



SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY

Improving Programs through Evaluation-Based Performance Monitoring and Management

Syllabus

Rome, Italy
Winter 2026

Instructors

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Even the best designed program can falter from poor implementation or management. Consequently, governments, multinational organizations, NGOs, and funders seek to improve program operations—using the tools of program evaluation to monitor program activities, outcomes, and costs. The most important tools they use include counterfactual identification, performance targets, and comparative effectiveness evaluations.

This, in turn, creates a demand for staff able to apply and interpret the tools of evaluation-based program monitoring. The course seeks to advance the skills and careers of participants by helping them understand and use these those tools in real-world settings. Students will learn how to:

Apply common performance measurement frameworks;

Use logic models to identify and operationalize key elements of performance indicators;

Collect and analyze data performance data for program monitoring;

Use counterfactuals, performance targets, and comparative effectiveness to gauge performance;

Estimate program costs (including total costs, cost-efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and cost-benefit analysis);

Develop and apply criteria to create new performance measurements or to assess and improve existing performance measures;

Anticipate potential pitfalls of performance measurement (such as cream skimming and goal displacement); and

Apply the resulting data to improve performance through management techniques and program adjustments and restructuring.

In addition to course instruction, the class will also visit senior officials of relevant Italian government offices, international organizations, and NGOs in Rome and Florence. The meetings will include officials from the Bank of Italy; the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance; the Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of the University and Research Systems (ANVUR); the Italian National Institute for Documentation, Innovation and Educational Research (INDIRE); the Italian Senate; and UNICEF.

Travel information

Telephone

Professor Besharov's cell phone number is +1-202-909-7299.

Professor Call's cell phone number is +1-240-351-9866.

Both professors will arrive in Rome on the afternoon of the Sunday before the course begins. When students arrive in Rome, they should text both professors to let them know that they have arrived. The professors will alert students to any schedule changes through both text and email.

Student lodging will be at the Casa I Cappuccini (Via Vittorio Veneto, 21). Students are able to check in at 3:00 pm on Sunday, January 4 and must check out by Saturday, January 17 at 11:00 am.

Classroom procedures

All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read and digested the readings. (Supplemental readings are optional.) If some unavoidable circumstance prevents you from being prepared, please inform the instructors. If you have not done so before class begins, we will assume that you are affirming that you are fully prepared to participate in that day's class discussion.

Assignments

Program selection. Students will select a program for which they will prepare a logic model and set of performance measures (see below). This can be an existing program or a proposed program. (Students may also select a program that is suggested by the instructors.) In 1–2 paragraphs, students will provide an overview of the program, including its purpose, size (both in terms of number of people served and budget), and the government agency or organization that administers the program. The assignment will be due to the instructors on Tuesday, January 14 at 5:00 pm.

Logic model. Using the template provided in the course, students will prepare a logic model of the program that they have selected. The assignment will be due to the instructors on Friday, January 24, 2025 at 5:00 pm.

Program performance measures. Using their logic models as a guide, students will prepare a set of performance measures for their previously selected programs. This will include the definition of the performance measures, how data will be collected for the performance measures, and, for outcome measures, the method for identifying counterfactuals that will be used for each of the measures. Students will then evaluate each of the performance measures using criteria discussed in the course. If the program already has performance measures, students will use criteria to evaluate the current set of performance measures and propose modifications, deletions, or additions. The assignment will be due to the instructors on March 31, 2025.

Note: Grades for the course are officially due on January 24, but we think that this is too compressed a schedule for students to be able to complete all the assignments. As described above, we are willing to offer more time to complete assignments but, according to new requirements of the university, students will need to complete an Incomplete contract. This means that students would temporarily receive an Incomplete grade for the course that would then be replaced by a final grade about submission of the final assignment. If students would prefer not to receive an Incomplete, then we encourage you to submit your program selection and logic model assignments earlier than the deadlines listed above.

Note: All assignments will be submitted via email. We ask that you copy both professors on your email and use the following naming convention for *both* the subject line of the email and the name of the document: Rome_26_[name of assignment]_[Your Last Name] (example: Rome_26_Logic Model_Smith). When submitting your exercises via email, please make sure to copy both instructors. (Use exactly the same naming convention for the subject line of your e-mail.)

Grading

Program selection	10%
Class participation	25%
Logic model	20%
Program performance measures	45%

All late assignments will receive a deduction of *one-third* a letter grade for each day that the assignment is late, unless permission is granted by the instructor.

Assigned readings

All course readings are available on Canvas (elms.umd.edu).

CLASS MEETINGS AND TOPICS

Sunday, January 4. Initial check-in and light dinner.

Note: Students will check-in with faculty at 6:00 pm in the lobby of the Casa I Cappuccini. We will then walk to a nearby restaurant (Signor Vino: for a light dinner.

Monday, January 5. Introduction to the course; Logic models and their use in performance measurement.

