

Policy Statement for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program  
School of Public Policy and Administration  
University of Delaware

(Revised October, 2016)

**Part I: Context and Program History**

The School of Public Policy & Administration (SPPA) is an academic unit within the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Delaware, and offers both undergraduate and graduate degrees. The undergraduate programs are the Bachelors in Organizational and Community Leadership, and the Bachelors in Public Policy. The graduate programs are the Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Affairs and Public Policy, the Master of Arts in Urban Affairs and Public Policy, the Master of Science in Disaster Science & Management, the Doctor of Philosophy in Disaster Science & Management, the Master of Arts in Historic Preservation, and the Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.). In addition SPPA offers three accelerated/combined degree (4+1) programs for undergraduate Public Policy majors: the 4 + 1 B.A. in Public Policy and M.A. in Urban Affairs and Public Policy, the 4 + 1 B.A. in Public Policy and Master of Public Administration (MPA), and the 4 + 1 B.A. in Public Policy and M.A. in Historic Preservation.

The M.P.A. program was authorized as a permanent degree by the Board of Trustees in May 1976. It is mission-driven and competency-focused program grounded in a rich history of research and public service coupled with an instructional philosophy of sustained community engagement, ethical behavior and the development of capable, competent, committed professionals. These same values reflect the expectations and requirements of our international accreditation organization, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

M.P.A. Program Mission Statement

“The mission of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program is to provide, diverse, talented graduate students with specific competencies for leadership and management, including the knowledge, skills and values essential to accountable and effective practice. The MPA program contributes directly to solutions to public challenges of our times through research and public service projects that involve students in experiential learning. The program also seeks to develop relationships with practitioners, fostering a professional focus and approaching public administration and nonprofit management and furthering the values of the field.”

The M.P.A. prepares students for career positions in government and nonprofit organizations and private sector companies that work closely with these agencies. It is the preferred professional degree for anyone whose ambition is a career in public or nonprofit management as well as for-profit organizations serving these sectors.

The M.P.A. program is usually completed in two years of full-time study. There is also a part-time accelerated program known as the Career Enhancement Option (CEO), designed for working professionals with at least three years of experience. CEO students can complete their degree requirements in about three and one-half years. An on-line version of the M.P.A. Program is also offered.

The M.P.A. program is administered by the M.P.A. director, operating under guidance specified in the documents "M.P.A. Governance" and the "Academic Reorganization of the College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy".

NASPAA ACCREDITATION. The M.P.A. program has been accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) since 1982 and conforms to all applicable accreditation requirements and governance provisions. Our last NASPAA re-accreditation review occurred in 2012, and the M.P.A. Program is accredited through 2017-2018. NASPAA is the global standard in public service education with 280 members in the U.S. and a dozen countries across the world. It is the membership organization of graduate education programs in public policy, public affairs, public administration, and public & nonprofit management. (See [http://www.naspaa.org/about\\_naspaa/naspaa.asp](http://www.naspaa.org/about_naspaa/naspaa.asp)).

## **Part II: Admissions**

The purpose of the admissions criteria is to identify those applicants who can benefit from, and make a distinct contribution to the M.P.A. program. Applicants are sought who show promise of constructive involvement with faculty, staff, and other students in instruction, research, and public service. Consideration is also given to the student's potential for successful completion of his or her graduate program within a reasonable period.

Given its mission, the M.P.A. program seeks students with a mix of interests, backgrounds, and areas of competence and among whose goals are research/service in the government or nonprofit sectors, urban affairs and public policy. To meet its academic and research goals, as well as to be responsive to the multicultural backgrounds of prospective students, the M.P.A. program employs a wide spectrum of criteria in assessing a prospective student's motivation, interest, and ability to perform successfully. No one criterion is the sole basis of an admissions decision. (Approved by Academic Council 7/30/86).

