

PUBLIC POLICY, B.S.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: Harrisburg

Program Description

The Public Policy major is designed for students interested in policy issues, politics, public administration, and related areas like policy analysis and policy advocacy. The program explores a myriad of critical issues facing our communities, the nation, and the world. Students receive the educational foundation for careers in the public sector, in government-related businesses, and in non-profit organizations, as well as for graduate work in the fields of law, public administration, criminal justice, public policy, political science, and health care administration. Building on the program core, students may choose electives from a broad array of courses in public policy and other areas. For-credit Internship opportunities are available, including the Harrisburg Semester program, where qualifying students may apply for a scholarship.

Students may wish but are not required to pursue a concentration within the Public Policy major. The following concentrations are available:

1. State and Local Government
2. Governmental Affairs and Public Service Careers
3. Policy Analysis and Governance Studies

Students should consult their adviser for a complete listing of courses in each of these concentrations. Overall, the Public Policy program seeks to advance the ideals of civic culture and a commitment to public service.

Our proximity to the state capital at Harrisburg provides students with a rich environment for both study and for internships. In addition to our full-time faculty, Public Policy draws on part-time faculty with particular professional strengths. In recent years students have explored politics and political issues in classes taught by a state senator, a former lieutenant governor, a corrections system administrator, and a governor's press secretary. This integration of academic study with the "real world" of Pennsylvania politics and policy making is further enhanced through quality internships. The Public Policy program prides itself in placing qualified students in internships that facilitate the development of professional skills and promote the prospects for professional employment following graduation.

Students are encouraged to complete an internship during their senior year. Additional information regarding internships may be obtained by contacting the School of Public Affairs Internship Coordinator (see <https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/internships> (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/internships/>)). For-credit Internship opportunities are available, including the Harrisburg Semester program, which offers scholarship opportunities to qualifying students.

What is Public Policy?

Public Policy is a discipline that focuses on the systematic analysis of public policy issues and decision processes. It includes study in the role of economic and political factors in public decision-making and policy formulation, microeconomic analysis of policy issues, resource allocation and decision modeling, and policy advocacy.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You have an interest in fostering positive policy change.
- You are concerned about critical issues facing your community or nation.
- You would enjoy working with others to solve these critical issues.
- You are interested in a career in government or with an NGO or non-profit.

Entrance to Major

Entry to the Public Policy major requires a 2.00 or higher cumulative grade-point average and an average of C (2.00) or better in any course already taken in the major.

Admission Requirements for Transfer Students

Transfer students must have a 2.00 or higher cumulative grade-point average. The evaluation of prior college work is done on an individual basis by the Office of Enrollment Services at Penn State Harrisburg.

Degree Requirements

For the Bachelor of Science degree in Public Policy, a minimum of 120 credits is required:

Requirement	Credits
General Education	45
Electives	15
Requirements for the Major	66

6 of the 45 credits for General Education are included in the Requirements for the Major. This includes 6 credits of GS courses.

Requirements for the Major

At least 15 credits must be at the 400 level.

To graduate, a student enrolled in the major must earn a grade of C or better in each course designated by the major as a C-required course, as specified by Senate Policy 82-44 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>).

Code	Title	Credits
Prescribed Courses		
<i>Prescribed Courses: Require a grade of C or better</i>		
ECON 102	Introductory Microeconomic Analysis and Policy	3
ECON 104	Introductory Macroeconomic Analysis and Policy	3
PLSC 1	American Politics: Principles, Processes and Powers	3
PLSC 309	Quantitative Political Analysis	3
PUBPL 304W	Public Policy Analysis	3
Additional Courses		
Select 9 credits from the following:		9
PLSC 300-499		
PUBPL 200-499		
Select 6 credits from the following:		6
PLSC 419	The Bureaucratic State	
PLSC 425	Government and Politics of the American States	
PLSC 444	Government and the Economy	
PLSC 488	Comparative Public Policy	

PLSC 489	Public Administration	
PUBPL 300-499		
Select 3 credits from the following:		3
PUBPL 481	Seminar in Environmental Policy	
PUBPL 482	Seminar in Health Policy	
PUBPL 483	Seminar in National Security Policy	
PUBPL 490	Seminar in Public Policy	
Supporting Courses and Related Areas		
Select 12 credits from the following:		12
ACCTG 200-499		
AFRAS 300-499		
AMST 300-499		
BESC 300-499		
COMM 300-499		
CRIMJ 300-499		
CMPSC 300-499		
ECON 300-499		
ENGL 300-499		
FIN 300-499		
HDFS 300-499		
HIST 300-499		
HLS 300-499		
HPA 300-499		
IST 300-499		
MGMT 300-499		
MIS 300-499		
MKTG 300-499		
PADM 500-899		
PSYCH 300-499		
SOC 300-499		
SRA 300-499		
WMNST 300-499		
Select 21 credits in consultation with an academic adviser and in support of the student's interests		21

General Education

Connecting career and curiosity, the General Education curriculum provides the opportunity for students to acquire transferable skills necessary to be successful in the future and to thrive while living in interconnected contexts. General Education aids students in developing intellectual curiosity, a strengthened ability to think, and a deeper sense of aesthetic appreciation. These are requirements for all baccalaureate students and are often partially incorporated into the requirements of a program. For additional information, see the General Education Requirements (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/baccalaureate-degree-general-education-program/>) section of the Bulletin and consult your academic adviser.

