

Master of Public Administration

Policy Handbook

For the Incoming Class of Fall 2008

MPA Program Description

A central focus of the University of Oregon's master of public administration (MPA) program is to prepare students to become evidence-based policy makers, analysts, and managers. Evidence-based policy making is a concept that has been gaining widespread acceptance in the policy community, both in the U.S. and abroad. It is based on the idea that the formulation of policy and its implementation should be based on evidence of effectiveness. Fostering evidence-based policy making requires a closer connection between research and practice. On the one hand, it requires that researchers ask policy relevant questions and conduct meaningful and timely analyses that can support the policy process. On the other hand, it requires that policy makers, managers, and leaders think critically about research and integrate appropriate evidence in the implementation and formulation of policy and practice. The MPA curriculum has been developed to train students in applied research and provide opportunities for real-world applications. The faculty strives to support evidence-based policy making through our research and community outreach activities, as well as our teaching.

Recent UO graduates work as advisors, policy analysts and strategic planners in all levels of government, in Oregon, throughout the US and around the globe. Their work addresses the full range of social, economic, environmental and development issues of the day, from improving health care access, increasing government efficiency and responsiveness, to creating new governmental structures in developing democracies. Alumni also work in a broad range of nonprofit organizations, for instance, as executive staff in social service, arts, and environmental organizations, and in for-profit companies serving the public sector.

The State of Oregon is an exciting place to study public administration. As a "laboratory of democracy" it has a long and distinguished record of policy innovation. Most recently, Oregon has been on the forefront of innovations in land use, health care, and environmental policy. Oregon is also a beautiful place to live and be a graduate student. The University of Oregon is located in the Willamette Valley, with easy access to snow-capped mountains and scenic coastlines.

The 72 credit program prepares students to become effective and creative leaders in the public and nonprofit sectors. The curriculum provides students with a combination of substantive knowledge, analytic skills, and professional experience that prepares students for careers as evidence-based policymakers, analysts, or managers. The program is comprised of four components: 1) core courses, 2) an area of concentration, 3) an internship and professional development training, and 4) synthesizing applied research projects.

MPA Core Courses

The seven core courses (29 credits) provide students with the theoretical foundation and analytic skills to be effective leaders in the public or nonprofit sector.

PPPM 618, Introduction to Public Service (Fall) 4 credits
The context of professional public services includes the history and theoretical foundation for public policy and management in the government and nonprofit sectors.

PPPM 628, Public Sector Economy (Fall) 4 credits
Reasons for governmental intervention and analysis of revenue sources available to governments. Introduces economic framework commonly used in public service decision-making.

PPPM 656, Quantitative Methods in Planning and Public Policy (Fall) 5 credits
Develop skills in using quantitative analysis to evaluate policies and programs. Emphasizes selecting appropriate analysis procedures, interpreting results appropriately, and writing clearly about findings.

PPPM 620, Applied Methods in Planning, Policy and Management (Winter) 4 credits
Overview of the basic methods of research design in planning and public policy. Emphasizes the development of appropriate research questions, reviewing academic literature, measurement, data collection, types of data sets, causality, and the design of research projects. (Prerequisite: PPPM 656)

PPPM 629, Public Budget Administration (Winter) 4 credits
Resource allocation through the budget process. Includes analysis of budget system reforms and applied budget-making exercises.

PPPM 636, Public Policy Analysis (Winter) 4 credits
Understanding the rationale for and impact of public policy interventions. Developing systematic methods for analyzing policy design, adoption and assessment. (Prerequisite: PPPM 628)

PPPM 633, Public Management (Spring) 4 credits
Principles, issues, and practices in public management. Emphasizes the theory and practice designed to improve the performance of public service organizations.

Core Course Policies

- All core classes must be taken for a letter grade.
- If a student has taken a core course prior to entering the program, a more advanced course in that area or a complementary course approved by the instructor and the MPA director may be substituted. The course substitution form is available on the Departmental [website](#).
 - For students who graduated from the PPPM undergraduate program, the policy on taking PPPM 656 and 620 are as follows: if an “A” (plus or minus) was earned in the undergraduate version of the course, a higher level or complementary course should be taken instead of the MPA core course. If a “B” (plus or minus) was earned in the undergraduate course, the student has the option of taking a higher level or complementary course or taking the MPA core course. Finally, for grades below a “B-,” the MPA core course should be taken.
- Students must take 5 of the 7 core courses in the department.

MPA Areas of Concentration

Students develop a substantive area of expertise by taking a minimum of 28 credits of coursework in a concentration area. There are five concentration areas that students may choose from: policy, public management, nonprofit management, planning, or environmental policy. An example of the courses that are appropriate for each concentration area are detailed on the departmental [website](#).

Students may alternatively develop their own concentration in consultation with a faculty advisor. Recent graduates have created customized concentrations in labor issues, health policy, and international development.

