



MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENT HANDBOOK

SCHOOL OF POLITICS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration Program at the University of Wyoming. This handbook is your guide to policies and procedures as you complete your degree. Refer to it often and ask questions as needed. We are excited to welcome you to our program.

-Dr. Robert Schuhmann
MPA DIRECTOR

THE MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

SCHOOL OF POLITICS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS, AND INTERNATIONAL
STUDIES

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDENT HANDBOOK

This handbook provides both prospective and currently admitted students with information and guidance to learn about, and successfully complete, their MPA degree. It represents current policies and procedures and is meant to supplement the practices of the School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies at the University of Wyoming.

Mission Statement

The MPA program seeks to prepare pre- and in-service students for a variety of public sector roles, including leadership, management, and administrative positions in government and non-profit organizations; to instill in our student's public service values and professional ethics; and to promote a commitment to the improvement of government and social institutions in the ever-changing public landscape.

Program Goals/Learning Objectives

Current NASPAA standards require all programs to develop competencies in five “universal domains.” They are:

1. To lead and manage in the public interest
2. To participate in, and contribute to, the policy process
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment
4. To articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective
5. To communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.¹

The MPA Program at the University of Wyoming has formulated a set of learning objectives anchored to these domains.

- 1. Lead and Manage in the Public Interest**
MPA Learning Objective: Acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies of management in the public sector, including the organization, management, assessment, and oversight of human and financial resources.
- 2. Participate in, and Contribute to, the Policy Process**
MPA Learning Objective: Understand the influence of politics on policy choices and the practices of policy analysis.
- 3. Analyze, Think Critically, and Make Evidence-Informed Decisions in a Complex and Dynamic Environment**
MPA Learning Objective: Demonstrate reading, writing, and analytical skills necessary for decision making.
- 4. Apply and Advance a Public Service Perspective**
MPA Learning Objective: Understand how the values of diversity, equity, integrity, ethical conduct, and professionalism shape the implementation of public policy.
- 5. Communicate Productively and in Culturally Responsive Ways with a Diverse and Changing Workforce and Society at Large**
MPA Learning Objective: Organize and communicate information to a diverse workforce and citizenry by means of oral presentations, written documents, and digital media.

¹ <https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-11/NASPAA%20Accreditation%20Standards%20-%202019%20FINAL%20with%20rationale.pdf>

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I. Introduction

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration Program at the School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies (SPPAIS) at the University of Wyoming. If you are an interested student seeking more information about the program, this handbook will give you more substantive information about the basics of our program and how to apply. If you are an admitted student, this material contains the program requirements and additional technical details about how to complete the degree.

The Master's in Public Administration degree offered at the University of Wyoming is considered an ethics-based program where complicated issues of administrative decision making are the hallmarks of professional life. Our program focuses on both pre-service and in-service (mid-career) students who are interested in either coming to campus for all of their classes or those students who are place-bound and who wish to complete their degree from their home town. We prepare MPA graduates to be leaders of government and non-profit organizations, providing both theoretically and technically anchored approaches to addressing modern public service challenges. In doing so, you will work closely with faculty who share with you a passion for leadership and learning about the problems of modern administrative life.

In addition to the general MPA degree, we offer the MPA with a concentration in Criminal Justice and also a focus in Non-Profit Administration. Two joint degrees are offered as well. Here, we have a joint MPA/JD that is a collaboration with the University of Wyoming's Law School and we also offer a joint degree (minor) in Environment and Natural Resources (MPA/ENR) through the University of Wyoming's Haub School.

The School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies

The University of Wyoming's School of Politics, Public Affairs, and International Studies (SPPAIS) is located in the College of Arts and Sciences on the main campus in Laramie, Wyoming. The School offers a total of six degree programs: Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Political Science (MA), Master of International Studies (MA), Bachelor of Political Science (BA/BS), and Bachelor of International Studies (BA). Newly renamed, SPPAIS has offered the MPA through on-campus and distance models for almost 30 years. Graduates of our MPA program work across all imaginable fields and in every level of government. Our graduates include city managers, university administrators, high-ranking federal appointees, police officers, policy advocates, executive directors of non-profit organizations, and all types of private-sector administrators.

II. Application and Admission

Required Application Materials

Traditional and mid-career applicants require slightly different application packages.

