

*Master of
Public
Administration*

STUDENT GUIDEBOOK

University of Alabama

Department of Political Science

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MPA Degree Requirements

Students are required to complete 39 semester hours of coursework. The 39 hours is subdivided as follows: 21 hours of public policy and administration core courses, 6 hours of public policy and administration electives, and 9 hours of general electives if a 3 hour internship is completed and 12 hours of general electives if an internship is not completed. An internship is required for all pre-service students. In addition to the 39 hours of coursework, students must pass written comprehensive exam.

Core Requirements: 21 Hours in Public Policy and Administration

Students are required to take each of the courses from the following lists.

PSC 565-Survey of Public Administration
PSC 562 Public Personnel
PSC 664 Public Policy Analysis
PSC 662-Leading & Managing Public Organizations
PSC 667-Public Budgeting
PSC 663 Program Evaluation
PSC 522 Quantitative Methods

Public Policy and Administration Electives Requirements: 6 hours

Students must take at least two electives from the following Public Policy and Administration courses:

PSC 561-Administrative Regulation-
PSC 621-Quantitative Methods II
PSC 663-Selected Problems in Public
Administration
PSC 665-Local Government Administration
PSC 666-Political Economy and Public Policy

With permission from the MPA director, some of the Public Policy and Administration elective courses can be used to fulfill the Core Requirements. That means students will have to take 6 hours of additional courses from the public policy and administration electives. Students can also use courses outside of the ones listed above to fulfill both the core and elective requirements. Similarly, permission from the MPA director is required.

All newly admitted students should enroll in Survey of Public Administration (PSC 565) as soon as possible. This course provides students with an overview of the general field of public administration and an introduction to the subfields of public administration.

General Electives

Students are required to take 9 to 12 hours of general electives, depending on whether one completes a 3-hour internship. Electives can be taken in the Department of Political

Science or any other department offering a course relevant to public administration. Students are encouraged to enroll in elective courses within a broad cross section of courses that will enhance their skills. Although a list of approved electives is provided below, students interested in taking courses not on this list may do so with approval of the MPA director.

Approved General Electives

Electives may be taken from Public Policy and Administration electives as well as other disciplines. The disciplines include:

1. **Higher Education**. The elective courses may be taken from the following courses: AHE 540 Organization and Governance, BEF 553 History, AHE 500 Perspectives in Higher Education Administration, AHE Financing Higher Education, AGE 640 Organizational Change, AHE 670 Higher Education Policy.
2. **Policy Analysis**. These electives should be taken from Political Analysis, Economic Analysis, and Management Analysis courses. Political Analysis courses include the following: PSC 521 Research Design, PSC 523 Survey Research, PSC 621 Quantitative Methods in PSC II (prereq. are PSC 521 and PSC 522), PSC 622 Seminar in Political Science Methodology, PSC 664 Problems in Public Policy. Economic Analysis courses include the following: PSC 666 Political Economy and Public Policy, EC 510 Advanced Microeconomic Theory, EC 610 Seminar in Microeconomic Theory. The Management Analysis course is MIS 511 Management Information Systems.
3. **Public Organization and Management**. These electives should be taken from Organization Communication and Management courses. Organization Communication courses include MGT 522 Leadership Communication, COM 549 Persuasion and Social Influence, COM 561 Human Communication Theory, COM 562 Theories of Persuasion, COM 563 Relational Communication (prereq. COM 220 or instructor approval), COM 567 Public Address, COM 569 Communication and Gender, COM 571 Seminary in Organization Communication, COM 572 Seminar in Organization Communication II. Management courses include COM 560 Group Leadership, MGT 517 Leadership and Ethics (if non-MBA course is offered), MGT 520 Change Management, MGT 597 Contemporary Issues in Performance Management, MG 610 Introduction to Management Thinking, MGT 620 Organization Behavior and Individual Performance, MGT 621 Organization Behavior and Group Performance, MGT 622 Managing Organization Conflict and Change, MGT 623 Contemporary Issues in Organization Theory, MGT 679 Theory Development and Testing, PY 672 Advanced Social Psychology, WS 510 Women and Work.
4. **Criminal Justice**. The elective courses may be taken from the following courses: CJ 530 Seminar in Criminal Justice Organization and Management, CJ 586 Research in the Criminal Justice Process, CJ 510 Seminar in Community Corrections, CJ 520 Seminar in Current Law Enforcement Problems, CJ 540 Seminar in Juvenile Delinquency, CJ 550 Seminar in the Judicial Process and Social Policy, CJ 570 Seminar in Correctional Policy, and CJ 584 Seminar in Criminology Theory.