Concentration Policies

- Concentration courses may be taken either for a grade or pass/fail. A “B-” or better is required of graduate students to pass a pass/fail course.
- There are many courses outside of the department that are relevant to public administration. See the listing of classes for each concentration for a listing of the routinely offered classes in other departments. In addition, it is useful to look at the websites of specific departments to see what new classes are offered. Course evaluation information for UO classes is available electronically [here](#).
- In addition to being able to take classes in other departments, UO students may take classes at any school in the Oregon University System through the Joint-Campus Program. Information and forms are available at the [Office of the Registrar](#).
- Students can additionally develop an independent reading class with a faculty member in an area of mutual interest. If a faculty member agrees to a reading class, the form to complete is available on the departmental [website](#). Return the signed form to Linda Dent, and then you can register for the class. Please note that the default number of credits is 1, so you must change the credits on DuckWeb, and if needed, the grading option.
- There is no requirement regarding the number of concentration credits that must be taken within the department.

Internships & Professional Development

There are two components of the MPA internship requirement. The first is enrollment in an Internship and Professional Development course (1 credit, PPPM 607 offered winter term). Through this course students identify their career goals and develop a plan to prepare themselves to meet the goals. Students identify summer internship and post-graduation fellowship opportunities, develop polished resume and cover letters, and conduct informational and mock interviews.

The second component is completion of an internship. Internships offer students opportunities to explore and clarify career goals, apply academic learning, enhance and learn new skills, gain experience, and network with professionals. Unlike jobs, internships are supervised training experiences with the explicit intent of developing skills. Internships are highly recommended for all MPA students, and required for those with less than two years of relevant professional experience.

Students are required to enroll in 3 pass/fail credits of internship (PPPM 604). In collaboration with the internship site supervisor and the Internship Director, students identify their learning goals and outline specific tasks and responsibilities that support these goals. Students who achieve their learning goals acquire a set of transferable skills and real-world experiences that prepare them for professional positions, fellowships, or further academic study. Gaining relevant professional experience beyond the 3 credits is highly recommended. Students may do so either for credit or not for credit.

Students have completed a wide range of internships. Examples include the highly selective **Oregon Performance Internship**, the competitive **United Nations Internship Programme**, and **IE3 Global Internships**. Students have also interned with the Oregon Governor's Office, Senator Ron Wyden's Office, The Institute for Policy Studies, City of Portland Office of Sustainability, Oregon Department of Human Services, and Holt International Children's Services. For more information on the Internship Program see the departmental [website](#).

Internship Policies

- Three credits of internship is the equivalent of 90 hours in an internship placement.
- A maximum of 10 internship credits may be taken. Credits beyond the required 3 will count as concentration credits.
- If a student has two or more years of related professional experience, the internship requirement may be waived. In lieu of the internship, 3 credits of elective courses should be taken.
- Community Planning Workshop (CPW) can be taken to fulfill internship credit. However, students are strongly recommended to complete an internship in addition to CPW.
- Students who have been in the RARE program may use 3 RARE credits towards the internship requirement and 6 towards their concentration.

MPA Applied Research Projects

The MPA curriculum provides students two key opportunities to synthesize classroom learning and apply their research skills to current policy and management issues. At the start of the second year, students engage in a 48-hour policy project (1 credit, PPPM 609 Terminal Project).

This project is intended to simulate the real-world environment where analysts and managers are given short time frames to research a topic that they know little or nothing about. Over 48 hours, students will read relevant policy and research documents, write a memo detailing the evidence base and key issues, and give an oral presentation. The 48-hour project takes place the week before fall classes begin, and incoming first year students will have the opportunity to view the presentations as part of their orientation to the program. We expect this new component of the curriculum to be a signature event and rite of passage each fall.

Students also enroll in a two-term terminal project sequence that serves as the synthesizing Capstone of the curriculum. Over the winter and spring terms of the second year of study (5 credits each for a total of 10 credits, PPPM 609 Terminal Project), students will work on real-world or ‘simulated real-world’ projects that require conducting in-depth needs assessments, evaluations, cost-benefit analyses, or other applied research. A faculty member will work closely with student groups on these projects over the two terms. Past projects have included conducting a survey for a state commission to gauge attitudes among key stakeholders on potential policy change, an analysis of administrative data on how a past policy implementation impacted Oregonians, and an examination of three potential communities for a nonprofit’s expansion.

Applied Research Policies

- In cases of personal emergency that prevents a student from participating in the 48-hour policy project, a policy paper may be substituted for the 48-hour project.
- Prior to participation in the Capstone, all core courses and at least 16 credits in concentration classes must be completed.
- Students have the option of completing a thesis instead of (or in addition to) the Capstone. This requires identifying a faculty member to serve as the chair of the thesis committee and two other committee members, and following the graduate school’s [thesis requirements](#). Students enroll in 9 credits of PPPM 503/Thesis while completing their research.

Concurrent Degrees

The University of Oregon is very flexible in allowing students to develop concurrent degrees. No formal program between PPPM and the other UO program is required. Students need to be accepted into both programs and work out their academic schedule in conjunction with their faculty advisors. Students have recently combined the MPA with a master of community and regional planning (MCRP), master of business administration (MBA), doctor of jurisprudence (JD), Ph.D. in educational leadership, master of international studies, and master of geography.

