



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
Bowling Green, Kentucky

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
(MPA, #051)

PROGRAM POLICY HANDBOOK

Effective Fall Semester 2018

*The WKU MPA Program is accredited by the Network of Schools of
Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration*



NASPAA is the Global Standard in Public Service Education

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PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to welcome and assist prospective students as they are admitted into and move through the MPA Program.

MPA PROGRAM MISSION (The Mission Statement was adopted after comments and revisions were received from—faculty, alumni, employers, students and advisory committee.) Revised June 26, 2013.

The MPA program prepares graduate students from diverse backgrounds to be productive leaders and managers in public service by sharing knowledge, encouraging excellence in research and practice, and fostering an environment of professionalism within the communities we serve.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree is offered at Western Kentucky University through the Department of Political Science. The MPA is designed to provide knowledge and skills appropriate for professional career development in public and non-profit organizations.

The MPA program prepares graduate students from diverse backgrounds to be productive leaders and managers in the public service by sharing knowledge, encouraging excellence in research and practice, and fostering an environment of professionalism within the communities we serve. We have a long history of providing quality education and practical experience to our students through community partnerships with organizations such as Kentucky's area development districts, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Center for Local Governments. Graduates go on to serve in a variety of local, state, federal, and nonprofit organizations, and many have successfully pursued doctoral degrees upon graduation from the MPA program.

Requirements for the degree reflect the need for an understanding of both the political and administrative nature of public organizations and the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the field. The curriculum provides a balanced blend of study of the theory and practice of public administration.

Effective Spring 2014, the MPA degree requires the completion of 39 semester hours, consisting of 18 hours of required course work, 18 hours of electives determined in conjunction with the MPA Advisor, and 3 hours of either PS 598, PS 505 or PS 597. All candidates for the MPA degree must also successfully pass a written MPA comprehensive exam. No thesis is required. All requirements for the degree must be completed within six years of the date of initial enrollment.

All course work can be completed on-campus in Bowling Green. The MPA can also be completed at the Fort Knox/Elizabethtown, Owensboro, and Glasgow regional campuses via a combination of on-site interactive television courses and courses offered online. To accommodate the schedules of busy professionals, most required classes and electives are offered in the evenings. In addition, several elective courses are offered in the summer semester.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The MPA degree is divided into three components: 1) core courses, 2) elective courses, and 3) internship. Students must satisfy all three components in order to earn their degree. The MPA Program has developed an annualized matrix of course offerings to assist students in the planning of their degree. This annualized course matrix is found on the website and updated frequently to meet needs of students and faculty.

1) Core Courses (18 hours):

All MPA students must complete the six courses listed below:

- PS 501 – Research Methods in Public Administration
- PS 530 – Public Sector Organizations
- PS 538 - Public Service Ethics
- PS 541 – Human Resources Management in Public Administration
- PS 542 – Public & Nonprofit Budgeting
- *PS 560 - Public Policy Theory
- or
- *PS 562 - Public Policy Implementation & Evaluation

*Students may elect either course in consultation with their MPA Advisor.

All students entering the MPA program are highly encouraged to take PS 520 - Elements of Public Administration in their first semester.

2) Elective Courses (18 hours):

In consultation with their MPA Advisor, students may select from the following departmental courses:

- PS 500 - Workshops in Public Administration (1.5 hours, may be repeated for credit)
- PS 510 - Problems in National Government
- PS 511 - Seminar in State Government
- PS 512 - Kentucky Government and Politics
- PS 520- Elements of Public Administration
- PS 524 - Administrative Law
- PS 526 - Local Government Administration
- PS 528 – Civic Engagement and E-Governance
- PS 543 - Politics and Administration in Rural Communities
- PS 549 - Special Problems in Public Administration
- PS 550 – Cultural Competencies for PA
- PS 554 – Cross-Sector Collaboration & Conflict
- PS 564 – Nonprofits & Public Policy
- PS 566 – Environmental Politics & Public Policy
- PS 580 - Directed Study
- PS 597 - Professional Seminar in Public Administration

PS 500 and PS 580 may each be repeated for a combined total of six credit hours. PS 580 may be taken for a total of six credit hours.

Courses from other academic departments may be acceptable for inclusion as electives provided permission is obtained from the MPA Advisor **prior** to the student's enrollment in any such course. A maximum of 12 hours credit accepted from any other department can be applied toward the MPA degree. All transfer credits from other educational institutions must be approved by the Graduate School. Additionally, students may not take more than 12 hours before being admitted to the program. Please see graduate catalog for complete requirement.

3) Internship (3 hours)

The MPA degree at WKU requires an internship of all students. There are three options available to meet the internship requirement for MPA students.