Internships: An Overview

After completing 18 hours in the program, students may receive 3 hours of course credit for working in an agency/nonprofit organization. Furthermore, students must complete at least 300 hours of program-related work in the organization. We require students to complete an internship if they have never worked in a public agency. See pages 7 through 9 for further details about internship requirements and sources.

Course Sequencing Example

The following is a common semester to semester sequencing of courses:

12-Hour/Semester Course Sequence

Fall 1

PSC 565 Foundations of Public Administration
PSC 662 Leading & Managing Public Organizations
PSC 664 Public Policy Analysis
PSC 663 Program Evaluation

Spring 1

PSC 667 Public Budgeting
PSC 562 Public Personnel Administration
PSC 522 Quantitative Methods
PSC 561 Administrative Regulation (PA elective)

Summer

PSC 679 Internship

Fall 2

PSC 663 Nonprofit Organizations (PA elective)
General elective
General elective
General elective
Comprehensive exam (0 credit hours)

Nine-Hour/Semester Course Sequence (more advisable)

Fall 1

PSC 565 Foundations of Public Administration
PSC 662 Leading & Managing Public Organizations
PSC 664 Public Policy Analysis

Fall 2

PSC 667 Public Budgeting
PSC 562 Public Personnel Administration
PSC 522 Quantitative Methods

Summer

PSC 679 Internship

Fall 2

PSC 663 Nonprofit Organizations (PA elective)

Spring 2

PSC 561 Administrative Regulation (PA elective)

PSC 663 Program Evaluation
General elective

General elective
General elective
Comprehensive exam (0 credit hours)

Advisement, Preregistration, Late Registration, and Drop-Add

To minimize complications that might prevent you from graduating on time, students should seek advising from the MPA director any time during the two-week preregistration period which is held in the middle of each semester. After advising, register for classes as soon as the registration period will allow; otherwise classes that you would like to take may be full/closed.

Late registration and the drop-add period typically occur the day before classes begin and last through the first week of classes. These are handled through MyBama.

Financial Aid: Scholarships, Assistantships, Work, and Loans

Graduate Council Fellowships and National Alumni Association Scholarships are awarded annually on a competitive basis with preferences given to students beginning their graduate education. For more information contact the Office of the Graduate School (102 Rose Administration, 348-5921). The Scholarship Resource Center of the Student Financial Aid Office (106 Student Services, 348-6756) also allows students to conduct self-directed searches for scholarships offered by agencies and individuals other than the University.

Loans, work-study opportunities, and student employment services are all available through the Student Financial Aid Office (106 Student Services, 348-6756). Plus, the Federal government has what is called the Student Career Employment Program (www.usajobs.gov) for students who are willing to go to school part-time and work part-time in a Federal agency. This program not only gives students wonderful work experience to add to their vitas, but can also lead to a permanent Federal job.

Jobs for students throughout campus are advertised at: <http://jobs.ua.edu/>. Our MPA students have been particularly successful at landing jobs in The Division of Student Affairs, which offers some fifty graduate assistantships for work in its offices of Housing and Residential Life, Student Life, Students Services, Student Financial Aid and Scholarships, Student Health, Student Publications, and University Recreation. Graduate assistants in these offices receive a stipend and partial tuition subsidy (in some assistantships) for 20 hours of work, typically in an administrative capacity. Beyond the preceding website, students can also contact the directors of the various Student Affairs Offices to learn about employment opportunities.

Transfer Credits

Students may transfer up to 12 hours of *relevant* coursework earned in another accredited graduate program within the last six years. However, only courses in which a student has achieved at least a “B” average can be transferred. Evaluation of credit for courses taken at another institution should be initiated at the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School and appropriate faculty in the Department of Political Science review the transfer of credits. To secure approval, students must submit a graduate transcript and demonstrate the relevancy of course content through graduate catalogue descriptions and/or course syllabi. All transfer credits must have been earned within six years of the awarding of the MPA degree, not the date of the request to transfer the credit.

Summer School

As there are limited course offerings in the Summer in the Department of Political Science, students have several options. First, they can enroll in approved electives offered in other departments. Second, pre-career students are encouraged to secure Summer jobs for which they can receive internship credit (PSC 679). Third, students can enroll in courses offered through the MPA program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham or Auburn University, Montgomery. Finally, students may wish to explore the possibility of distance learning—enrolling in videotaped, internet, or teleconferenced courses offered by other universities. The best single website for distance learning courses is: <http://naspaa.org/students/clearinghouse/clearinghouse.asp>.