The keystone symbol appears next to the title of any course that is designated as a General Education course. Program requirements may also satisfy General Education requirements and vary for each program.

Foundations (grade of C or better is required and Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Quantification (GQ): 6 credits
- Writing and Speaking (GWS): 9 credits

Breadth in the Knowledge Domains (Inter-Domain courses do not meet this requirement.)

- Arts (GA): 3 credits
- Health and Wellness (GHW): 3 credits
- Humanities (GH): 3 credits
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS): 3 credits
- Natural Sciences (GN): 3 credits

Integrative Studies

- Inter-Domain Courses (Inter-Domain): 6 credits

Exploration

- GN, may be completed with Inter-Domain courses: 3 credits
- GA, GH, GN, GS, Inter-Domain courses. This may include 3 credits of World Language course work beyond the 12th credit level or the requirements for the student's degree program, whichever is higher: 6 credits

University Degree Requirements

First Year Engagement

All students enrolled in a college or the Division of Undergraduate Studies at University Park, and the World Campus are required to take 1 to 3 credits of the First-Year Seminar, as specified by their college First-Year Engagement Plan.

Other Penn State colleges and campuses may require the First-Year Seminar; colleges and campuses that do not require a First-Year Seminar provide students with a first-year engagement experience.

First-year baccalaureate students entering Penn State should consult their academic adviser for these requirements.

Cultures Requirement

6 credits are required and may satisfy other requirements

- United States Cultures: 3 credits
- International Cultures: 3 credits

Writing Across the Curriculum

3 credits required from the college of graduation and likely prescribed as part of major requirements.

Total Minimum Credits

A minimum of 120 degree credits must be earned for a baccalaureate degree. The requirements for some programs may exceed 120 credits. Students should consult with their college or department adviser for information on specific credit requirements.

Quality of Work

Candidates must complete the degree requirements for their major and earn at least a 2.00 grade-point average for all courses completed within their degree program.

Limitations on Source and Time for Credit Acquisition

The college dean or campus chancellor and program faculty may require up to 24 credits of course work in the major to be taken at the location or in the college or program where the degree is earned. Credit used toward degree programs may need to be earned from a particular source or

within time constraints (see Senate Policy 83-80 (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/82-00-and-83-00-degree-requirements/>)). For more information, check the Suggested Academic Plan for your intended program.

Program Learning Objectives

1. **Understand Political Processes and Government Operations at National, State & Local Levels**
 - a. Understand Constitutional Foundations, Institutions & Political Processes in the U.S.
 - b. Understand Role of States in Federal System and Local Governments within States
 - c. Understand Operation of Government Agencies
2. **Understand and Analyze Policy Creation Process, Policy Implementation & Policy Impact**
 - a. Understand Roles of Legislatures, Agencies & Interest Groups in Policy Formation
 - b. Attain Familiarity with Selected Public Policies and Their Impact
 - c. Acquire Ability to Analyze Critically the Content and Impact of Public Policies
3. **Be Prepared to Function in Policy-Related Careers in Government and NGOs**
 - a. Ability to Write Clearly and Concisely
 - b. Ability to Communicate Effectively Using Oral Skills and Technology
 - c. Knowledge of Leadership Qualities and Strategies
 - d. Ability to Function Successfully in Policy-Related Work Environments
 - e. Ability to Understand Research Methods and Use Statistics
 - f. Knowledge of Microeconomics and Macroeconomics

Academic Advising

The objectives of the university's academic advising program are to help advisees identify and achieve their academic goals, to promote their intellectual discovery, and to encourage students to take advantage of both in-and out-of class educational opportunities in order that they become self-directed learners and decision makers.

Both advisers and advisees share responsibility for making the advising relationship succeed. By encouraging their advisees to become engaged in their education, to meet their educational goals, and to develop the habit of learning, advisers assume a significant educational role. The advisee's unit of enrollment will provide each advisee with a primary academic adviser, the information needed to plan the chosen program of study, and referrals to other specialized resources.

READ SENATE POLICY 32-00: ADVISING POLICY (<https://senate.psu.edu/students/policies-and-rules-for-undergraduate-students/32-00-advising-policy/>)

Harrisburg

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Suggested Academic Plan

The suggested academic plan(s) listed on this page are the plan(s) that are in effect during the 2025-26 academic year. To access previous years' suggested academic plans, please visit the archive (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/archive/>) to view the appropriate Undergraduate Bulletin edition.