- i. Traditional graduate students (those who have recently graduated from college and have less than five years of professional administrative experience) must complete the online application and submit undergraduate transcripts that reflect their degree, coursework, and cumulative grade point average (GPA). A letter of interest and a short analytical writing sample, based on an essay

question prompt, are also required. Finally, two letters of recommendation (preferably from someone who knows their academic qualifications) are required.

- ii. Mid-career applicants (those with five years of professional administrative experience) must complete the online application and submit undergraduate transcripts that reflect their degree, coursework, and cumulative grade point average (GPA). These applicants must submit a letter of interest, their resume, and a short analytical writing sample, based on an essay question prompt. Finally, two letters of recommendation are required. These can be from someone who knows their academic abilities, but can also be from supervisors or colleagues who can attest to the applicant's ability to succeed in graduate school.

Taking classes as a non-degree seeking student

Students not admitted to the MPA program are allowed to take one course (POLS 5000: Survey of Public Administration) as a non-degree student with the permission of the program director. Non-degree students may not register for any additional courses, which can be applied toward their MPA, until they are notified of their successful admission to the program. Successful completion of POLS 5000 does not guarantee admission to the MPA program.

Admission Calendar

With some exceptions, applicants are admitted on a rolling, continual basis throughout the year (the application window closes, however, two weeks prior to the first day of class). Importantly, full-time applicants who seek funding through the program (i.e., those who are interested in applying for a graduate assistantship) must have all materials submitted and complete by February 15th. A typical part-time applicant, once all materials are completed and submitted, can receive an admission recommendation from the admissions committee within two weeks of receiving the completed application packet. All recommendations for admission are then forwarded to Admissions and, ultimately, the Graduate School for final approval. The Graduate School is the final arbiter of all admissions decisions (including provisional, full, and admission denial). Our recommendation is that students who seek full-time admission only apply for Fall admission, otherwise we have a class sequencing problem and it becomes a challenge to get you graduated in May.

Graduate Assistantships

Several graduate assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and generally cover: all tuition, most fees, student health insurance, and a monthly stipend in exchange for working approximately 18 hours each week. More information and the application can be found here: <http://www.uwyo.edu/ppais/graduate-programs/index.html>

III. Curriculum and Degree Requirements

Degree requirements

The MPA degree normally requires the completion of 39 semester hours of approved graduate study in public administration and related fields. The distribution of credit hours is as follows:

- 24 credit hours of core courses
- 15 credit hours of electives (to include an internship for pre-career students)

39 credit hour total (13 classes)

Required core (8 classes)

- POLS 5000 Survey of Public Administration
- POLS 5400 Public Personnel Management
- POLS 5410 Administrative Behavior and Theory of Organizations
- POLS 5440 Principles and Processes of Government Budgeting
- POLS 5480 Ethics in Government
- POLS 5510 Public Policy and Program Management
- POLS 5684 Empirical Analysis for Public Administration
- POLS 5690 Capstone in Public Administration

Electives include (5 classes)

Examples include:

- POLS 5420 Seminar in Public Administration
- POLS 5450 Administrative Regulation
- POLS 5460 Public Administration and Law
- POLS 5465 Survey of Non-Profit Administration
- POLS 5540 Public Policy Perspectives
- POLS 5710 Topics in Public Administration
- POLS 5051 Environmental Politics
- POLS 5430 US Presidency
- POLS 5500 Internship
- POLS 5710 Topics in Public and Non-Profit Evaluation
- WIND 5100 Topics in Global Disability
- CRMJ 5130 Criminal Justice Management

Students may take 1 class listed at the 4000 level that can count toward the elective requirement. If a course is dual-listed (4000/5000) the MPA student must register for the 5000-level section.

Elective classes can be taken from departments across campus, including Political Science (the list shown above show only a portion of what might be possible). Electives must be approved by the program director. Failure to do so may result in coursework not counting toward a student's program of study.

Students are allowed to take a maximum of 3 “Topics” classes (4710/5710) classes throughout their program. In addition, any MPA student receiving a letter grade of “F” in a core MPA class will be academically suspended from the program and not allowed to reapply.

Finally, POLS 5690 Capstone in Public Administration is only offered in the Spring semester. All coursework must be completed (or in progress) before a student can register for this class.