Concurrent Policies

- Students interested in a concurrent degree program must 1) apply to both programs, and 2) meet with faculty advisors in both programs to develop an academic plan. Usually concurrent degrees decrease the time it takes to complete two separate degrees by at least a year.
- An official concurrent degree program form must be completed, approved by both program directors and the graduate school. The form is online at the [Graduate School website](#), and Linda Dent can answer questions about the credit requirements.

- The MPA program will accept the core courses of the second graduate degree as concentration credits.

MPA & MCRP Concurrent Degree Policies

- Students must take 3 credits of internship as well as CPW to complete both the MPA and MCRP degrees.
- One thesis can fulfill the thesis/capstone requirement for both degrees.

MPA & Other Concurrent Degrees

- Students completing concurrent graduate programs may be able to have their thesis fulfill both degree requirements. Student must have a PPPM faculty member on the committee to determine that the topic and methods are suitable for the MPA. If a student has begun completing their thesis in another department, an MPA faculty committee of two will review the thesis/terminal project to determine whether or not it fulfills the MPA requirements.

Student Advising

- When students start the program, they are each assigned a faculty advisor. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor in the first term of study and as needed throughout the year for answering questions related to program requirements, for advice on elective course selection, and to answer other curriculum matters.
- Students have the option of changing their academic advisor if another faculty member is a better fit. There is a form on the departmental webpage to officially change advisors.
- In the fall of the second year, students are required to meet with their advisor for a mid-program review. The advisor reviews and discusses with the student what degree requirements must be fulfilled prior to graduation.

Academic Standing

- Students have seven years to complete their MPA. Any credits taken earlier than seven years from graduation will expire and not be valid towards the MPA.
- Graduate students must convert a grade of Incomplete (“I”) into a passing grade within one calendar year of the term the course was taken. If there are extenuating circumstances, there is a process to petition the [Graduate School](#) for a removal of an incomplete that is longer lasting than one year.
- Grades below “C-” are not accepted for graduate credit but are computed in the grade point average (GPA). For pass/fail classes, a grade of pass must be equal to or better than a “B-.” A student may retake a class if a very low grade is earned, and the grades will be averaged together.
- Students must maintain a 3.0 GPA to be in good standing and to graduate from a PPPM graduate program. At the end of the first year of classes (for full time students) or after completion of 36 credits (for part time students), a 3.0 cumulative GPA is required in order to continue in the graduate program. If in subsequent terms a student’s cumulative GPA drops below a 3.0, he or she is given one term to raise the cumulative GPA to at least the 3.0 level.

- Failing five credits (“F” in a graded class or “N” in a pass/fail class) is grounds for expulsion from the program.

Fellowships

There are a number of prestigious policy-related fellowships that provide students with one to two years of excellent training in the public sector. These include the Presidential Management Fellowship, which is the entryway into federal employment in agencies as diverse as the EPA, AID, CDC and OMB, and The Local Government Management Fellowship. Applications are due in the fall of students’ second year of study. For application information and deadlines see the Internship Program [website](#).

Miscellaneous Policies

PPPM Questions

- Linda Dent and Zudegi Giordano are indispensable resources when you have questions about curriculum and departmental matters. Here is the breakdown of their responsibilities, so that you will know what type of questions to ask to whom.

Zudegi Giordano

Faculty/GTF Office Hours
 Keys and Computer Lab Access
 General Questions/Directions
 Event/Room/Equipment Reservations
 Workstudy Hiring, Ordering Supplies
 Website & Listserves Manager
 State car/van Reservations/Drivers Clearance
 Events & Field Trip Cost Estimates

Linda Dent

Student Records
 Faculty & GTF Payroll
 Petitions/Waivers
 Preauthorization to Add Classes
 Classroom Scheduling
 Clarity on Program Requirements
 Admissions
 Graduation Clearance

Academic Calendar

- The academic calendar, with add and drop deadlines, can be found on the Registrar’s [website](#).

Graduate Teaching Fellowships

- In the spring of each academic year the department advertises its GTF positions for the following year. On occasion, additional departmental GTF positions will become available at other times of the year, and notices will be emailed and posted.
- Students have been very successful obtaining administrative GTF positions throughout the university. Current listings are available throughout the school year on the Graduate School’s [webpage](#).

Transferring Credits

- Students may petition PPPM and the Graduate School to transfer up to 15 graduate credits from another graduate program if: 1) the credits are relevant to the MPA program, 2) they were taken within seven years of the date of MPA graduation, 3) they

were not used towards a prior graduate degree, 4) they were taken at an accredited university, and 5) the grade earned was a “B” or higher (or a Pass in a Pass/Fail course). The credit transfer form is available at the [Graduate School forms website](#). Please return the form to Linda Dent.

- Students should meet with their advisor to discuss how the credits will count towards the MPA degree, towards either the core or concentration.

Graduation

- Students must apply for their degree or certificate by the second Friday of the term; see the Graduate School’s [website](#).