

MPA Degree Requirements

The MPA curriculum combines a core of courses designed to provide students with essential knowledge with electives chosen by the student to meet specific educational objectives. Students must complete a minimum of 42 credit hours of course work, including an internship or thesis. The program is structured around three tiers of learning:

1. A core curriculum of six required courses (18 credits);
2. Electives, perhaps including a graduate minor in another department (18 credits);
and
3. An internship and proseminar or thesis (6 credits).

1. The MPA Core

All students must complete a core curriculum of 18 credits of course work, including:

GOVT 502 Research Methods in Government	(Offered every Fall)
GOVT 541 Public Budgeting	(Offered every Fall)
GOVT 542 Public Sector Human Resource Management	(Offered every Spring)
GOVT 544 Public Policy Analysis	(Offered every Spring)
GOVT 547 Government Organizations	(Offered every Fall)
GOVT 549 Ethics in Government	(Offered every Spring)

The core courses provide a broad introduction to the political, legal, social, and economic institutions and processes associated with public administration. They present concepts and teach skills for organizing and managing personnel, programs, and funds; for analyzing policy options and program endeavors; for representing public interests; and for examining ethical and personal values. The courses seek to develop writing skills and enhance computer literacy. Working effectively in groups and learning from "real world" experiences are a fundamental component of the core courses.

The remaining 24 credit hours required for the degree are selected by the student, with an advisor's approval, to meet the needs and interests of the individual. The object is to combine graduate electives and an internship or thesis to prepare the graduate for a specific career objective. This format insures that students master a body of knowledge while allowing enough flexibility to develop a substantive specialty and gain experience through a variety of methods.

2. Graduate Electives

With the advice and approval of a faculty advisor, each student selects and completes 18 credit hours of graduate electives. This must include six credits in MPA courses and may include up to 12 credits outside the Department of Government. Many students have taken advantage of this opportunity to pursue a graduate minor in another department. Potential graduate minors include criminal justice, social work, health administration and economics. Students interested in a minor should contact the minor department directly for information on requirements or any restrictions that may apply to courses which can be counted toward a minor.

3. Thesis and Internship Options

Because students have divergent career goals, both the thesis and internship options are offered. The thesis option requires six credit hours of thesis (GOVT 599) and a final oral examination covering the thesis and course work. The internship option requires three credit hours of internship (GOVT 510), three credit hours of Proseminar in Public Administration (GOVT 519) and a final oral examination covering the internship and course work.

A. Thesis Option

The thesis option is strongly suggested for students who have a specific career objective that can be enhanced by the deep and careful analysis of a selected topic in public administration. Also, for the student interested in pursuing a doctoral degree, the thesis option provides an excellent opportunity for exploring themes and ideas which might serve as the foundation for a dissertation topic, while offering valuable experience in conducting original research.

The committee for a thesis option student will be composed of three members of the Department of Government faculty. In all instances the committee chair and at least one other committee member must be a member of the MPA faculty. Given the time commitment involved in preparing a thesis, students are urged to have a committee appointed ten to twelve months prior to the expected time of completion of all degree requirements. Early in the semester prior to the semester of expected completion of the thesis, a prospectus (six to ten pages in length) must be presented for approval by the thesis committee. A formal meeting of the committee and student will be convened, and the student may be asked to revise the prospectus for resubmission to the committee. Upon completion of the thesis, with approval of the committee chair, the student is permitted to schedule the final oral examination that is required by the Graduate School.

B. Internship Option

This option offers students a formal field experience in a public or private nonprofit agency to complement their academic training and career goals. The internship is considered a vital part of the student's education in that it serves as a link between the classroom and agency operations. This option is strongly recommended for individuals lacking practical experience in the public sector or for those not planning to seek a doctorate in the immediate future. Students selecting the internship option must take the Proseminar in Public Administration (GOVT 519) after successfully completing 30 credit hours of course work, including at least five of the core courses. GOVT 519 is offered every spring semester. The proseminar class is typically offered during the late afternoon. Students with day jobs should plan to make arrangement to take this class. Students are required to earn a B- or higher in the proseminar in order to schedule oral examinations. Participation in the proseminar and an internship permits the integration of knowledge, theories, attitudes, and values, while developing professional skills.

The MPA faculty will make every effort to develop internship opportunities, but students are encouraged to identify and arrange internship positions as well. An internship position may be paid or unpaid, although an effort will be made to secure paid positions for students. Generally, a student should plan on working at least 10 hours per week for 16 weeks for three credit hours of internship. Adjustments are required when participating in a summer internship.

Students enrolled in an internship are expected to meet with an internship advisor on a regular basis. The academic requirements for the internship are determined by the faculty member supervising the placement, pursuant to the MPA internship guidelines. As part of the internship placement, the student is expected to undertake a major task or project for the agency. This endeavor should be a well-defined activity capable of being completed in a fixed period of time. For returning students working full-time in an appropriate position and organization, this project or task may be part of their current position but must represent an assignment given beyond one's normal duties.

