Public Administration (MPA)

The master of public administration (MPA) is a two-year program for people interested in public service careers that address the critical social, economic, and environmental issues of our time. The curriculum is designed to provide a combination of academic theory, analytic skills, and real-world applications so that students become effective and creative leaders in public service.

A central focus of the program is to prepare students to become evidence-based policymakers, analysts, and managers. Evidence-based policy making—the idea that the formulation of policy and its implementation should be based on evidence of effectiveness—has gained widespread acceptance in the policy community, both in the United States and abroad, and requires a closer connection between research and practice. It requires that researchers ask policy-relevant questions and conduct meaningful and timely analyses that support the decision-making process; conversely, it requires that policymakers, managers, and leaders think critically about research and integrate appropriate evidence in the implementation and formulation of policy and practice.

Recent graduates work as advisors, policy analysts, and strategic planners in all levels of government, in Oregon, throughout the US, and around the globe. Their work addresses the full range of social issues, from improving health-care access, increasing government efficiency, and responsiveness to creating new governmental structures in developing democracies. Graduates also work in a broad range of nonprofit organizations, for instance, as executive staff members in social service, arts, and environmental organizations.

The State of Oregon is an exciting place to study public administration. As a "laboratory of democracy," it has a long and distinguished record of policy innovation. Most recently, Oregon has been on the forefront of advances in land-use, health-care, and environmental policy.

Unique Aspects of the Program

The size of the program means that master's students at the University of Oregon receive a tremendous amount of individual attention, particularly in the second year when they conduct a team-based policy research project. The close, collegial working relationships between students and instructors means that faculty members are often able to help students attain relevant alumni contacts, internships, and job opportunities.

Since the department also houses a master's degree program in community and regional planning (MCRP), master of public administration students benefit from additional faculty and planning-related course offerings. In particular, students are invited in their first year to enroll in a two-term, field-based course—Community Planning Workshop (PPPM 625)—in which students consult on a topical issue for a local government or nonprofit agency in Oregon.

Students interested in a career in nonprofits can earn a certificate in nonprofit management concurrently with their master of public administration. The certificate program offers innovative courses including one on board governance, in which students serve on a nonprofit board, and another on philanthropy, in which students award a $15,000 grant to a local agency. As an alternate, students may complete both the MPA and MNM degrees concurrently. See a member of the department staff for application procedures for concurrent programs.

Oregon is known for its progressive policy making, from the Bottle Bill, to vote-by-mail, to current efforts in health-care reform. Students find policymakers and public managers unusually accessible for consultation in Oregon.

The program prepares participants to become effective, creative leaders in the public and nonprofit sectors. The curriculum provides a combination of substantive knowledge, analytic skills, and professional experience that primes students for careers as evidence-based policymakers, analysts, or managers.

Application Procedures

To be eligible for the graduate program in public administration, an applicant must hold a bachelor's degree.

Submit the following documents, which must be received by February 1:

1. Graduate Admission Application, available online—follow the instructions on the department's website
2. Comprehensive employment and education résumé
3. A two-page, typed statement of purpose that clearly describes the applicant's reasons for pursuing graduate study in the program at Oregon, his or her professional goals and objectives, and professional work experience
4. Transcripts of grades in courses taken for the bachelor's degree and of any other college-level work. They should be sent directly by the institution that awarded the course credits
5. Three letters of recommendation
6. The Graduate Record Examination is optional for admission
7. Applicants whose native language is not English must supply results of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination. The minimum acceptable TOEFL score for admission is 575 (paper-based test) or 88 (Internet-based test); the minimum acceptable IELTS exam score is 7.0. The results of the examination should be sent to the Office of Admissions, 1217 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1217

Students are selected for the program based on a combination of their undergraduate academic performance, intellectual aptitude, commitment to public service, and written statement. The deadline for receipt of fall term admission is February 1. Applications received after the deadline will be considered on a rolling basis as space allows.

The department strongly encourages applications from people of all backgrounds, and is dedicated to fostering a diverse academic environment. This, we believe, will help prepare better future public leaders.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- Leadership: Graduates will demonstrate effective leadership skills in managing and leading public and nonprofit organizations. This includes skills in decision-making, communication, and strategic planning and management.

- Policy: Graduates will be able to develop, implement, and evaluate public policies that are evidence-based, data-driven, and responsive to the needs of the community.
- Analytical Skills: Graduates will be able to use qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze complex public problems and to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives for the purposes of decision-making in a complex and dynamic environment.
- Public Service: Graduates will understand the role of public servants as stewards of public resources, responsible for ensuring that government programs and services are effective, efficient, and equitable. They will understand the importance of emphasizing service to the community and the greater good, rather than individual or organizational interests.
- Diversity: Graduates will understand and appreciate the diversity of people, cultures, and ideas in the public and nonprofit sectors. They will be able to develop policies and programs that address the needs and concerns of diverse communities, and promote inclusion, equity, and social justice.

Master of Public Administration Requirements

Code	Title	Credits
CORE COURSES (33 credits) [1]		
PPPM 618	Public Sector Theory	4
PPPM 628	Public Sector Economics	4
PPPM 629	Public Budget Administration	4
PPPM 633	Public Management	4
PPPM 636	Public Policy Analysis	4
PPPM 656	Quantitative Methods	5
PPPM 657	Research Methods in Public Policy and Management	4
PPPM 684	Public and Nonprofit Financial Management	4
FIELD OF INTEREST (28 credits minimum)		
plus 24 credits from elective courses focused on a specific field of interest [2]		24
PPPM 623	Professional Development	1
PPPM 604	Internship: [Topic] [3]	3
APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECT (11 credits)		
PPPM 637	MPA Policy Analysis Project	1
PPPM 638	MPA Capstone Applied Research Project I	5
PPPM 639	MPA Capstone Applied Research Project II	5
Total Credits		**72**

1 Must be taken for letter grades.

2 Interest areas may include: policy, public management, nonprofit management, planning, environmental policy, or other field of interest. A list of potential courses for each field of interest is available on the department's website. Students who would like to develop their own field of interest are able to do so in consultation with a faculty advisor. Recent graduates have created customized fields of interest in food sufficiency, health policy, and international development.

3 Completing an internship (3 credits) is highly recommended for all MPA students, and required for those with fewer than two years of relevant professional experience.

The master of public administration (MPA) program provides students with two key opportunities to synthesize classroom learning and apply their research skills to current policy and management issues. At the start of the second year, students engage in a policy project intended to simulate the real-world environment where analysts and managers are given short time frames to research a topic that they know little or nothing about. Over forty-eight hours, students read relevant policy and research documents, write a memo detailing the evidence base and key issues, and give an oral presentation. The project takes place the week before fall courses begin, and incoming first-year students have the opportunity to view the presentations as part of their orientation to the program. This component of the curriculum is a signature event and rite of passage each fall.

Students also enroll in a two-term project sequence that serves as the synthesizing capstone of the curriculum. Over winter and spring terms of the second year of study, students work on real-world or simulated real-world projects that require conducting in-depth needs assessments, evaluations, cost-benefit analyses, or other applied research. A faculty member works closely with student groups on these projects over the two terms. Past projects have included a survey for a state commission to gauge attitudes among key shareholders on potential policy change, an analysis of administrative data on the impact of a post-policy implementation on Oregonians, and an examination of three potential communities for a nonprofit's expansion.