Criminal Justice Concentration

Students who wish to pursue the Criminal Justice concentration must take the following requirements:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| CRMJ 5000 | Survey of Criminal Justice |
| CRMJ 5100 | Public Policy and Crime |
| CRMJ 5500 | Internship in Criminal Justice |

Plus one additional elective course (or two electives if the internship is waived)

| | |
|-----------|--|
| CRMJ 5130 | – Leadership and Management in the Criminal Justice System |
| CRMJ 5860 | – Social Inequality, Crime and Criminal Justice |
| CRMJ 5150 | – Crime Causation |
| CRMJ 5280 | – Comparative Criminal Justice |

These classes fulfill the entire elective requirement in the MPA program (noted above). Students admitted into the concentration should consult with the Criminal Justice Graduate Program Coordinator, Dr. Jamie Snyder (jsnyde29@uwyo.edu).

Non-Profit Focus

Students who wish to pursue the Non-Profit focus should take:

| | |
|-----------|---|
| POLS 5465 | Survey of Non-Profit Administration (option core) |
| POLS 5710 | Topics in Public and Non-Profit Evaluation (option core) |
| ENGL 4075 | Writing for Non-Profits (elective) |
| | One other elective approved by the student’s advisor (elective) |

These classes will satisfy portions of both the option-core requirement AND the elective requirement. Students must still complete an internship if they do not have the requisite experience.

General Public Administration Focus

If a student does not choose Criminal Justice, Non-Profit, JD/MPA, or ENR a student will be considered having a “general public administration” focus. Here, a student can choose from across the MPA offerings in an area they would like to learn more about (e.g., law, ethics, statistics, management, personnel).

Typical Course Load

The standard course load for a full-time graduate student is nine credit hours (three classes) per semester. For a mid-career student, typical course loads can vary from three to six credit hours each semester. MPA faculty offer option-core and elective classes during the summer semesters to help both pre-service and in-service students continue making progress toward their degree completion. We realize that mid-career

students have little concern for the ebb and flow of a regular academic calendar. Therefore, we try to accommodate the schedules of working professionals and traditional graduate students. All core courses are offered once each year and will typically be repeated in the same semester each year. It would be rare for a core course to be offered twice in any given semester.

Plan B

The MPA degree at the University of Wyoming is a non-thesis, Plan B degree. The Plan B process consists of taking the Capstone class and applying concepts and themes from across the program to help evaluate/understand a contemporary public problem. Here, a student will write a research paper and prepare a presentation for delivery in front of MPA and other department faculty. This event runs parallel to the Capstone course (POLS 5690) and only takes place during the Spring semester. Students should keep all books and notes from program classes until the Capstone event is complete.

IV. Course Delivery

Courses are delivered in both traditional (in-person, on-campus) and distance formats. In either model, classes are typically delivered in a “synchronous” environment where students and faculty interact in real-time (rather than a non-synchronous environment where classes do not meet face-to-face and are on-line). Using the University of Wyoming’s preferred web conferencing platform “Zoom,” we are able to deliver courses, in real time, to any location. In this model, pre-service and in-service students can access class in an on-campus room (with other students) or from their office or home.

In addition to the flexible delivery, some courses may utilize “intensive weekend” formats where the number of classes held during a semester are reduced in exchange for a compressed weekend event. Although on hold while COVID is active, a typical intensive weekend will meet on Friday from 4-8pm and Saturday from 8am-5pm. Here, students get to meet in person, network, and develop a sense of community while working together with faculty on campus. This format is especially important for the initial graduate seminar where we introduce you to faculty and you get to know other students in the program. We seek to meet two interrelated goals by minimizing the logistical challenges of taking classes while developing a strong sense of community.

V. Internships

Internship Overview

A mid-career student is defined as a student who has “appropriate professional experience,” which we define as having at least five years of full-time, progressively responsible administrative experience. In addition, mid-career students are typically employed full-time in their professional position while they are enrolled in one or two classes each semester.

Mid-career students are NOT required to complete the 3-credit hour internship and must, instead, complete the internship waiver found here: <http://www.uwyo.edu/mpa/internship/> All students must complete 39 credit hours, which means mid-career students will complete 15 hours of elective requirements (four courses) while pre-career students will complete 12 hours of electives (four classes) PLUS the 3-credit hour internship.