Public Policy, B.S. at Harrisburg Campus

The course series listed below provides **only one** of the many possible ways to move through this curriculum. The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. This plan should be used in conjunction with your degree audit (accessible in LionPATH as either an **Academic Requirements** or **What If** report). Please consult with a Penn State academic adviser on a regular basis to develop and refine an academic plan that is appropriate for you.

First Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
ENGL 15, 15S, 30T, or ESL 15 [†]	3 CAS 100A or 100S [‡]	3
Quantification	3 Quantification	3
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
PLSC 1 ^{*†}	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5 Elective	3
13.5		15

Second Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
General Education Course	3 General Education Course	3
General Education Course	3 ENGL 202 [‡]	3
General Education Course	3 PLSC 300-499 or PUBPL 241 or PUBPL 300-499	3
ECON 102 ^{*†}	3 ECON 104	3
Elective	3 PUBPL 304W [*]	3
General Education Course (GHW)	1.5	
16.5		15

Third Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PLSC 309 [*]	3 PUBPL 481, 482, 483, 485, or PUBPL 490	3
PLSC 419, 425, 444, 488, 489, or PUBPL 305	3 PLSC 300-499 or PUBPL 241 or PUBPL 300-499	6
PLSC 419, 425, 444, 488, 489, or PUBPL 305	3 Select Supporting Courses in consultation with adviser	3
Select from Supporting courses and Related Areas	6 Elective	3
15		15

Fourth Year

Fall	Credits Spring	Credits
PUBPL 481, 482, 483, 485, or PUBPL 490	3 Select Supporting Courses in consultation with adviser	10
PLSC 300-499 or PUBPL 241 or PUBPL 300-499	3 PUBPL 481, 482, 483, 485, or PUBPL 490	3
Select Supporting Courses in consultation with adviser	4	

Electives	6	
	16	13

Total Credits 119

- * Course requires a grade of C or better for the major
- ‡ Course requires a grade of C or better for General Education
- # Course is an Entrance to Major requirement
- † Course satisfies General Education and degree requirement

¹ Select from Supporting Courses and Related Areas:
 ACCTG 200-400, AFRAS 300-499, BESC 300-499, COMMS 300-499,
 CRIMJ 300-499, ECON 300-499, ENVE 460, FIN 300-400, HIST 300-499,
 MGMT 300-400, MKTG 300-400, SCLSC 300-499, SOSC 300-400, SOC
 300-499, SRA 211, WMNST 300-499

University Requirements and General Education Notes:

US and IL are abbreviations used to designate courses that satisfy Cultural Diversity Requirements (United States and International Cultures).

W, M, X, and Y are the suffixes at the end of a course number used to designate courses that satisfy University Writing Across the Curriculum requirement.

General Education includes Foundations (GWS and GQ), Knowledge Domains (GHW, GN, GA, GH, GS) and Integrative Studies (Inter-domain) requirements. N or Q (Honors) is the suffix at the end of a course number used to help identify an Inter-domain course, but the inter-domain attribute is used to fill audit requirements. Foundations courses (GWS and GQ) require a grade of 'C' or better.

Program Notes

- Students must complete at least 15 credits of 400-level courses
- Concurrent majors in Political Science and Public Policy are not permitted.
- Students must complete a 3-credit course in "United States Cultures (US)" and a 3-credit course in "International Cultures (IL)."

Career Paths

Our proximity to the state capital in Harrisburg provides students with a rich environment. In addition to our full-time faculty, public policy draws on part-time faculty with particular professional expertise and strengths. In recent years, students have explored politics and political issues in classes taught by a state senator, a former lieutenant governor, a corrections system administrator, and a governor's press secretary. This integration of academic study with the practice of Pennsylvania politics and policy making is further enhanced through quality internships that enhance learning outcomes by immersing students in a credit-earning, real-world experience.

Careers

The Public Policy major is designed for students interested in policy issues, politics, public administration, and related areas like policy analysis and policy advocacy. Students in the Public Policy major receive the educational foundation for careers in the public sector, in government-related businesses, and in non-profit organizations.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT POTENTIAL CAREER OPTIONS FOR GRADUATES OF THE PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/public-policy-bs/>)

Opportunities for Graduate Studies

The Public Policy program also provides a strong background for graduate education, including Penn State's Master of Public Administration, Master of Professional Studies in Homeland Security, Master of Health Administration, Master of Arts in Criminal Justice, and the PhD in Public Administration.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRADUATE STUDIES (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/>)

**Contact
Harrisburg**

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<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/public-policy-bs> (<https://harrisburg.psu.edu/public-affairs/public-policy-bs/>)