The Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) program is intended for those with career interests in public management, health and human services, government, and other public service and nonprofit organizations. The curriculum blends theoretical and applied concepts and assures "real-world" experiences for the novice administrator. In addition, it requires that students devote attention to general professional development. The M.P.A. program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

The mission of the Ph.D. program in Public Administration is to provide advanced graduate education in theory and research in the field to prepare students for academic, research, and advanced professional careers in public administration. Each student is expected to graduate with:

1. Research experience working with public administration faculty
2. Experience in presentation of scholarly papers and posters at national and regional conferences
3. Experience in developing, authoring, or co-authoring with a faculty member, and submitting at least one article for a refereed publication
4. Teaching experience at the college/university level

Admission Requirements

Applicants apply for admission to the program via the Graduate School application for admission (http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply). Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-300 Admissions (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies).

Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)

Applicants who are still completing their baccalaureate requirements at the time of application may be provisionally admitted (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/provisional-admission) to the Graduate School conditional on the awarding of the baccalaureate degree.

Admission to the MPA program is based on clear suitability for the program as demonstrated by the application as a whole, including the following:

- a completed application with the nonrefundable application fee;
- official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended (http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission);
- satisfactory scores on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), or Law School Admission Test (LSAT) if the GPA is less than 3.0; and
- recommendations from three references.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Individuals with superior academic records and a strong interest in careers emphasizing research and scholarship are encouraged to apply to the program. The program typically admits a Ph.D. cohort of full-time students to begin each fall semester.

Admission to the Ph.D. program is based on the applicant's undergraduate and graduate academic records, standardized test scores, letters of reference, and the compatibility of their backgrounds and interests with those of the program faculty members, as expressed in the applicant's statement of goals and research interests. All applicants must have completed a master's degree. A completed master of public administration (M.P.A.) degree is preferred, but students with master's degrees in related areas (political science, public policy, economics, sociology, anthropology, social work, business management, and health administration, for example) or Juris Doctorate degrees (law) will also be considered.

Application Deadlines

There are two deadlines for applications for the fall semester of the following academic year: January 15 and March 15 of each year. For those applicants seeking research or teaching assistantships, the deadline to submit all application materials is January 15. Late applications may be considered if assistantships are still available. Applicants who wish to finance their education with their own funds or other sources (foreign governments that fund international students for Ph.D. studies in the United States and other funding agencies, such as Fulbright commissions) must submit all application materials by March 15.

Application Package

A complete application must include:

1. A completed online Graduate School application (http://www.gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply)
2. Payment of a non-refundable application fee
3. Official Graduate Record Examination scores (verbal, quantitative, and analytical) taken within the five years prior to the date of application
4. A resume that includes:
   a. work experience,
   b. volunteer activities,
   c. academic and professional honors,
   d. honorary societies,
   e. extracurricular activities,
   f. offices held,
   g. any publications and
   h. other significant activities
5. A statement of goals and research interests, including evidence of research aptitude and interest as well as "fit" with the faculty interests in the Ph.D. program at Penn State Harrisburg. The
applicant should make the case why this Ph.D. program at Penn State Harrisburg would be a good fit for him/her.

6. A writing sample that reflects the applicant’s background in conducting academic research and potential to conduct academic research in the future.

7. At least three letters of recommendation, preferably from faculty members who can comment upon the applicant’s potential as a doctoral student.

8. Official transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.

The language of instruction at Penn State is English. English proficiency test scores (TOEFL/IELTS) may be required for international applicants. See GCAC-305 Admission Requirements for International Students (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/gcac-305-admission-requirements-international-students) for more information.

**Degree Requirements**

**Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)**

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-700 Professional Degree Requirements (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies).

Students may begin the program in any semester. Three courses (or 9 credits) per semester are considered a normal course load for full-time students. Part-time students typically take one or two 3-credit courses each semester and one or two courses during the summer session to maintain steady progress toward the degree. The program, including an internship in a public agency or nonprofit organization for those without three years of managerial, supervisory, or professional experience, requires eighteen to twenty-four months of full-time study, or three to five years on a part-time basis.

The M.P.A. degree program requires a minimum of 39 credits:

- 18 credits in core courses,
- 15 credits in electives,
- 3 credits for the research project that serves as the culminating experience for the degree, and
- a 3 credit internship.

The 3-credit internship may be waived at the discretion of the program for students who have at least two years of full-time relevant work experience that consists of supervisory, managerial, or professional work, or who gain this experience while enrolled in the program. Students for whom the internship requirement is waived can complete the program with a minimum of 36 credits. Up to 6 credits of 400-level courses may be taken as electives, with the approval of an adviser.

### Code Title Credits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PADM 500</td>
<td>Public Organization and Management</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 502</td>
<td>Governmental Fiscal Decision Making</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 503</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 505</td>
<td>Human Resources in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 507</td>
<td>Introduction to Public Policy Analysis</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 510</td>
<td>Organization Behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internship in Public Administration**

PADM 595 Internship 3

**Electives**

With the faculty adviser’s approval, a student selects 15 credits of electives from a list of approved electives maintained by the program office.