M.P.A. ADMISSIONS POLICY STATEMENT. The M.P.A. Program’s admissions criteria and indicators of these criteria include:

| Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Indicators and Sources                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Genuine interest and motivation to pursue graduate study in public administration/urban affairs and public policy; personal objectives, aspirations, and plans are well formulated, ethically based and coherent. | Personal statement by candidate in admission application and/or subsequent communications; personal interviews (telephone conversations when personal interviews are not possible) with members of the M.P.A. faculty and the M.P.A. admissions committee.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Expectations of sound academic performance in graduate level work.                                                                                                                                                | Review of undergraduate achievement and any previous graduate level work. Particular emphasis on assessing achievement in the context of the quality of the institutions candidate has attended and the trends or patterns in achievement in the last 1 - 2 years of applicant's program. GRE scores; TOEFL scores, if applicable. Recommendations of faculty, professional associates, community leaders. Reports or research papers written by candidate (published or unpublished). |
| Ability to apply previously acquired competencies to problem areas, community, or organizational needs.                                                                                                           | Contributions in and nature of professional work experience, volunteer service and/or internships. Assessments by faculty, professionals, and/or community leaders.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

Given the professional objectives of the M.P.A. program, the goal of serving students from a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and career stages as well as empirical analysis of prior student admissions and performance, the successful candidate for admission will ordinarily have an undergraduate grade point index above 3.0 and an index of 3.3 or better in his/her major field of study. In addition, the quality and extent of previous related work experience and the motivation to pursue a professional career in the public sector are particularly important.

GRE SCORES. Generally, those admitted for graduate study have scores that are distributed equally on the quantitative and verbal aptitude portions of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) at or above the 69th percentile and analytical scores of 4.0 or better. GRE scores are viewed in the context of the applicant’s complete record. The School has established no minimum GRE score required for admission.

TOEFL SCORES. International applicants must demonstrate a satisfactory command of English, particularly if English is not their first language. The TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) is required of all international applicants. A minimum score of 600 (paper-based test), or 100 (TOEFL iBT) is usually required for consideration for admission. TOEFL scores are viewed in the context of the applicant's complete record. The School has established no minimum TOEFL score for admission.

The M.P.A. program follows University guidelines that allow waiving of the TOEFL exam for those international students who have earned an undergraduate degree in a country where English is the primary language, or if a degree has already been earned in the United States. (See <http://www.udel.edu/gradoffice/apply/testscores.html>).

CAP PROGRAM. The M.P.A. program participates in the University's Conditional Admissions Program (CAP) offered in conjunction with the English Language Institute (ELI). Through CAP, the University offers admission to otherwise qualified international graduate students with the condition that they must first improve their English language skills by successfully completing the highest levels of oral and written communications skills training offered by the ELI. Once CAP students meet these English language objectives they begin their regular graduate coursework without submitting a TOEFL score. (See <http://sites.udel.edu/eli/programs/cap/>).

Admission to the M.P.A. program is competitive. Those who meet stated requirements are not guaranteed admission, nor are those who fail to meet all of those requirements necessarily precluded from admission if they offer other appropriate strengths.

M.P.A. ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE. Applications to the M.P.A. program are evaluated by the M.P.A. committee on admissions. This committee is appointed by the director of the M.P.A. program from among the faculty and consists of at least two members. Decisions of the committee are subject to review and modification by the full M.P.A. faculty and are made on behalf of the full faculty.

ESTIMATES OF PROGRAM ADMISSIONS. The M.P.A. program generally admits 20 - 25 candidates (both full- and part-time) each year. While the great majority of new admissions occur in the fall semester, students may also be admitted to begin their studies in the spring semester.

### **Part III: Degree Requirements**

The 36-credit master of public administration degree is designed to provide professional training for public or nonprofit management careers. The curriculum is divided into four areas:

- (1) core subjects,
- (2) specialization courses,
- (3) internship experience, and
- (4) capstone project or thesis.

All students are required to attain a grade of B- or better in all courses counted towards the M.P.A. degree. In accordance with University policy, students must also maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0.

Consistent with NASPAA accreditation standards, the M.P.A. curriculum is designed to focus on the acquisition and development of five universal competencies:

- (1) to lead and manage in public governance,
- (2) to participate in and contribute to the policy process,
- (3) to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions,
- (4) to articulate and apply a public service perspective, and
- (5) to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

**REQUIRED COURSES.** The MPA core curriculum has been developed to support these five NASPAA universal competencies and includes the following required courses:

- UAPP 684 Performance Management & Program Evaluation (3) **OR**
- UAPP 702 Research Methods in Urban and Public Policy (3)
- UAPP 689 Information Technology and Management of Public & NP Orgs (3)
- UAPP 690 Seminar: Public Administration (3)
- UAPP 691 Quantitative Analysis in Public & NP Sectors (3)
- UAPP 693 Economics in Public & NP Sectors (3)
- UAPP 694 Financial Management in Public & NP Sectors (3)
- UAPP 696 Human Resources in Public & NP Sectors (3)
- UAPP 697 Leading Organizations in the Public & NP Sectors (3)
- UAPP 699 Capstone Project (2).

