



**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM
STUDENT MANUAL**

Current as of Spring, 2009

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SECTION 1. MISSION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE MPA PROGRAM

1.1 Mission Statement

The Master of Public Administration program prepares students to competently and ethically lead public and/or nonprofit organizations. In addition, the program serves these community organizations through service-learning and applied research projects

1.2 Program Description

The Master of Public Administration degree is designed to help prepare an individual for career service in national, state or local government; in regional planning agencies, and in non-profit or voluntary organizations. It is a two-year program of study, which encourages post-baccalaureate students to utilize their education as a foundation upon which to build highly valued organizational and managerial skills. Clearly focused on the needs of *practitioners*, the MPA program seeks to respond in particular to the needs of public service professionals in our region, the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA). Consequently, input from program graduates, public and non-profit managers in our region, and the Community Advisory Board is used to develop and refine the program's offerings and strategies.

SECTION 2. CURRICULUM

2.1 Program of Study

The Master of Public Administration requires the satisfactory completion of 36 semester hours of course work. The program of study must include the prescribed courses of the core curriculum; electives, and the capstone course (two credit hours). Students who have little or no public or nonprofit agency experience will take the internship course (see section 2.4) in lieu of one elective course.

The MPA program offers two specialized tracks. The first specialized track is in Human Services Administration (HSA). The HSA track is designed to prepare students for the challenges of working in agencies involved in providing human services to the community. Such agencies face unique challenges including mixed funding streams, board structures, dependence on volunteers, and infrequent planning. Students pursuing the Human Services Administration Track must complete 28 hours of prescribed course work, 6 hours of electives, and the two-hour capstone course.

The second specialized track is the Homeland Security track. This track is designed to prepare students to meet the challenges facing our nation from natural disasters, terrorists, and other threats. Students pursuing this track must complete 31 hours of prescribed course work, 3 hours of electives, and the two-hour capstone course.

The curriculum is designed to meet the standards for accreditation set by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and prepare students for the practice of public and nonprofit management in our region. The responsibility for curriculum design rests with the MPA faculty nucleus. To ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the

profession, the Community Advisory Board plays an active role in periodically reviewing the curriculum and making recommendations for change. In addition, surveys of public and nonprofit agencies in the region, and benchmark institutions in the region, are used as inputs for further review and refinement of the curriculum. All curriculum changes originate with the MPA faculty nucleus before proceeding through the normal curriculum approval process. Writing is an important component of all MPA courses. The MPA program uses the American Psychological Association's style manual.

2.2 Core Curriculum Elements for the MPA Degree

Required Courses for students pursuing the general degree:

PADM 6000, Survey of Public Administration (3)
 PADM 6050, Seminar on Constitutional and Administrative Law (3)
 PADM 6100, Organization Theory and Behavior (3)
 PADM 6200, Human Resources Management (3)
 PADM 6300, Public Budgeting (3)
 PADM 6500, Research methods in Public Administration (4)
 PADM 6600, Quantitative Methods (3)
 PADM 6650, Public Policy Analysis (3)

Required Courses for students in the Human Services Administration Track

PADM 6550, Human Services Administration (3)
 PADM 6050, Seminar on Constitutional and Administrative Law (3)
 PADM 6100, Organization Theory and Behavior (3)
 PADM 6200, Human Resources Management (3)
 PADM 6300, Public Budgeting **OR** PADM 6301, Financial Management for Nonprofits (3)
 PADM 6500, Research methods in Public Administration (4)
 PADM 6600, Quantitative Methods (3)
 PADM 6650, Public Policy Analysis (3)
 PADM 6750, Program Evaluation (3)

Required Courses for students in the Homeland Security Track

PADM 6351, Introduction to Homeland Security (3)
 PADM 6050, Seminar on Constitutional and Administrative Law (3)
 PADM 6100, Organization Theory and Behavior (3)
 PADM 6200, Human Resources Management (3)
 PADM 6300, Public Budgeting (3)
 PADM 6350, Emergency Management (3)
 PADM 6352, The Unconventional Threat **OR** PADM 6353, Information Security Management (3)
 PADM 6500, Research methods in Public Administration (4)

Required Courses for students in the Homeland Security Track (cont)