Withdrawal from Classes

During the drop-add period—usually the day before classes begin and the first week of classes—students may withdraw from classes with approval of the department chair or MPA director. If a student withdraws during the first week of class, the withdrawal will not appear on his/her record. From the end of the drop-add period until the end of the tenth week of class, students may withdraw from the University and receive a “W” (withdrawal) for the courses in which they were enrolled. After the tenth week, graduate students are not normally permitted to drop classes. Withdrawals from courses are processed through MyBama.

Withdrawal from School

A student may withdraw from the University any time during the semester. Withdrawal requires clearance from the Records Office (166 Rose) and approval by the Dean of the Graduate School. Withdrawal for medical reasons should be initiated through the Student Health Center.

Comprehensive Exams

Passing comprehensive exams (“comps”) over one’s coursework is the final step in completing the MPA degree. Comps are administered during the middle of Fall and Spring semesters, usually the last week in October and the first week of March. A comprehensive exam lasts one day and is typically given on Monday of comprehensive

exam week.

No later than a month prior to taking comps, students must inform the MPA director of their intentions to do so by registering at <http://psc.ua.edu/intent-to-take-mpa-comps/>. In so doing, they must submit a list of the courses they have taken and the faculty who taught each course. In order to take comps, all incompletes must also be removed from one's record and students must be registered for at least one credit hour in the MPA program, even though they may have completed all the degree requirements.

Comp questions tend to be fairly broad, often requiring students to integrate or synthesize a wide variety of academic material. To develop a better understanding of comps, visit with faculty who teach in the program and speak to students who have recently completed the degree. Studying for comps requires a substantial investment of time—you cannot study the night before and expect to pass. To help prepare for comps, consider forming a study group with other students taking comps.

Within a month of completing your comps you will be notified in writing of your grade. Comps are not given a letter grade; they are pass-fail.

Applying for Degree Candidacy and Graduation Requirements

Students must apply for graduation through the Graduate School no later than the registration period of the semester or first summer-school session in which they complete the degree requirements. To graduate, students must have a cumulative grade point of no less than a "B" and must complete 75 percent of their coursework with no less than a "B." No more than 20 percent of a students' coursework can be taken on a pass-fail basis, and degree requirements must be completed within six years prior to the date the MPA degree is awarded.

These forms may be found on the Graduate School's website at: <http://graduate.ua.edu/academics/forms/>

Career Placement

The Career Center in room 330 of the Ferguson Center is the primary source for assistance in finding a job. The Center offers workshops on such topics as resume writing, searching for jobs, and interviewing. For a reasonable price, it also provides a Resume Service for quality production of resumes and employment correspondence. Most importantly, the Center provides students opportunities to network with recruiters on campus, and its Job Center lists *thousands of job openings* in an unlimited number of fields.

The Internet is also a source for job information. Contact:

1. <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> -- for federal jobs
2. <http://www.es.dir.alabama.gov>

For jobs in both the public and private sector, the following internet sites will also be helpful:

3. www.publicservicecareers.org/
4. <http://www.ajb.dni.us/> -- for jobs in different states
5. <http://www.monster.com>
6. <http://www.careerbuilder.com>
7. <http://www.careerbliss.com/>
8. <http://www.indeed.com>
9. <http://www.snagajob.com>
10. <http://jobs.com>
11. <http://craigslist.com>

Impact Publications at (703) 361-7300 or 335-9486 (fax) also publishes the following literature on jobs and careers in government:

- * *The Complete Job to Public Employment*
- * *The Complete Guide to Finding Jobs in Government*
- * *The Almanac of American Government Jobs & Careers*
- * *Federal Career Opportunities (biweekly job listing)*
- * *Find a Federal Job Fast*
- * *How to Get a Federal Job*
- * *Federal Jobs Digest (biweekly job listing)*

The Alabama State Employment Office at 534 14th St. in Tuscaloosa also posts job openings in Alabama state government. For jobs in local government, you must typically contact the personnel offices of the cities and counties in which you are interested in working. However, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) publishes a newsletter advertising hundreds of job openings in local governments throughout the country. To initiate a subscription to the newsletter, visit the ICMA website at: <http://icma.org/en/icma/home>.

Internships

Internships provide an applied frame of reference for the knowledge, skills, and values learned in the academic classroom. They deepen insights, broaden perspectives, and build on the technical skills and critical thought processes developed in the classroom. They are an especially critical learning experience for pre-career students and students who do not have experience working in public agencies.