SPECIALIZATION. A student will choose an area of specialization prior to the third semester of full-time study. There are four specialization options available through the M.P.A. program:

- (1) Nonprofit Management,
- (2) Public Management,
- (3) Public Policy Analysis,
- (4) Emergency Management, or,
- (5) Individualized Specialization developed by the student in conjunction with his/her advisor and with the approval of the M.P.A. director.

Each specialization area consists of a minimum of 9 credit hours, including a required three-credit 'threshold course' and an additional 6 credits approved by the academic advisor. The M.P.A. faculty have designated the following as required 'threshold courses':

- (1) Nonprofit Management – UAPP 673 Governing Nonprofit Organizations (3),
- (2) Public Management – UAPP 684 Performance Management & Program Evaluation (3)
- (3) Public Policy Analysis – UAPP 701 Public Policy (3),
- (4) Emergency Management – DISA 650 Overview of Disaster Science and Management (3),
- (5) Individualized Specialization –Developed by the student in conjunction with his/her advisor and with the approval of the M.P.A. director.

The additional 6 credits for each specialization are to be selected from SPPA course lists developed by the M.P.A. director in conjunction with the M.P.A. faculty

Information on areas of specialization is available in the School Administration Office and on the School website. (See <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/mpa-program-specializations>).

WAIVERS OF REQUIRED COURSES. Courses required in the M.P.A. may be waived if comparable courses or the requisite skills are, or will be, acquired elsewhere under an approved plan of study. To waive a required course, a student must have a petition to waive approved and signed by her or his advisor and a person currently responsible for teaching a course. A record of the signed waiver shall be sent to the program director and included in the student's file. Students must petition to substitute one course for each one that is waived.

Waivers cannot be used to reduce the total number of credit hours (36) required for the completion of the M.P.A. degree. The petition must be approved by the student's advisor and a record of the substitution sent to the program director to be included in the student's file.

With the approval of the M.P.A. program director, a maximum of 9 credits may be waived for a matriculating student in the M.P.A. program who has completed comparable graduate level M.P.A. courses with a grade of a B- or higher in a NASPAA accredited (or equivalent graduate program) as part of their undergraduate program.

**INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE.** An internship is required for the M.P.A. program unless a student receives permission from the internship coordinator and the M.P.A. director to waive this requirement. The internship requirement is fulfilled through UAPP 860 Internship Seminar (1).

The internship involves a practical experience in an operating agency, generally outside of the academic departments of the University. The internship requires a minimum of 450 hours of full-time, professional level work experience. The major purposes of the internship program are:

- (1) To provide an opportunity for the student to apply knowledge and skills acquired in the academic program,
- (2) To provide an opportunity for the student to develop appropriate skills and experience to enhance chosen fields of specialization,
- (3) To assist the student in developing experience that will assist him/her in securing the best possible full-time employment upon completing the requirements for the degree.

The internship placement must be planned with, and receive the approval of, the internship coordinator. During the internship the student carries out work assignments under the direction of a designated agency supervisor and fulfills academic requirements under the direction of the internship coordinator.

**WAIVER OF INTERNSHIP REQUIREMENT.** M.P.A. students with substantial prior professional experience may petition to waive the internship requirement. Substantial professional experience is interpreted as at least 2 years of full-time work in a public or nonprofit organization where the individual has responsibility for client service, program administration or policy development and implementation. Students who believe they meet this standard should contact the internship coordinator.

All M.P.A. internship policies, procedures, and evaluations are carried on under the direction and approval of the M.P.A. faculty.

