

Electronic versions of applications can be submitted to the USC Graduate School at:
<http://www.gradschool.sc.edu> from this page go to graduate school forms.

INTRODUCTION

This Handbook provides students admitted to the Master's Program in Public Administration with basic information about the requirements for the degree and the content of the Program. If, after reading the Handbook, you have unanswered questions regarding any facet of the Program, please discuss them with the MPA Director. All MPA faculty are also available to assist students we were are needed. Please do not hesitate to take advantage of our help. We sincerely appreciate your interest in the Program and we wish you a successful and rewarding course of study.

Faculty and Staff
MPA Program
Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2675

<http://www.cas.sc.edu/poli/grad/MPA.html>

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Background

The Master of Public Administration Program (MPA) at the University of South Carolina was initiated in 1968 in response to a growing demand for professionally-trained public administrators at the state and local levels of government. Since its inception, the program has granted more than 1,000 MPA degrees. The current enrollment is approximately 45 students, with slightly more than half of the students employed by federal, state, and local governments or by private organizations. During 2004-2006, the MPA program was reviewed by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and, as the result of that review, maintains its accreditation with the profession.

Program Mission and Objectives

The Master of Public Administration Program at the University of South Carolina strives to promote teaching, research, and service activities that will enhance the performance of the public sector across the state of South Carolina, the region, and the nation. In order to accomplish this goal, the program has three more specific objectives: (1) to provide a broadly focused graduate and professional education that contains the managerial and analytical skills necessary for students who seek careers in the public service and for those already working in the public sector who want to enhance their capabilities; (2) to advance the understanding of issues facing the public sector and to facilitate the utilization of relevant analytic and management skills within the public sector itself; and (3) to apply appropriate knowledge and skills to important problems and concerns facing the state, its communities, and its citizens.

Program Curriculum Requirements

The MPA Program is designed both to provide a fundamental grounding in the basic elements of public administration (the required core curriculum) and to permit sufficient flexibility for students to pursue special interests and skills (the electives). The length of the program depends on the prior preparation of the student and ranges from thirty-nine to forty-eight semester hours. If the student has not had prior coursework in statistics and computer use, or in American politics, prerequisite courses must be taken in each of these areas. An internship is also required if the student has not had prior administrative experience. Students who have completed a graduate program elsewhere may transfer up to 9 hours of graduate credit subject to program approval; students who have been accepted into a graduate degree program elsewhere but not graduated may transfer more credits depending upon the number of hours earned in the prior degree, and subject to program approval. Such transfers cannot be more than 6 years old upon graduation from USC. Specific questions may be answered by consulting the USC graduate catalog which is available online at USC.

Of the basic 39 hours required for graduate, six courses are taken in the areas of perspectives on public organization, personnel management, financial administration, public policy, public accountability & ethics, and data analysis. Six electives (often including a “level of government course”) and a capstone seminar, and five electives ordinarily constitute the remainder of a student's

coursework. Elective courses may be taken within the MPA program itself, in other programs in the Department of Political Science, or in other departments of the University.

The program also seeks to integrate the theoretical and practical aspects of administration. Accordingly, students without substantial prior administrative experience serve an internship, usually in a public or non-profit agency in South Carolina. In addition, practicum courses are offered in specific subject areas. These courses are usually taught by affiliated and "adjunct" faculty drawn from the surrounding professional community. Finally, students must complete a capstone project at the end of the program, demonstrating their ability to apply relevant ideas, concepts, and techniques to real world problems.

Organization

The MPA Program is part of the Department of Political Science, within the College of Arts and Sciences. It is one of three graduate programs offered by the Department. The Department also offers a professional Master's Degrees in International Studies (the M.A.I.S.) as well as the M.A. and Ph.D. in Political Science.

THE SETTING

The University

The University of South Carolina was founded in 1801 and was the first state college to be supported by annual public appropriations. The University has expanded through the years and today is the state's largest public institution of higher learning with seven regional campuses and a total enrollment of over 38,000 students, more than 26,000 students are enrolled on the Columbia campus.

Students enrolled in the MPA Program may rely upon a number of units and resources to enhance their learning experience. The University Library contains more than 2.6 million volumes, 4.0 million units in microfilm, and 17,000 current periodicals. Comprehensive computer facilities are available in the Humanities and Social Sciences Computer Laboratory, which is located in the same building as the MPA Program.