Internship Procedures and Requirements

1. To register for internship credit (PSC 679), MPA students must take the initiative to secure part-time or full-time work relevant to public administration. An agency's consent to employ you as an intern must be secured *at least six weeks* prior to the beginning of the internship. This is especially critical if the agency intends to pay you through the University of Alabama. Sources to contact about internships are presented on the next page.
2. A faculty member in the Department of Political Science who has expertise relevant to the specific nature of the internship must also agree to supervise the

- internship. For example, an internship in a municipal budget office must be supervised by a faculty member with budgeting expertise.
3. To ensure an adequate academic frame of reference for an internship, students must complete at least 18 hours of coursework before enrolling in PSC 679. To ensure the internship is a meaningful learning experience, develops professional skills, and is consistent with the student's overall plan of study, the MPA director and faculty supervisor must approve the internship. To ascertain the preceding, students must submit a proposal containing the following information to the MPA director: the sponsoring organization, the internship supervisor, and a description of the duties and responsibilities of the internship. The MPA director will provide a standardized form requesting this information.
 4. Students must complete a minimum of 300 hours of relevant work for three credit-hours of internship. These hours can be fulfilled in any combination of days and weeks that allow for a worthwhile internship experience as determined by the faculty supervisor.
 5. Interns must complete an academic exercise that enhances the quality of the internship learning experience. The faculty supervisor will determine the nature of the exercise, the intern's grade on the exercise, and the intern's grade for the internship.
 6. Upon completion of the internship, the intern's immediate *work* supervisor shall provide the faculty supervisor certification of the number of hours that the intern worked. He/she shall also provide the faculty supervisor an evaluation of the intern's work, which shall be used in the faculty supervisor's determination of the intern's final grade. The MPA director shall provide the work supervisor a standardized form for evaluating the intern and certifying the hours worked. Before internships begin, faculty supervisors are to inform interns of the criteria for determining their final grades.

Sources of Internships

Students are encouraged to visit the Career Center (330 Ferguson) as a source for internships. Also, check the MPA bulletin board outside Ten Hoor 343 for periodic postings of internships. Contacts in public agencies and politics in your hometown are also a good source for internships. In addition, contact the following for internships in Alabama and Washington, DC:

Tuscaloosa. The City of Tuscaloosa employs summer interns for ten-weeks in its legal and planning departments. For information about these paid positions, contact the Human Resources Department at 349-0125.

Tuscaloosa County. While there is no central coordinating authority for internships within the county, students are encouraged to contact county departments for possible internships.

Northport. The City of Northport has internships in the planning department but in recent years has not been able to pay interns. For internships in planning and other possible areas, contact Jennifer Wheat at 333-3002

Jefferson County and Birmingham. Students must first contact individual county commissioners to determine the availability of internships. These individuals are:

David Carrington, Commission President	325-5503
Rehabilitation and Health Center	849-2352
Frederick Hamilton, Community & Economic	266-7174
Environmental Services	325-5390
Sandra Brown, Roads and Transportation	325-5174

Internships are also available through the Health Department, which can be contacted at 933-9110. The Birmingham Personnel Office also has internships in planning and development. This office can be contacted at 254-2819.

After determining the availability of internships in Jefferson County and Birmingham, students must apply for the internships through the Jefferson County Personnel Board (279-3500).

Shelby County. Shelby County offers a six-month paid internship for students interested in urban and regional planning. Extensions beyond the six-month period may be possible. For more information, contact the Shelby County Personnel Office at 669-3742.

The Washington Internship Program

MPA students can receive nine hours of internship credit and three hours of course credit through participating in The Washington Internship Program. Six of the internship credit hours can be applied to the MPA degree. This program is designed specifically for University of Alabama students. Students enroll in The Washington Seminar, a co-requisite with the internship that earns them three hours of credit. This seminar is conducted in Washington DC exclusively for University of Alabama interns. The Washington Internship Program is administered each Spring. Interested students should contact Carroll Phelps in room 301 Wilson Hall, at cphelps@sw.ua.edu, or at 348-5571.

Important Facts about the Program

Currently, 28 students are enrolled in the MPA program. MPA classes are delivered in-person. Consequently, there are no online MPA courses. Most students complete the program within 3 years, and the completion percentage of students 5 years prior to Self-Study year (2016-2017) was 87.5 percent. And, our recent graduates have earned employment in such organizations as US Census Bureau, AmeriCorps, Southlake Public Works Department, City of Tuscaloosa, Selma County Chamber of Commerce, Madison County Builders Association, Vulcan Park and Museum of Birmingham, Education Corporation of America, and Choctaw County Chamber of Commerce.