**Culminating Experience**

PADM 594 Research Topics (Capstone Course) 3

Total Credits 39

**Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)**

Requirements listed here are in addition to Graduate Council policies listed under GCAC-600 Research Degree Requirements (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies).

A Ph.D. student must first successfully complete the prerequisite courses specified by the program to make up for deficiencies, if any exist. After these are completed, a student must take a minimum of 42 credits:

- five 3-credit foundation courses,
- four 3-credit research methods courses, and
- five 3-credit specialization area courses.

All doctoral students must pass a qualifying examination, a comprehensive written and oral examination, and a final oral examination (the dissertation defense). To earn the Ph.D. degree, doctoral students must also write a dissertation that is accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School.

**Prerequisite Courses and Provisional Admission**

Applicants who do not have the necessary background, but otherwise meet the criteria for admission may be admitted provisionally (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/provisional-admission) and must make up any deficiencies in graduate courses in public administration noted in the letter of acceptance. Students who must make up deficiencies are considered to be provisionally admitted (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-300/provisional-admission) into the program.

Provisionally admitted students are required to take one or both of the following prerequisite courses: PADM 500 and PADM 507. In consultation with the program faculty members, the coordinator of the Ph.D. program makes the decisions on which prerequisite courses each student should be required to take.

A student may remain in this temporary classification for a period of no longer than two semesters following admission. Upon successful completion of the prerequisite courses noted in the letter (with at least a 3.5 grade-point average), the student will be removed from provisional status and be regularly enrolled. The provisional status must be removed before a student takes his/her qualifying exam.

**Foundations of Public Administration**

All the students in the program will be required to take the following foundational courses before they are eligible to take the qualifying examination:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PADM 570</td>
<td>Scope and Methods of Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specialization Area Courses
In consultation with the student’s adviser and Ph.D. committee, each doctoral student will develop a public administration specialization that consists of five 3-credit courses. These specialization areas are not pre-defined. They may be tailor-made by the student and his/her committee, based on the student’s interests and the availability of the courses in the School of Public Affairs and other colleges and graduate programs at Penn State. Examples of possible specialization areas are

- public and nonprofit management,
- organizations and human resource management,
- public budgeting and finance,
- public policy analysis,
- state and local government administration,
- criminal justice,
- health administration, and
- homeland security.

Research Methods Courses
Students are required to take four 3-credit research methods courses. The following two research methods courses are required for all Public Administration Ph.D. students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PADM 503</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADM 575</td>
<td>Advanced Research Design</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students also will select two in-depth 3-credit research methods courses on the basis of their research interests (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods), suitability of the courses in preparing students for their dissertation studies, and the availability of the courses.

Students may find suitable courses in the Ph.D. program in Public Administration or other graduate programs at Penn State. These two in-depth methods courses should be approved in advance by the student’s Ph.D. committee. A student’s committee may also allow him/her to take in-depth methods courses that are offered by other universities or research institutions if the equivalent courses cannot be found within Penn State, if the equivalency of these courses to 3-credit graduate-level courses offered at Penn State can be verified by Graduate Enrollment Services, and if the costs of taking these courses can be covered by the student or another arrangement can be made to cover the costs.

Qualifying Examination
Only students who complete the required courses in the Foundations of Public Administration successfully, with a minimum 3.5 GPA, may take the qualifying examination. The qualifying examination will cover topics about the intellectual history and enduring questions in the field. Many of these subjects are covered in the required foundational doctoral courses; they include such topics as public administration and democratic theory, public organizations and management, and constitutional and legal foundations. The exam is written and graded by the Public Administration Graduate Faculty.

Comprehensive Examination
Upon successful completion of the specialization courses and research methods courses, with a minimum 3.5 GPA, a doctoral student takes a comprehensive written and oral examination. Comprehensive examinations are administered by the student’s Ph.D. committee. In comprehensive examinations, students are tested about the contents of their specialization areas and they will be required to propose a research design on a relevant topic.

Dissertation
After passing the comprehensive examination, a student must work with his or her adviser and Ph.D. committee to develop a full dissertation proposal within three months of the exam. Once the Ph.D. committee approves the full proposal, dissertation research can begin. Students will be required to conduct their dissertation research and write and defend their dissertations in accordance with Graduate Council policy and as agreed on by their Ph.D. committees.

Grade Point Average and Time Limit
Full-time students are expected to finish the program in four to five years. Graduate Council policy requires that a student must complete the program within eight years after passing the qualifying examination. The Ph.D. program in Public Administration requires that students have at least a 3.50 grade-point average in order to graduate.

Joint Degrees
Joint J.D./M.P.A. with Dickinson Law
Requirements listed here are in addition to requirements listed in GCAC-211 Joint Degree Programs (http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-200/gcac-211-joint-degree-programs).

