | **PLA Topic – Spanish Culture** |
| **NOT college –level** | Know how to put up wallboard | Work to complete items on a checklist given to you | Traveled in Spain twice, for two weeks each time |
| **Intro. college-level** | Understand why walls are constructed a certain way | Create a timeline and supervise the completion of tasks | Understand trends and practices related to daily life, holidays, food, religion, etc. Understand some Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices |
| **Advanced college level** | ***Intro level plus:***  Understand how to design a building so the walls stay up | ***Intro level plus:***  Work to create cooperation of all parties concerned with the project; analyze problems or issues and amend the plan; evaluate the outcome of the project | ***Intro. level plus:***  Understand nuances related to attitudes and practices. Know of and understand sub-groups within the overall culture. Understand more fully Spanish history related to contemporary attitudes and practices. |