PADM 6600, Quantitative Methods (3)
 PADM 6650, Public Policy Analysis (3)

Exit Requirement (for the general degree and all tracks)

PADM 7050, Capstone Project (2)

2.3 Elective Curriculum Elements

Electives: (number of courses required depends upon track, see description in section 2.1 and 2.2)

PADM 6020, GIS for Public and Nonprofit Managers (2)
 PADM 6030, Grant Writing (1)
 PADM 6250, Introduction to Urban Planning (3)
 PADM 6301, Financial Management for Nonprofits (3)
 PADM 6350, Emergency Management (3)
 PADM 6351, Introduction to Homeland Security (3)
 PADM 6352, The Unconventional Threat (3)
 PADM 6353, Information Security Management (3)
 PADM 6302, Nonprofit Management (3)
 PADM 6550, Human Services Administration (3)
 PADM 6701, Comparative Public Administration (3)
 PADM 6750, Program Evaluation (3)
 PADM 6950, Selected Topics in Public Administration (3)
 PADM 7000, Directed Readings (1-3)

2.4 Internship

The purpose of an internship is to give students realistic exposure to an organizational/bureaucratic environment. The internship experience should enhance the student's awareness of the internal dynamics of a public or nonprofit organization and the values and attitudes of employees toward their clientele and their administrative or political superiors. The internship should give students the opportunity to become aware of their obligations as professionals and to those they will serve.

A student who has had little or no public or nonprofit agency experience will be required to take a 3-hour internship course (PADM 6900). This course will substitute for an elective course. The internship may not be scheduled until the student has completed at least three core courses in the program.

The MPA Director identifies students in need of an internship as they are admitted to the MPA program. Being a full-time employee does not automatically exempt a student from the internship requirement. Students whose work experience comes solely from the private sector, is limited in time (less than one year), in depth or breadth may be required to take the internship course.

The Director works with the Career Center, the Internship Director and the Community Advisory Board to identify appropriate internship opportunities and match students to them based on student interests and abilities. Internships may be undertaken only at organizations with which the university has a written agreement.

All internships last for a full semester, and will be scheduled for the fall or spring only. Internships begin on the first day of the semester and end on the last day of the semester. Student interns are expected to work at least 20 hours per week for the semester. Interns may be compensated for their work by the agency, if the agency has funding available. Students who already hold full-time jobs, but lack adequate exposure to the public and nonprofit sector may be required to take the internship course. In such a case, the student will be assigned to an agency and given a project to work on that will give them the needed exposure to the public/nonprofit sectors.

MPA interns are expected to be doing work that is appropriate and supportive of the students' educational goals. Thus, students should be in an applied learning experience to gain management and analytical skills. Appropriate work includes:

- Conducting research
- Developing or revising regulations, policies, or plans
- Evaluating the effectiveness of programs, policies or regulations
- Facilitating meetings or group discussions
- Writing technical or nontechnical documents
- Training others in specific skills
- Setting up information systems
- Developing standards and measures for agency performance
- Drafting agency budgets, preparing grant applications, or assisting in other fund raising initiatives

All interns are supervised by the site supervisor and the Internship Director. The Internship Director will visit each worksite at least twice during the semester to assess the student's performance and progress. The site supervisor will evaluate the intern at least twice during the semester—once at mid-term and again at the end of the semester. These reports will be used as part of the grading process for the internship. The site supervisor is required to share the contents of the mid-term assessment with the intern, as part of the process of helping the intern improve his or her performance. In addition to work performance, the Internship Director will require the intern to write a major paper on some aspect of the internship experience. The precise topic will be determined by the Internship Director and the intern.

2.5 Directed Readings

PADM 7000 is not a regularly scheduled course; rather, it is an opportunity for a student to do intensive study into an area that is NOT covered in the regular curriculum. Students wishing to do a directed reading must propose the topic to the MPA Director at the beginning of the fall semester (for the spring semester), the beginning of the spring (for the summer term), or the beginning of the summer term (for the fall semester). If the proposal is suitable, the MPA Director will assist the student in locating a faculty member to direct the reading.