Penn State Dickinson Law and the School of Public Affairs, Penn State Harrisburg, the Capital College, offer a joint degree program leading to the degrees of Juris Doctor, granted by Dickinson Law, and Master of Public Administration, granted by Penn State Harrisburg.

Admission Requirements
In order to be admitted to the program, students must first be admitted to Penn State Dickinson Law under its regular admission procedures. Subsequently, the student must be recommended for admission to the M.P.A. program by Dickinson Law, and must apply for admission to the M.P.A. degree program as described on the Admission Requirements tab. Penn State Harrisburg will make independent admissions decisions as to all joint degree applicants.

Admissions requirements and applications for Dickinson Law are available at the Admissions & Aid (https://dickinsonlaw.psu.edu/admissions-aid) section of its website.

Degree Requirements
Students must fulfill all requirements for each degree in order to be awarded that degree, subject to the double-counting of credits as outlined below. Degree requirements for the J.D. program are listed on the Dickinson Law website (https://dickinsonlaw.psu.edu/academics/curriculum/jd-program). Degree requirements for the M.P.A. degree are listed on the Degree Requirements tab.
A maximum of 9 credits of Dickinson Law course work may be double-counted for credit toward the M.P.A. degree at Penn State Harrisburg, subject to program approval based on relevance to the M.P.A. degree.

A maximum of 9 credits of M.P.A. course work with a grade of B or better may be double-counted for credit toward the J.D. degree at Dickinson Law, subject to approval by Penn State Dickinson Law.

A student in the joint degree program can graduate with one degree prior to completing the other, if all requirements for that degree have been completed. Students must earn at least a 3.0 grade-point average to be eligible for the M.P.A. degree. If students accepted into the joint degree program are unable to complete the J.D. degree, they are still eligible to receive the M.P.A. degree if all the M.P.A. degree requirements have been satisfied.

### Student Aid

Graduate assistantships available to students in this program and other forms of student aid are described in the Tuition & Funding [section](http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-funding) of The Graduate School’s website. Students on graduate assistantships must adhere to the course load limits [set by The Graduate School](http://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gsad-gsad-900/gsad-901-graduate-assistants) set by The Graduate School.

Qualified Ph.D. students will be supported with 9-month merit-based research or teaching assistantships. The assistantship granted to a student may be renewed at the end of each academic year, based on the student's academic performance in the program. While these are not guaranteed, funding opportunities may also be available for admitted students during the summer semesters. Such opportunities may include, but are not limited to, teaching and involvement in faculty-sponsored research. Students may also apply for other financial aid programs through the University's Office of Student Aid [section](http://studentaid.psu.edu).

In addition, the program faculty may admit to the program qualified full-time students who will finance their educations with scholarships from sources outside Penn State or with personal funds. These sources may include foreign governments that fund international students for Ph.D. studies in the United States and other funding agencies, such as Fulbright commissions.

World Campus students in graduate degree programs may be eligible for financial aid. Refer to the Tuition and Financial Aid [section](http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/tuition-and-financial-aid) of the World Campus website for more information.

### Courses

Graduate courses carry numbers from 500 to 699 and 800 to 899. Advanced undergraduate courses numbered between 400 and 499 may be used to meet some graduate degree requirements when taken by graduate students. Courses below the 400 level may not. A graduate student may register for or audit these courses in order to make up deficiencies or to fill in gaps in previous education but not to meet requirements for an advanced degree.

Public Administration (PADM) Course List [section](https://bulletins.psu.edu/university-course-descriptions/graduate/padm)

### Learning Outcomes

1. Graduates will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the foundations (major concepts and theories) of public administration and policy processes.

2. Graduates will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of relevant research methods to be used in their dissertation studies and publications.

3. Graduates will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the specializations area of their choice.

4. Graduates will demonstrate their ability to apply relevant research methods in their class papers and dissertation studies.

5. Graduates will demonstrate their ability to communicate their conceptual knowledge of foundational topics, specialization area topics, and research methods in written and oral forms.

6. Graduates will demonstrate their analytical and critical thinking abilities on the topics relevant to public policymaking and public administration processes.

7. Graduates will demonstrate their knowledge of the rules of ethics and professional conduct in public policy and administrative processes and the knowledge of ethical research practices and apply them in their studies in the program.

### Contact

**Campus**
- Harrisburg

**Graduate Program Head**
- Alexander Siedschlag

**Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Professor-in-Charge (PIC)**
- Triparna B Vasavada

**Program Contact**
- Autumn D Wise
  - School of Public Affairs
  - 777 West Harrisburg Pike, 159W Olmsted Bldg.
  - Middletown PA 17057-4898
  - adw5533@psu.edu
  - (717) 948-6773

**Program Website**
- [View](https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/public-administration/master-public-administration)

**Program Contact**
- Autumn D Wise
  - School of Public Affairs
  - 777 West Harrisburg Pike, 159W Olmsted Building
  - Harrisburg PA 17057
  - adw5533@psu.edu
  - (717) 948-6773

**Program Website**
- [View](https://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/degrees-and-certificates/public-administration-masters/overview)