PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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 Policies (https://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.

Time Limitation

All degree requirements for the Master of Public Administration must be met within five years of admission to degree status.

The M.P.A. degree program requires a minimum of 39 credits at the 400, 500, or 800 level, with a minimum of 18 credits at the 500 or 800 levels, and at least 6 credits at the 500 level:

- 21 credits in core courses,
- 12 credits in electives,
- 3 credits for the capstone course 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
Required Courses		
PADM 800	Foundations of Public Administration	3
PADM 502	Governmental Fiscal Decision Making	3
PADM 503	Research Design	3
PADM 504	Data Analysis for Policy and Administration	3
PADM 505	Human Resources in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors	3
PADM 507	Introduction to Public Policy Analysis	3
PADM 510	Organization Behavior	3
Internship in Public Administration		
PADM 595	Internship	3
Electives		
With the faculty adviser's approval, a student selects 12 credits of electives from a list of approved electives maintained by the program office.		12
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 Policies. (https://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, students must take a minimum of 36 credits:

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

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:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
PADM 570	Scope and Methods of Public Administration	3
PADM 571	Seminar in Organizational Theory	3
PADM 572	Research and Theory in Public Budgeting and Finance	3
PADM 573	Research and Theory in Public Policy and Governance	3
Total Credits		**12**

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 four 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 three research methods courses are required for all Public Administration Ph.D. students:

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		
PADM 503	Research Design	3
PADM 504	Data Analysis for Policy and Administration	3
PADM 575	Advanced Research Design	3
Total Credits		**9**

Students also will select one in-depth 3-credit research methods course 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. This one in-depth methods course should be approved in advance by the student's Ph.D. committee. A student's committee may also allow them to take an in-depth methods course that is offered by other universities or research institutions if an equivalent course cannot be found within Penn State, if the equivalency of this course to a 3-credit graduate-level course offered at Penn State can be verified by Graduate Enrollment Services, and if the costs of taking this course can be covered by the student or another arrangement can be made to cover the cost.

Qualifying Examination

Only students who complete 18 credits, including the required courses in the Foundations of Public Administration successfully, with a minimum 3.0 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 3.0 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. The dissertation must be accepted by the Ph.D. committee, the head of the graduate program, and the Graduate School, and the student must pass a final oral examination (the dissertation defense).

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 3.00 grade-point average in order to graduate.