CAPSTONE PROJECT OR THESIS. This requirement may be fulfilled in one of the following ways:

- (1) By completing a 2 credit Capstone Project practicum course (UAPP 699) in which students:
  - a) work in teams to complete a consulting project for a client,
  - b) provide their recommendations to their clients in a formal consulting report and presentation,
  - c) complete an individual professional portfolio, or
- (2) By writing and defending a master's thesis (UAPP 869) for 6 credits

THESIS OPTION FOR THE M.P.A. PROGRAM. Under circumstances deemed appropriate for the student, and with approval of the student's advisor and the appropriate program director, a thesis may be submitted in lieu of the capstone project. The thesis is to be written under the supervision of a three-person faculty committee chaired by the student's principal advisor in his/her area of specialization and defended in an oral examination before this three-person faculty committee. The thesis committee should provide guidance throughout the process of topic selection, research, writing, and evaluation. Successful oral defense of the thesis, as certified by the student's advisor to the M.P.A. program director, enables a recommendation to be made that the M.P.A. degree be conferred. General guidelines and regulations governing the format, development, and presentation of the thesis must conform to the University requirements reflected in the Office of Graduate and Professional Education Thesis Manual. Detailed policies for those choosing to write a thesis are available on the School's website. (See <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/administrative-matters>).

STUDENT ADVISEMENT IN THE M.P.A. PROGRAM. All students entering the M.P.A. program are assigned a faculty advisor by the M.P.A. program director, or the student may choose his/her advisor if the student has a preference. The faculty advisor is responsible for monitoring the progress and performance of the student throughout their course of study with the M.P.A. program. A student may request a change of academic advisor at any time by submitting the appropriate form from the School website. (See <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/files/pdf/mpa-change-advisor.pdf>).

OVERALL STUDENT ASSESSMENT. At the end of each semester the grades of M.P.A. students are reviewed by the program director and the M.P.A. faculty. All students are expected to



maintain a 3.0 cumulative index (4.0 scale) to remain in good academic standing. Substandard performance may result in a recommendation from the director of the M.P.A. program in consultation with the student's advisor to the full M.P.A. faculty that actions be initiated in accord with general University guidelines regarding probation, warning, and termination.

At the end of each academic year, the M.P.A. program director and the M.P.A. faculty review the performance of all students in the program and, if needed, initiate appropriate corrective actions based on program and University guidelines.

#### **Part IV: Plan of Study**

All M.P.A. students, in consultation with their academic advisor, are required to complete and periodically review the attached Plan of Study form (**Attachment 1**). Each successive revised form becomes part of the student's official file.

#### **Part V: Financial Aid**

Financial aid is available to M.P.A. students in the form of graduate assistantships, research assistantships, tuition scholarships as well as University graduate scholar awards, assistantships and fellowships. The primary type of aid awarded are research assistantships (RAs) provided to those working on public service or research projects in one of the SPPA affiliated centers, or other University office. Detailed information on financial aid options, along with the applicable application processes and funding policies as approved by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. (See <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/financial-aid>.) Awards are competitive and merit-based.

Applications and nominations for financial aid for new students are generated by the M.P.A. admissions committee when reviewing the Supplementary Information Form submitted as part of the application packet. These are transmitted as recommendations to the director of the M.P.A. program and, in turn, to the School director for final disposition. Funding commitments are made through consultation between the M.P.A. director, the School director, the directors of SPPA affiliated centers and faculty who provide graduate stipend support.

#### **Part VI: Program Assessment**

The M.P.A. Program is reviewed regularly by the School director, the M.P.A. program director and the M.P.A. faculty to assure that the program is meeting its objectives and effectively serving the students.

**OTHER ASSESSMENT ACTIONS:** Each spring graduating students are invited to complete an anonymous online Exit Survey to share their views on M.P.A. program admission procedures, course offerings, research assistantships, internship experiences, faculty advisement, diversity

matters, student support services, School facilities, financial aid and general climate for learning and professional development. Survey results are reviewed extensively by the faculty at the beginning of the next School term and corrective actions taken, as appropriate, through the regular governance process.

In addition, M.P.A. alumni and employers of M.P.A. graduates are polled every 3 years for their distinct views on the program. Finally, as a NASPAA accredited M.P.A. program, every six years we must participate in a year-long self-study process that culminates in a three-day site visit by a NASPAA-appointed external team of academics and professionals. The results of the self-study and the external site-visit team are consolidated by NASPAA as part of their re-accreditation process. In turn, the NASPAA comments/recommendations are shared with the M.P.A. faculty and strongly influence planning and governance actions impacting the program.

The SPPA Academic Curriculum Coordinating Committee, consisting of all program directors in SPPA, including the M.P.A. director, develops and reviews a three-year course offering plan to meet program curricular needs. The committee also reviews all course and curricular changes.

