The Policy Concept Paper is a 15-20 page paper that integrates students’ study of key policy concepts with their internship experience. It should be developed in consultation with your internship adviser. This paper is analytic. It is not a report of what you did, but it will incorporate information about your experiences, observations, and reflections into the analysis. This paper may take one of three approaches:

1. Analysis of a full policy cycle as applied to work students do on a specific policy during their internships. Analysis of a full policy cycle must include review of key literature on policy cycles, including competing and complementary models of policy cycles;
2. A deep dive into one policy concept based on students’ experiences and observations during their internships. A deep dive into one concept would require students to conduct significant scholarly research on the single concept and integrate observations made during the internship to that literature.
3. Application of one or more theories or frameworks of policy processes to explain an observed experience or phenomenon. Students would explain one or more theories or frameworks, apply them to a policy-related experience, and critique the extent to which the theory(ies) or framework(s) adequately explain the experience or phenomenon.

Key policy concepts to be covered as part of the policy cycle must include, at a minimum:

- Policy environment description
- Policy stakeholder analysis within and among policy environments
- Problem/issue development
- Approach development and agenda setting
- Policy/program implementation and oversight
- Policy evaluation
- Policy revision and return to the policy cycle

Here are some examples of policy concept papers consistent with each approach outlined above:

1. A student interning in a district or congressional office who worked on a policy to change free-and-reduced student lunch policies might ground the issue in its various policy environments (social justice, political, cultural, economic, etc); critique how the office strived to achieve issue consensus among stakeholders and how those stakeholder influenced problem definition; discuss how the policy components were prioritized and adopted; evaluate implementation of the policy; analyze any evaluative work that has been done on the policy; and make recommendations for policy improvement based on what they learned during their internship.
2. A student researching ethanol policy for an environmental policy nonprofit might conduct a literature review of research on ethanol, then analyze the feasibility of the nonprofit’s implementation plan for a new ethanol policy.
3. A student working in a government agency could use narrative theory and punctuated equilibrium theory to explain a student shift in agency policy in response to an unanticipated event.