2.6 Course Scheduling

The MPA Director will develop a course rotation in cooperation with the program faculty to ensure students can graduate in a timely manner. In support of this goal,

- All core courses (with the exception noted below) and PADM 7050 will be taught at least once per academic year. For purposes of this manual, the term “academic year” includes the summer term.
- Core courses which have an associated option will be taught every other year.
- All elective courses will be taught at least once every two years. Elective courses which cannot be taught at least once every two years will be considered for elimination by the Core Faculty Committee.
- Students will be given a copy of the course rotation at the new student orientation program.

SECTION 3. DEGREE COMPLETION REQUIREMENTS

3.1 General Requirements

In order to become eligible for the degree of Master of Public Administration, a candidate must have: a) completed the core courses specified in the curriculum summary with a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale; b) completed the required number of elective courses with a grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale; c) be certified as satisfactorily completing the capstone paper, and d) be certified as having completed all portfolio requirements.

3.1.a. Specified period of time for degree completion

Only that course work completed within the six calendar years prior to completion of the degree requirements will apply toward graduation. The age of a course will be calculated from the date when the course would be expected to have been completed—the last day of class of the term in which registration for the course occurred. Under rare and exceptional circumstances, the MPA Director may waive this requirement.

3.1 b. Residency and Transfer Credits

No more than nine semester credit hours shall be transferred from another institution for the purpose of earning credits for the Master of Public Administration degree. The institution from which the credits are transferred must be an accredited one, and each transfer course is subject to review in order to determine its equivalency in the Augusta State University MPA Program.

3.1 c. Minimum number of credit hours required; course substitutions

The MPA degree consists of 36 semester hours. No more than two course substitutions are allowed in the MPA Program. A course substitution consists of having a graduate-level course taken at ASU or at another accredited institution in a subject area related to public management counted as an elective course for purposes of the requirements of the MPA degree. Requests for course substitutions must be approved by the MPA director.

3.1 d. Maintenance of Acceptable Grade Point Average

A student enrolled in the MPA Program is limited to two “C” course grades (2.0 on a 4.0 scale), whether earned at ASU or transferred from another institution. A student who earns a second “C” grade will be placed on academic probation. Should a student on academic probation earn a third “C,” the student will be suspended from the program. A student who earns a grade lower than a “C” in any class will be expelled from the program without right of appeal.

A student who is suspended may apply for readmission after one year by writing a letter to the MPA Director to request reinstatement. The Admissions Committee will consider the letter, the circumstances surrounding the suspension, and the student’s record in making a reinstatement decision. Should the committee choose to reinstate the student, the student will be required to re-take courses where a “C” was earned. The Admissions Committee’s decision will be final. A student who is reinstated will be placed on academic probation, and remain on probation for the remainder of his or her time in the program. Should the student earn another “C” grade, the student will be expelled without right of appeal.

3.2 Capstone Project

The Capstone project is the culminating written work for the MPA program. The purpose of the capstone project is to have the student demonstrate his or her ability to apply the knowledge acquired in the program of study and to utilize skills of observation and analysis as demonstrated in a formal paper. It is written by a degree candidate when he or she is in the process of completing coursework and is typically scheduled in the student’s last semester. The paper is written as the course requirement for PADM 7050. A student may register for PADM 7050 only with the permission of the MPA Director.

3.2.a Capstone Project Format

Students may conduct either an applied or a theoretical research project. An applied

research project may take the form of a program evaluation, a needs assessment, or some other form of practical, applied research undertaken for a public or nonprofit agency in the area. Students desiring to do such a project for an agency other than the one they work at may ask the MPA Director for assistance in locating a suitable project. A theoretical research project will involve the empirical testing of theory using primary or secondary data.

For purposes of critiquing the capstone project, there are two READERS. The FIRST READER is the instructor for the PADM 7050 course. The student may request a particular faculty member to serve as SECOND READER. However, the MPA Program Director will make the final selection of the SECOND READER based on the 1) subject matter to be covered in the capstone paper, 2) the research methodology to be used, and 3) the availability of faculty to serve. Alterations and clarifications suggested by the two readers are then incorporated by the student into the capstone project in a series of drafts submitted according to a time table set by the instructor of the PADM 7050 course. At regular intervals throughout the course, the student revises the project paper according to critiques made by the readers. The final polished copy is turned over to the course instructor no later than the last day of classes for the term.