Internship requirement can be satisfied by one of the following options with consent of the MPA academic advisor:

- a) PS 598 - Internship in Public Administration (3 hours)
- or
- b) PS 505 - Washington Internship (3 or 6 hours)*** Students electing the six hour internship may substitute three of the hours for one of their elective courses.
- c) PS 597 Professional Seminar in Public Administration

Students entering the MPA program with appropriate previous public sector experience may, upon approval, have the internship requirement of PS 598 or PS 505 substituted with PS 597. In order for the substitution to be considered, a current resume and a job description indicating sufficient public sector experience must be submitted to the MPA Director. If substitution is approved, these students will enroll in PS 597.

PROCEDURAL CHECKLIST FOR MPA STUDENTS

The department and the Graduate School require a series of steps to enable the student to make orderly progress toward the completion of the MPA degree. It is important that students follow these steps in processing the appropriate forms and in completing their program requirements.

Admission Procedures:

Students desiring admission to the MPA program must complete each of the following prior to their first semester of enrollment:

- 1) Complete the Online Application for Admission found on Graduate Studies website (https://acsapps.wku.edu/pls/prod/twbkwbis.P_GenMenu?name=wkumenu.P_AdmUnsecMnu)

- 2) Submit required application fee.
- 3) Request that official transcripts of the undergraduate and/any graduate work (from all undergraduate and/any graduate institutions attended) be sent directly to the WKU Graduate School.
- 4) Achieve a minimum cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of 2.75 (on a 4.0 scale).
- 5) Take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and have scores sent directly to the WKU Graduate School. (**Note: Applicants with a cumulative undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or higher from an accredited undergraduate institution and/or 3 years of relevant work experience in the public service are exempt from the GRE requirement.**)
- 6) Send two (2) letters of recommendation from persons familiar with the applicant's academic or employment experience to mpa@wku.edu
- 7) Send Statement of Purpose outlining how the MPA degree will help accomplish career goals and objectives to mpa@wku.edu.
- 8) Send current resume to mpa@wku.edu.

Program Content and Timetables:

The following procedures are required in order to ensure that you are making progress toward your MPA degree.

(1) Program of Study (Form C):

This form includes a listing of the MPA program curriculum courses which the MPA student agrees to complete in order to receive the MPA degree.

NOTE: All MPA students are strongly advised not to register for any course work without prior consultation with their MPA Advisor.

(a) The Program of Study (Form C) must be completed in cooperation with their MPA Advisor during the **first semester** of enrollment in MPA course work (or before reaching 12 hours of credit);

(b) The Form C must be filed with and accepted and approved by the Graduate School during the **first semester** of enrollment in MPA course work.

(2) Program Course Substitutions (Course Change Form)

It is possible that some elective courses listed on a student's Form C may not always be offered at a time suitable for completion. Changes (substitutions) for courses already included on the Form C must be requested and approved by the MPA Advisor prior to enrollment in any alternative course work. The course change form must be approved by the Graduate School as well.

(3) Transfer Credit

Up to 12 semester hours of transfer credit from an accredited institution may be accepted toward meeting the course requirements for the MPA degree. These courses must be properly identified as graduate level courses. Courses accepted for transfer credit must fall within the 6 year limit for degree completion.

Requests for transfer credit must be approved by the MPA Director and the Graduate School. All requests for transfer credit must include supporting documentation regarding course content and requirements. Course outlines, syllabi and reading lists are appropriate for this requirement. The Graduate School must approve all requests for transfer credits.

(4) Admission to Candidacy (Form D):

This form enables the Graduate School to review your progress toward your MPA degree. .

(a) Form D (Admission to Candidacy) Criteria include:

- (1) GRE scores and Form C are on file;
- (2) any "conditional" status has been satisfied;
- (3) student maintains a 3.0 or above in all graduate course work.

(b) The Form D may be filed at any time after the student has completed 15 graduate semester hours and before completing 21 credit hours.

NOTE: BEGINNING FALL 2014 FORM D IS NO LONGER REQUIRED!

(5) Program Completion:

The completion of the MPA program includes the successful passing of all courses on the student's Form C, the successful completion of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, and the filing of an application for degree form (along with the requisite fees) with The Graduate School.

(a) Students are expected to file for graduation either during the semester previous to the semester of graduation or early in the semester they expect to graduate. These forms may be obtained online on the Graduate School website.

(b) Students who have completed at least 27 semester hours of their MPA coursework (including all of the required core courses) are eligible to apply to take the written MPA Comprehensive Exam. (See Appendix B for the appropriate application form).

(c) Upon successful passage of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, a Form E (report on the Comprehensive Exam) will be filed by the MPA program with the Graduate School.