Internship Requirements

In order to fulfill the program's internship requirements, students must complete 150 hours of work at a public or non-profit agency. Students may select this opportunity in consultation with the program director. An "internship contract" must be completed by the student and the student's supervisor (found here: <http://www.uwyo.edu/mpa/internship/>). These are expected to be robust, professional working opportunities where students are clearly and thoughtfully attached to some project, program, or administrative activity.

VI. Advising

The program director serves as the official advisor for all MPA students, and will assist in academic program planning, electives, and determination of whether an internship is required. Other faculty members in the program area available to assist students on an individual basis, but only the director has access to PERC numbers when students are ready to formally register.

Students are to use UW's online WyoWeb system to register for courses each semester. In order to register, students will need their official registration code (PERC # as noted above) and University assigned W# (a unique number associated with each student, which is analogous to a Social Security number for students). To ensure a place in a class, students are encouraged to get advised and register as early as possible. Each student's PERC number is associated with a particular day/time to begin their registration. The University's advising period typically takes place in the middle of the semester prior to the next academic semester. The University calendar indicates when this period begins, but students will also receive reminders from staff.

Time Limitations

MPA students must fulfill all requirements for the MPA degree within a period of six consecutive years unless otherwise noted. Exceptions can be made with the approval of the University Registrar and the MPA program director.

Academic Integrity

There is an expectation that all MPA students will abide by the University's Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here: <http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/files/docs/uw-reg-8-30.pdf#code-of-student-conduct>. In addition, students are required to follow regulations regarding plagiarism and academic honesty, which is governed by UW Regulation 6-802 found here: <http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/files/docs/uw%20reg%20updates%202016/uw%20reg%206-802.pdf>

If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please see any of our faculty or the program director.

Grade Point Average

In order to remain in good standing, MPA students must receive a grade of B or higher in all core courses and must also maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher. Students receiving a grade of “C” or “D” in any core class will be allowed to retake the course one time (the next semester the course is offered) and must receive a letter grade of “B” or higher in that course. Failure to do so may result in the student’s suspension from the program. If a 3.0 grade point average is not maintained by the end of their program, a student will NOT be able to graduate. Any student who does not meet this minimum requirement will need to enroll in further coursework and improve their GPA before graduation.

VII. MPA Graduation Procedures

As our programs contains a number of different students on part-time and full-time paths, this section will discuss the processes and procedures you will need to complete during the last two semesters of your degree.

POLS 5690: Capstone in Public Administration

This course is taken during your final semester in the MPA program (spring only). This requirement is graded S/U. All oral exams and committees are scheduled/assigned by your Capstone professor. See “Curriculum and Degree Requirements”, section III, for course description.

Forms

In order to graduate, SPPAIS and the University of Wyoming require specific forms to be completed. As a student of the MPA program, these forms include:

Final Exam/Capstone Form (office only, Capstone professor will provide)

Anticipated Graduation Date Form

Change of Major Form (for students with dual degrees, minors, and concentrations.)

Optional Fee Package Form (this is for Graduate Assistants only who are taking less than 9 credit hours during their last semester)

These forms will need to be completed by your final semesters, however, it is advised to complete them in the semester preceding your final semester (graduating semester) in the program.

****NOTE: Unless otherwise noted, graduate students are responsible for providing their own paperwork. Graduate student forms can be found at:**

http://www.uwyo.edu/registrar/students/graduate_student_forms.html

Degree Evaluation and Pointing

In your WyoWeb account, under “Student Records” you will be able to access your degree evaluation for your program/graduation requirements. It is your responsibility to check each semester to see how your

classes are being applied to each requirement. In the case where you find a course not counting for a requirement (this is common for concentrations and electives offered outside our program), you will need to follow this procedure to have these courses “pointed” to resolve the issue:

- i. Contact your advisor to alert him of this issue. Include a screenshot of your degree evaluation.
- ii. Your advisor will look at your degree evaluation and email the office staff to point each course to its respective requirement.
- iii. Your advisor will email the degree analyst in the office of the registrar with your situation.
- iv. The Office of the Registrar will remediate the issue within a time period of about two weeks.
- v. If you are still seeing this issue after two weeks, reach out to the program director for an update; cc the staff member involved.

****Note:** This procedure will need to be followed during the last semester of your degree AFTER registration for your classes. At this point, all requirements should show either completion, or an in progress (~) box checked on your degree evaluation. **Waiting until graduation is not advised and is strongly discouraged.**

(Revised 10/10/2022)