The Community

Columbia is the capital of South Carolina and a focal point of politics and government in the state. Our location thus affords student's ample opportunity for direct observation and participation in governmental affairs. The campus is located within blocks of the capitol building, most major state offices, and within easy reach of a variety of regional, county, and city agencies. A metropolitan area of nearly a half million people offers a wide range of recreational, cultural, and intellectual activities. Convenient transportation arrangements are available to Washington, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, New Orleans, and other major centers. State parks, lakes, and mountain and beach areas are easily accessible.

ADMISSIONS

Process

In order to be considered for admittance into the MPA program, prospective students must submit a complete application file. A complete file consists of:

1. An application form and accompanying application fee to the Graduate School at USC;
2. Official transcripts of all previous academic work with degrees posted;
3. Scores on the verbal, quantitative, and analytical portions of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE);
4. Two letters of recommendation from persons familiar with the applicant's academic and job performance (one of these letters would ordinarily come from a former professor);
5. A resume; and
6. A statement of purpose.

Application materials should be submitted to the Graduate School at the University of South Carolina. Hard copies of materials can be sent to:

The Graduate School
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
777-4243

Electronic versions of applications can be submitted to the USC Graduate School at:
<http://www.gradschool.sc.edu>

Prospective applicants are also strongly encouraged to send copies of all application materials directly to the MPA program. This expedites the entire review process, and it enables the MPA Program to keep in closer contact with applicants. Copies of all materials should be sent to:

Ms. Debby Tiemeyer,
Student Coordinator for MPA Program
Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2675
tie@sc.edu

For further assistance with, or questions about, the MPA application process, please contact Ms. Tiemeyer (phone: 803-777-2675) or e-mail at tie@sc.edu.

Deadlines

The MPA program admits new students for the fall, spring, and summer semesters. Prospective students are encouraged to submit their applications early. This will enable the MPA Admissions Committee and the USC Graduate School to process all materials in a timely fashion so that students can be considered for admittance during the requested academic terms. The deadlines for completed applicant files to be received at USC are:

April 1.....Admission and departmental assistantships/internships for the Fall Semester

July 1.....Admission (without departmental aid) for the Fall Semester.

November 15.. Admittance for the Spring Semester.

April 15.....Admittance for the Summer Semester.

General Guidelines

All students entering the MPA program must have an undergraduate, baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. Normal admissions standards include at least a 3.0 overall undergraduate grade point ratio (on a 4.0 scale) and a total of 1000 on the general sections (verbal and quantitative) of the Graduate Record Examination. Applicants must have at least two positive letters of recommendation from previous professors and/or work supervisors (with at least one of these letters coming from a former professor). In addition, applicants must submit a resume describing their past accomplishments and a personal statement (about 500 words) of their professional goals, academic records, and/or professional work experiences. Fulfillment of the preceding guidelines does not guarantee acceptance into the MPA program.

Students with lower grade point averages and/or GRE test scores may be accepted into the program under circumstances justifying a conditional admittance. Students admitted under a conditional status are restricted to 12 hours of enrollment in which they must earn at least a B (3.0) or better grade in all 12 hours. The MPA Admissions Committee monitors the performance and makes final decisions about full admittance for all students who are initially admitted under the conditional status.

To receive further clarification about any aspect of the admissions process, please contact Dr. Mark E. Tompkins, the Program Director, at tompkins.mark@sc.edu or 777-2675.

JOINT PROGRAMS

In addition to the regular on-campus program, the MPA program participates in three joint programs.

These consist of the following:

J.D. - MPA Program: A combined degree program with USC's School of Law in which the student may pursue both an MPA degree and a law degree. The combined degree program permits the student to acquire both degrees with a possible reduction of twenty-one credit hours from the total requirements of the individual programs. To be eligible, the student must apply to, and be accepted by, both the MPA program and the School of Law.

MSW - MPA Program: A combined degree program with USC's College of Social Work. The total number of academic hours is reduced from 99 to 87 by using requirements in one program as electives in the other. To be eligible, students must apply to, and be accepted by, both programs.

USC - University of Charleston Combined Degree Program: A joint degree program offered primarily at the University of Charleston's Department of Political Science. This program is jointly administered and taught by the two schools. Interested students must apply to the University of Charleston, but must indicate that they are applying for the combined degree program and must be accepted by both institutions (University of South Carolina and University of Charleston).

Students enrolled in joint programs are subject to all of the regulations governing MPA students, unless exceptions are specifically designated in the respective agreements or are granted by the MPA Graduate Committee.