3.2.b Capstone Project Proposal

In the semester prior to enrollment in the capstone course, the student will be enrolled in PADM 6500, Research Methods in Public Administration. As part of that course, the student will develop his or her design for the capstone project. This design is given to the instructor of the PADM 6500 course for review. If it is satisfactory, the student will be given permission to enter the capstone course in the subsequent semester.

3.2.c Capstone Project Evaluation

The course instructor, along with the second reader, determines the mark for the project. There are three choices of assigned marks: “pass with distinction” “pass” or “fail.” If the project is not completed within the semester in which it is commenced, then the student is given an “IP” and is notified that **the capstone course will have to be retaken**. The grade for the capstone course will be listed as either pass or fail.

3.2.d Capstone Project Certification

The first and second readers certify to the MPA Program Director and to the Chair of the Department of Political Science that the degree candidate has successfully completed the capstone project and has been given a mark for the project. This certificate is forwarded to the Office of the Registrar as part of the degree completion requirement.

3.3. Application for Graduation

A student submits an application for graduation at the mid-point of the semester immediately preceding the semester in which he or she anticipates completing all degree requirements (course work and capstone paper). The graduation application is completed in

consultation with the MPA Program Director, who certifies the courses completed (graduation checksheet); courses yet to be completed, and approximate time frame for completion of the capstone paper. Upon approval by the Director and the Chair of the Department of Political Science, the application is given to the Registrar by the student along with payment of graduation fees.

3.4. Certification for Graduation

The student is certified for graduation at the time a) his or her transcripts indicate the completion of all courses required in the program of study; b) the grade point average is at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale; c) there is certification on file that the student's capstone paper was completed with a satisfactory mark, and d) all portfolio assignments have been turned in to the MPA Director.

3.5. Student Portfolio

A portfolio is a compilation of a student's work over the course of his or her MPA studies. The portfolio should demonstrate the student's skills and abilities as they have evolved over time. The portfolio provides

- a means for students to evaluate and see their progress over time.
- a source of information for faculty about students. Learning more about students as individuals enhances the teaching and advising process. In addition, the portfolio can help faculty provide more meaningful references for students.
- information and documentary evidence to support the evaluation of the MPA program itself.

3.5a. Beginning the portfolio

The MPA Director begins a portfolio for each student when they are admitted in provisional, probationary, or regular status. The initial document to open the portfolio is the student's resume.

1. As part of the entry level course (PADM 6000, 6351, or 6550), the student will have two assignments that become part of the portfolio:
 - a. A reflective essay that answers three questions: 1) where am I now in my life, 2) where do I want to be in five years, and 3) how do I think the MPA program will help me get there.
 - b. A major research paper to provide a "benchmark" to see how the student's writing and research abilities improve over time.

The instructors for these courses will submit these items to the MPA Director for inclusion in the portfolio. If the student enrolls in more than one of these courses, the determination of which items to include will depend on the student's choice of track.

2. Additional documents will then be added to the portfolio as follows:
 - a. The *instructor* for PADM 6200 will submit a praxis journal paper, a case study paper, or other assigned work to illustrate that the student can effectively link theory to personnel management practices in the field.
 - b. The *instructor* for PADM 6300 or 6301 will submit a case study paper or other suitable assignment to illustrate that the student can effectively link theory to financial management practices in the field.
 - c. The *student* will submit the following items:
 - i. Two graded oral presentations of his or her choice from any course.
 - ii. One additional graded research paper of his or her choice from any course.
 - d. Faculty from other courses are encouraged to submit documents for the portfolio.
3. As part of the capstone course, the student will be given two final assignments that become part of the portfolio. The first assignment is a reflective essay that answers these questions: 1) What have I gained from being an MPA student? 2) How well did the program meet my expectations? This assignment will not be graded. The second is an essay that describes the student's personal code of ethics. The instructor of the capstone course will submit these papers to the MPA Director for filing at the end of the semester.

SECTION 4. ADVISING AND ORIENTATION

The MPA Director will insure each student is given a written plan of study clearly outlining those required courses and the elective options which a student will take during the course of this or her program of study, and the approximate time frame when each of those courses will be offered. This written plan will be reviewed with each student during the fall and spring semesters.