Readings

“Chapter 2: Modern Performance Measurement : Monitoring Program ‘Outcomes’” in Douglas J. Besharov, Karen J. Baehler, and Jacob Alex Klerman, eds., *Improving Public Services: International Experiences in Using Evaluation Tools to Measure Program Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) (22 pages).

“Chapter 14: Using Logic Models to Strengthen Performance Measurement” in Douglas J. Besharov, Karen J. Baehler, and Jacob Alex Klerman, eds., *Improving Public Services: International Experiences in Using Evaluation Tools to Measure Program Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) (23 pages).

Tuesday, January 6. Performance monitoring frameworks and data collection; Developing performance indicators; applying criteria to create new performance measures or to assess and improve existing performance measures.

Readings

Theodore H. Poister, “Chapter 4: Performance Monitoring,” in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, eds. Joseph S. Wholey, Harry P. Hatry, and Kathryn E. Newcomer (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004): 98–122 (24 pages).

Rachel Glennerster and Kudzai Takavarasha, *Running Randomized Evaluations: A Practical Guide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 180-190, 202-212 (22 pages).

Wednesday, January 7. Using outcome measures to predict long-term impacts; Pitfalls of performance monitoring systems

Readings

Jeannette Taylor, “Causes of Gaming in Performance Management,” in *Handbook on Performance Management in the Public Sector* Deborah Blackman (ed.) (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2021) (14 pages).

“Chapter 9: Do Short-Run Performance Measures Predict Long-Run Impacts?” in James J. Heckman, Carolyn J. Heinrich, Pascal Courty, Gerald Marschke, and Jeffrey Smith, eds., *The Performance of Performance Standards* (Kalamazoo, MI: Upjohn Institute,

2011) (26 pages).

Alastair Muriel and Jeffrey Smith, "On Education Performance Measures," *Fiscal Studies*, 32, no. 2 (2011): 187–206 (20 pages).

Thursday, January 8. Cost, cost-efficiency, and cost-effectiveness measures and value costs and benefits in performance measurement.

Readings

Stephanie R. Cellini and James E. Kee, "Cost-effectiveness and Cost-benefit Analysis," in *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2016): 636–669 (34 pages).

David H. Greenberg and Ute Appenzeller, *Cost Analysis Step by Step: A How-To Guide for Planners and Providers of Welfare-to-Work and Other Employment and Training Programs* (New York: MDRC, 1998): 7–32 (26 pages).

Friday, January 9. No class.

Monday, January 12. Florence.

Note: For this class, please make sure to be at UNICEF by 10:00 so that we can start by 10:30.

10:30–12:30: UNICEF (Via degli Alfani, 58)

2:00–4:00: INDIRE (Via Michelangelo Buonarroti, 10)

Readings

Note: Readings are being provided by our host and will be posted as soon as the instructors review them.

Tuesday, January 13. The use of counterfactuals in performance monitoring.

Readings

"Chapter 4: Indicators, Assessments, and Benchmarking of the Quality and Governance of Public Human Development Services" in Douglas J. Besharov, Karen J. Baehler, and Jacob Alex Klerman, eds., *Improving Public Services: International Experiences in Using Evaluation Tools to Measure Program Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) (30 pages).

David Ammons, "Chapter 27: Benchmarking Performance" in *The Handbook of Human Resource Management in Government*, eds. Stephen E. Condry and James L. Perry (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2010) (31 pages).

Wednesday, January 14. Italian Performance Measurement: ANVUR

Note: This class will be held at ANVUR (Via Ippolito Nievo, 35); time: 10:00-12:00.

Guest lecturers: Daniele Livon, director, ANVUR; and Simone Via, head of the Internationalization unit, ANVUR.

Readings

Note: Readings are being provided by our host and will be posted as soon as the instructors review them.

Thursday, January 15. Ministry of Economy and Finance

Note: This class will be held at the Ministry of Economy and Finance (Via Venti Settembre, 97) from 10:30–5:00.

Guest lecturers: Aline Pennisi, Central Budget Authority, Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance; and Tito Bianchi, Director, State General Accounting Office, Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Readings

European Court of Auditors, Performance-orientation, *Accountability and Transparency: Lessons to be Learned from the Weaknesses of the RRF* (Luxembourg: European Court of Auditors, 2025).

Aline Pennisi, “Issues in Implementation of the National RRFs: Milestones, Targets, and Evaluation of the Policies,” (presentation, Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2021).

Ministry of Economy and Finance, “Recruitment Procedures for Administrative Courts,” (Rome: Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2024) (*note:* this reading is optional).

Ministry of Economy and Finance, *Criteria and Methodologies for the Definition of Analysis Processes and Activities* (Rome: Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2024). (*Note:* When reading this document, pay special attention to how MEF is measuring the annual performance of the various Italian ministries).

Friday, January 16. Measuring performance in the Italian Senate

Note: This class will be held at the Italian Senate from 10:30–2:00.

Guest lecturer: Gloria Abagnale, Clerk of the Italian Senate Committee on Labour and Social Security; Parliamentary Counselor of the Senate of the Republic.

Readings

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