TRANSFER CREDIT

Students who have completed previous graduate course work may be permitted to obtain transfer credit. Anyone wishing to apply for such credit should write to the MPA Director, and include all pertinent information (including transcripts, course syllabi, and catalogue description of the relevant courses).

In order to qualify for transfer, courses must satisfy five criteria:

1. The course must be at the graduate level.
2. The course must be directly related to a public administration curriculum.
3. The student must have earned a grade of B or better.
4. The course must not be more than six years old at the time the student graduates from the MPA program.
5. The rules of the Graduate School at USC also apply to any requests for transfer credit.

The MPA Graduate Committee serves as the final authority over the acceptability of transfer credit.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Regular Internships. The MPA Program coordinates regular internship positions for all interested MPA students. These internships provide valuable administrative experience and financial support for limited periods of time. Any MPA student interested in a regular internship should contact the Director of the Program the semester before they would like the internship to start.

Dedicated Internships. When funding permits the MPA Program arranges Dedicated Internship Positions. The Dedicated Internships are designed to attract outstanding students to careers in the public sector and to provide participating agencies with the services of some of our most competent students. Eligible students acquire significant administrative experience, reduced tuition rates, and a meaningful level of financial support during their time in the MPA program. Dedicated internship positions are determined by the MPA Admissions Committee upon the recommendation of the MPA Director.

Assistantships. MPA students are eligible for graduate assistantships within the Department of Political Science. Graduate assistants receive a stipend and are eligible for reduced tuition rates. Students interested in these sources of financial support should contact:

Director, Master's of Public Administration Program
Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
(803) 777-2675

Financial Aid. MPA students have also received financial support from a variety of other sources. The MPA program has been approved by the Veteran's Administration for eligible recipients of veterans' educational benefits. Students seeking these types of assistance should contact:

Student Aid Office
University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina 29208
777-8134

ADVISEMENT

On admission to the program, each student will be advised by the Director of the MPA program. During each semester, advisement sessions will be held to acquaint students with course offerings and program changes. All students are required to attend these advisement sessions before registering for classes to insure that appropriate courses are selected and that degree requirements are being fulfilled.

HOUSING

A variety of housing accommodations are available both on campus and in the Columbia community. Students who anticipate that they will need on-campus or off-campus housing should contact the Office of Residential Life Services at 777-4283.

CURRICULUM

From 39 to 48 semester hours are required for the MPA degree depending on the student's

background. These hours are distributed as follows:

Prerequisites	up to 6 hours (2 courses)
Core Courses.....	18 hours (6 courses)
Elective Courses	18 hours (6 courses)
Internship (POLI 779).....	3 hours (one course)
Capstone Course (POLI 753).....	3 hours (one course)

A. **Prerequisites:** At the time of admission, all students' academic files will be evaluated by the MPA Director to determine if prerequisites will be required. Prerequisite courses, if deemed necessary, must be taken at the beginning of the student's program of study. The MPA program requires that entering students have a basic proficiency in Statistics and American Government:

1. Statistics Entering students who lack basic skills in statistics and/or computer use are required to enroll in POLI 502 (Methods of Political Analysis) or its equivalent (e.g. STAT 515), prior to enrolling in POLI 771 (Public Data Analysis). When used to complete a prerequisite requirement, this course cannot be used as an elective.

2. American Government Entering students who lack a basic understanding of the American Political process are required to remedy this deficiency before enrolling in POLI 774 (Public Policy Process). To fulfill their pre-requisite requirement in American Government, students are encouraged to take POLI 761 (American National Government for Professionals), which can also be counted as an elective in the MPA program. With the permission of the MPA Director, students may take POLI 201 (American National Government) or receive a passing score of 70 on the CLEP (College Level Examination Program) to fulfill this requirement; however, no graduate credit will be granted for either the use of POLI 201 or a passing score on the CLEP. (Exceptions may be made only with the explicit approval of the MPA Director.)

B. **Core Courses:** All students are required to take the following six core courses:

1. POLI 770 -- Perspectives on Public Administration (3 hours). The study and practice of public administration in the United States in the 20th century, examining historical development and current approaches in the field.

2. POLI 771 -- Public Data Analysis (3 hours). Problems of gathering and using public data for public administrators and policy analysts, including problems of research design and data gathering, interpretation, and use in the analysis of public programs.

3. POLI 773 -- Personnel Administration (3 hours). Organization, techniques, and theories of personnel management; interpersonal relations in organizations; personnel change and development; changing conditions in the public service; ethics for the public service.

4. POLI 774 -- The Public Policy Process (3 hours). An examination of the public policy process, including the role of public officials in the process and constraints on its outcomes.