**Attachment 1 – Plan of Study Form** (Revised 10/16 for Use Fall 2017)

**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY & ADMINISTRATION  
MPA PLAN OF STUDY**

|                                       |                                    |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Name                                  | Email                              |
|                                       |                                    |
| UD ID#                                |                                    |
|                                       |                                    |
| Full time <input type="checkbox"/>    | Part-time <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4+1 <input type="checkbox"/>          | Entry Term                         |
|                                       |                                    |
| Expected Date of Completion of Degree |                                    |
|                                       |                                    |
| Academic Advisor                      |                                    |
|                                       |                                    |
| Career Objectives                     |                                    |
|                                       |                                    |
|                                       |                                    |

**I. Core Curriculum (30 credits)**

Designate the semester/year you have taken, or desire to take, these required core courses.

|          |                                                                   | <b>Semester/Grade</b> |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| UAPP 684 | Performance Management & Program Evaluation (3) <b>OR</b>         |                       |
| UAPP 702 | Research Methods in Urban & Public Policy (3)                     |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 689 | Information Technology Skills for Planning and Administration (3) |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 690 | Seminar in Public Administration (3)                              |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 691 | Quantitative Analysis in Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)           |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 693 | Economics in Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)                       |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 694 | Financial Management in Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)            |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 696 | Human Resources in Public & Nonprofit Organizations (3)           |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 697 | Leading Organizations in the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)       |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 699 | Capstone Project (2)                                              |                       |
|          |                                                                   |                       |
| UAPP 860 | Internship Seminar (1)                                            |                       |

**II. Internship Requirement:**

An internship is required for anyone with less than two years of fulltime, professional-level work experience. Those with sufficient prior relevant work experience may request a waiver of the

internship requirement. See the Internship Coordinator for details.

Do you intend to seek a waiver from the Internship Requirement? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Waiver approved \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

|                                 |                        |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Internship Experience</b>    |                        |
| <b>Semester/Grade</b>           |                        |
| UAPP 860                        | Internship Seminar (1) |
|                                 |                        |
| Internship Placement and Duties |                        |
|                                 |                        |
|                                 |                        |

**III. Area of Specialization (Select One):**

A specialization should be selected and approved prior to the third semester. Indicate your area of specialization below. In addition to the threshold course listed for your specialization, list other SUAPP course you plan to take in your area of specialization. Every specialization requires at least 6 credits (three credit threshold course plus an additional three credits).

- Public Management**   
Threshold Course: UAPP 684 Performance Management & Program Evaluation
- Public Policy Analysis**   
Threshold Course: UAPP 701 Public Policy (3)
- Nonprofit Management**   
Threshold Course: UAPP 673 Governing Nonprofit Organizations (3)
- Emergency Management**   
Threshold Course: DISA 650 Overview of Disaster Science & Management (3)

| <b>Additional Course Numbers &amp; Titles</b> | <b>Semester/Grade</b> | <b>Credits</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
|                                               |                       |                |
|                                               |                       |                |
|                                               |                       |                |
|                                               |                       |                |

**Student Designed Specialization**



A student-designed specialization must be developed in consultation with your academic advisor and approved by the MPA director. This specialization requires a three-credit SPPA Threshold Course determined in consultation with your academic advisor as well as at least three additional credits from approved courses.

| Threshold Course Number & Title | Semester/Grade | Credits |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------|
|                                 |                |         |

| Additional Course Numbers & Titles | Semester/Grade | Credits |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---------|
|                                    |                |         |
|                                    |                |         |
|                                    |                |         |
|                                    |                |         |

**IV. Capstone Writing Requirement**

The capstone writing requirement is normally completed in the final semester of study. Students may choose either UAPP 699 (2) or, for those considering graduate study at the PhD level, UAPP 869 (6). Check School/University policies for thesis guidelines. Your topic should be drawn from your specialization, or another area with your advisor’s permission. Indicate your choice below:

|                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|
| UAPP 699 Capstone Project (2) Title/Topic |
|                                           |
| Capstone Project Client                   |
|                                           |
| Capstone Project Team Member(s)           |

**OR**

|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| UAPP 869 Thesis (6) Title/Topic |
|                                 |
| Chair                           |
|                                 |
| Committee Members               |
|                                 |

Academic Advisor's Approval \_\_\_\_\_