(d) All necessary course work must, of course, be completed, all "incompletes" removed, and all records be complete and on file before the MPA degree will be officially awarded.

THE MPA COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The MPA Comprehensive Exam is structured to measure the student's ability to integrate and apply knowledge acquired in MPA coursework to current and/or hypothetical problems involving public management and/or policy. The written exam consists of five substantive areas, all of which directly relate to the MPA core courses. All core courses must be completed and 27 hours within the Program before a student is eligible to take the comprehensive exam. "Core course" topics will cover the following general areas:

- (1) ethical norms and issues (PS 538);
- (2) public sector organizations, theory, structure, and behavior (PS 530);
- (3) applications of personnel management in the public sector (PS 541);
- (4) applications of public financial management (PS 542);
- (5) public policy analysis and/or evaluation (PS 560 or PS562).

The specific content of each question will be prepared by the faculty responsible for that subject matter area. Students will be provided with suggested study materials and they are strongly urged to consult with their respective faculty prior to the exam.

The MPA Comprehensive Exam is offered once per semester (Fall, Spring, Summer) on the WKU Bowling Green campus. The exam dates are the first Saturday in December, the third Saturday in April and the fourth Saturday in July.

Completed forms should be sent via email to daniel.boden@wku.edu or mailed to:

MPA Director, #305 Grise Hall
Western Kentucky University
Department of Political Science
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11060
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1060

The Exam is graded on a pass/fail basis and a passing grade on all five areas is required. The exam is assessed on the basis of: 1) fails to meet expectations; 2) meets expectations; 3) exceeds expectations. Students are permitted to apply to re-take any question(s) not successfully passed on the exam. Students who fail to meet expectations may apply to retake that section of the exam. The second exam should be completed no later than the end of the semester following the first exam. Students need to refer to the Graduate School website and catalog for instructions if they do not pass after the second re-take. Students may be dismissed from the program by the Graduate School. Upon successful passage of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, a Form E (report on the Comprehensive Exam) will be filed by the MPA Program with the Graduate School.

Additional Opportunities for MPA Students

Graduate Assistantships

The MPA Program has graduate assistantship positions available each semester. Students are usually awarded the assistantships for an entire academic year.

Effective Fall semester 2013, if a student desires consideration for an available GA position, an Application for Graduate Assistantship must be submitted to the MPA Program Director. Three letters of reference and a resume should also accompany the Application. Continuation of a GA position are handled in the same way—and GA's wanting to return the next year must submit a continuation application, but new reference letters and resume are not required.

Outstanding MPA Course Paper

Each academic year, MPA faculty identify student course papers for consideration. A committee of the MPA faculty reviews these submissions and determines the best paper. The name of the author of the selected paper is inscribed on a plaque.

Outstanding MPA Graduate (Fall and Spring graduation)

Each Fall and Spring semester, a committee of the MPA faculty reviews all the graduates for that semester and selects the outstanding graduate based on scholarship, research, contribution to the MPA Program, and other factors of relevance. The name of the selected graduate is inscribed on a plaque.

Research Presentation Opportunities

MPA students are encouraged to pursue their individual research interests. Accordingly, the MPA faculty act as sponsors in working with students in the development and presentation of research. Annual meetings of the Kentucky Political Science Association (KPSA), Southeastern Conference of Public Administration (SECoPA) and other conferences provide opportunities for students to present and receive external feedback on their work.

Networking and Mentoring Opportunities

At the beginning of the Fall semester, the MPA program sponsors an orientation of new and returning MPA students and invites alumni and faculty to share information and develop external linkages to the broader community. On a more limited basis, an orientation is held each January as well. Networking opportunities are provided through the local American Society for Public Administration Metro Louisville chapter.

MPA Faculty

Communication is essential to the success of our students and the mission of the WKU MPA Program. All faculty in the MPA Program have regular office hours to assist students. In cases where students need assistance beyond these normal office hours, instructors can be reached via telephone or email. An organization site has also been established using Blackboard for the MPA faculty and students.

If any part of this handbook conflicts with the WKU Graduate Catalog, the WKU Graduate Catalog takes precedence and that portion of this handbook becomes null. Anyone discovering a conflict between this handbook and the WKU Graduate Catalog, or a potential conflict, should report said conflict to the Director of the MPA Program immediately.

List of MPA Faculty

Saundra Ardrey, PhD
Daniel Boden, PhD
Jeff Budziak, PhD
Victoria Gordon, DPA
Jeffrey Kash, PhD
Scott Lasley, PhD
Shannon Vaughan, PhD

Reviewed Summer 2018 and updated