5. POLI 775 -- Financial Administration (3 hours). Organization and techniques of governmental financial management; budgetary theories; intergovernmental financial relations.

6. POLI 754 – Public Accountability & Ethics (3 hours). An examination of the legal, political, professional, and organizational accountability demands made on administrators; the interplay of these demands with the needs for ethical decision making and integrity.

C. Electives: Students may select the fifteen hours of elective courses from the courses offered in the Department of Political Science, from courses offered in other departments, or some combination of these alternatives. Elective courses must be approved by the MPA program director prior to enrollment in the specific course. The five electives should constitute a coherent set of courses that further the development of administrative competence in a particular area.

D. Internship: A three-credit-hour internship (POLI 779) is required for all students who lack significant administrative experience. Students who have had such experience in the past or who are currently employed in administrative positions may have the requirement waived. Anyone wishing to do so should address his/her request to the MPA Director. The internship requirement is more thoroughly discussed in the section entitled "Internship".

E. Capstone Course: All MPA candidates are required to take the following course, preferably during the last semester in the program. Questions should be directed to the MPA Director. The Capstone serves in lieu of a comprehensive exam for the graduate MPA degree and is required of all students.

POLI 753 -- Capstone Seminar in Public Administration (3 hours)
Prerequisite: 30 credit hours, MPA program, and permission of the department. Critical issues in public administration; term project integrating the material from other courses in the analysis of a contemporary problem.

F. Additional Requirements

Grade-Point Average: To qualify for graduation students must have at least a 3.00 grade-point average in all courses attempted for graduate credit and in all courses numbered 700 or above. Students who do not maintain a 3.00 grade-point average are subject to denial of enrollment privileges. Student files are evaluated each semester in order to determine eligibility for continued enrollment.

Selected Topics Courses: Students will not normally be permitted to take more than three hours of POLI 790 - Selected Topics. This limit may be increased to six hours with the written consent of the student's advisor and the MPA Director. In no case will the

student be permitted to take more than six hours in Selected Topics or its equivalent.

Thesis Option: MPA students may elect to write a thesis, for which six hours of academic credit are granted (elective credits) . Students interested in the thesis option should consult with the MPA Director during their second semester of enrollment in the MPA program.

Residency: No University of South Carolina course work other than thesis research and preparation may be performed in absentia. The student may prepare a thesis in absentia and receive up to six hours of academic credit for thesis research and preparation. These restrictions have no bearing on graduate course work taken elsewhere which can be transferred to the MPA program at USC.

The Responsibilities of Public Service,
the Profession of Public Administration,
Members of the Carolina Community
and Students in the MPA Program

As students in a professional degree program, as members of the Carolina Community, and as prospective professionals, your future is full of promise and opportunity. With this comes important responsibilities.

As a student in a professional degree program at the University of South Carolina, and a member of the Carolina Community, you are responsible for adherence to the Honor Code and the Carolina Creed. These principles are explained in the documents published here:

<http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed/>

<http://www.housing.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honorcode.html>

Among the important implications of these principles are the prohibition against plagiarism or the presentation of another's work as though it was your own. Moreover, your work in each course is designed and intended to provide you with accumulating benefits and learning opportunities – it is therefore inappropriate to submit work prepared for one assignment in fulfillment of another assignment. (This does not preclude the possibility that you and your instructor may find it helpful to build your response to a new assignment on the foundation prepared in a previous assignment – in all cases, however, you must provide your instructor with your previous work as well as the new work so that a fair assessment of your new work can be made.)

In the unhappy and unlikely event that a student is found to have violated these responsibilities, the responsibility for determining the appropriate course of action rests entirely with the affected course instructor, the MPA Committee and the University's Office of Academic Integrity. They will reach their decision and notify those involved as soon as practicably possible, recording their actions as appropriate.

MPA PROGRAM SUMMARY

Degree Offered Master of Public Administration

Program Requirements:

Length of Program: 39 to 48 hours
Prerequisites: Statistics (3 hours), if unfulfilled
American Government (3 hours), if unfulfilled
Required Courses:

Core Courses : POLI 770 – Perspectives on Public Administration
POLI 771 -- Public Data Analysis
POLI 773 -- Personnel Administration
POLI 774 -- Public Policy Process
POLI 775 -- Financial Administration
POLI 754 – Public Accountability and Ethics

Elective Courses: 18 hours

Capstone Course
(POLI 753): 3 hours -- Capstone Seminar in Public Administration

Internship: 3 hours -- Mandatory for all students unless specifically exempted on the basis of previous work experience.

Thesis -- optional

Language Requirement – none

INTERNSHIPS

All students in the MPA program are required to serve an internship with the exception of students with substantial prior administrative experience who must submit a written request for a waiver of the requirement. The internship is an integral part of the student's program which builds around the professional career to which he/she aspires. It provides an opportunity for exposure to the attitudes of public administrators toward their clientele, their substantive responsibilities, and their administrative and political superiors.

Students have served their internships at every level of government in South Carolina as well as in various federal agencies, in private firms doing public sector work, in various professional associations for public administrators, and in nonprofit organizations. Students have performed a wide range of staff and managerial functions such as planning, research, program supervision, and information systems development.

The MPA Internship Director assists students in locating internship positions and directs the overall internship activity in the MPA program. Students are required to meet with the Director of the MPA program and Internship Director prior to the start of their internship to define internship needs and develop an internship search strategy.

A student may serve an internship during the summer or during the regular academic year. An internship ordinarily involves serving at least 300 hours in a professional capacity, albeit with regular supervision by another professional. Internships may also combine summer work and work during the regular academic year. (Other arrangements may be made with the approval of the MPA Director, such as experiences extending beyond one semester, but involving fewer hours per week.)

At the end of the internship, the student must submit a paper to the MPA Internship Director describing the duties, evaluating the experience, and relating it to his/her academic studies. The student should also request a statement from the employer stipulating the duration of employment and whether or not the student's performance was satisfactory. Three hours of academic credit will be granted for successful completion of an internship. A student must enroll in POLI 779 to receive credit for the internship. The internship will be graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. Students with substantial prior administrative experience may petition for a waiver of the internship requirement. This petition must be in the form of a written request to the Director of the MPA program stating the nature of the duties performed, the length of the employment period (it must be at least one year of full-time employment), and the relevance of the experience to training for the MPA degree. This request must be accompanied by a statement from the student's employer attesting to the length of employment and stipulating whether or not the student's performance was satisfactory. No academic credit is attached to a waiver of the internship requirement.

For more information regarding internships, please contact:

Dr. Mark E. Tompkins, MPA Director
Department of Political Science
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29208
(803) 777-2675

PLACEMENT

The Director of the MPA program and individual advisors assist students in defining their career and employment needs and help develop an employment search strategy. Students are requested to meet with the Director of the MPA program and their advisors at least three months prior to the date of graduation and as needed thereafter to discuss placement possibilities.

The MPA degree has proven to be highly attractive to prospective employers, both on a national level and in South Carolina. Graduates of the MPA program are placed in a variety of positions in government and in private industry. Many students move directly from their internship positions to permanent employment in agency posts. The vast majority of our graduates report that their training in the MPA program was useful in their current positions and promises to be useful for their long-range career objectives.

Graduates of the program hold prominent positions in a variety of state agencies, regional planning commissions, county governments, and municipal governments. MPA Graduates have served as a University President, Executive Director of the South Carolina Budget and Control Board, Executive Director of South Carolina's Worker's Compensation Commission, Director of the State Law Enforcement Division, and Commissioner of the South Carolina Department of Youth Services. MPA graduates have also served as state procurement officers, city managers, and county administrators throughout South Carolina.

PROGRAM FACULTY

Andrea McAtee – Ph.D. (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) – State Politics, Public Policy, Public Budgeting, Political Parties

Robert W. Oldendick -- Ph.D. (University of Cincinnati) -- Survey Research, Research Methods, Applied Statistics, Political Psychology, Public Policy Evaluation.

Xuhong Su – Ph.D. (University of Georgia) – Human Resource Policy, Public Organizations, Science and Technology Policy

Mark E. Tompkins -- Ph.D. (University of Minnesota) -- Public Policy (with particular interests in Health and Environmental Policy), US Government, Methodology.

Neal Woods – Ph.D. (University of Kentucky) -- Public Policy, Intergovernmental Relations, Research Methods, Environmental Policy.

AFFILIATED FACULTY

J. Anthony Dukes – Ph.D. (University of South Carolina) – Public Administration; Quality Improvement Processes in Public Sector Applications; Organizational Behavior; Criminal Justice Policy

Dennis Lambries – Ph.D. (University of South Carolina) – Local Government and Local Government Administration; Survey Research

Mary Baskins Waters – Ph.D. (University of South Carolina) – Grants Administration and Management; Women and Gender Studies