



**BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY**

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**MASTER OF PUBLIC  
ADMINISTRATION  
STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to provide students in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program in Boise State's School of Public Service with a detailed set of program policies, procedures, and timelines. Our hope is that this handbook will help you to be successful in this program.

It answers the most frequently asked questions for students during the various stages of the program, from application through graduation, and provides basic guidelines for you to use to track your progress through the program. We encourage you to read this handbook carefully and refer to it as you plan and make choices. Students should frequently meet with their advisor early in the program for planning purposes and consistently throughout the program to ensure requirements are met.

The policies and proposals in this handbook frequently refer to these important resources:

1. The Boise State University [Graduate Catalog](#) and [website](#), and
2. The [MPA Program Website](#).

Forms and information are frequently updated, so students should *always* refer to these online resources for the most up-to-date information. Additional resources and procedures, such as student services and policies on plagiarism, can also be found online.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The MPA Program is housed within the School of Public Service at Boise State University. The program is designed to prepare students for positions of leadership in the public and nonprofit sector. The degree provides a sound foundation in the theoretical and practical dimensions of public management necessary to assist students seeking public service careers.

Students move through the program in stages: application, coursework, internship, application for candidacy, and finally capstone. Faculty in the School of Public Service work closely with students, first as professors in seminars and coursework, then as advisors who mentor and advise students on program requirements.

The study and practice of public policy and administration is inherently interdisciplinary, and students will have the opportunity to work with faculty from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds in the School of Public Service and beyond. At the same time, the curriculum is

organized to ensure that students receive a strong foundation in administration, research, and policy that will prepare them for careers in public administration.

## INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants must satisfy the minimum admission requirements for the Boise State Graduate College; please see their website for more information. Admission is competitive and the achievement of minimum Graduate College and MPA requirements does not guarantee admission into the program. Applicants are required to have a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and demonstrate satisfactory academic competency by attaining an overall undergraduate GPA of at least 3.00 and a minimum combined score of 300 on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) verbal and quantitative sections. Students that have an aggregate undergraduate GPA of 3.20 or better may have the GRE requirement waived.

Applicants must submit all application materials to the University by January 15th to be considered for acceptance in the program for the following fall term and by October 1 for the following spring term. The admission decisions are made shortly after the deadline, but applications are accepted at any time per Graduate College guidelines. Consideration of admission applications to the MPA program requires acceptance to the Boise State Graduate College and the payment of student fees.

During the application process for the online Graduate College system, applicants will be prompted to provide:

1. Submit official transcripts from all previous academic institutions.
2. Submit names and contact information for three references. These references will then be asked to upload reference letters evaluating the applicant's academic potential.
3. Upload a formal statement of at least 500 words explaining the applicant's educational and career objectives.
4. Upload a recent resume or curriculum vitae.

After the admission deadline for a given term, the program's admission committee will evaluate all complete applications. That committee will forward its recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate College. The graduate Dean will make the final admission decision and notify the applicant and the program Director.

## Admission Not Recommended to the Graduate College, Decision Appeal

Applicants who are not recommended for admission to the MPA program at Boise State University may appeal this decision initially within the program. Students who are denied admission have 14 working days, from informal notification by the Program Director that the program will not recommend admission, to submit a written appeal to the Program outlining their rationale for challenging the Admission Committee's decision. The Admissions Committee, in consultation with the Program Director, will review that appeal and notify the student of their decision to admit or to uphold the denial of admission. If the denial is upheld on appeal, then the applicant may appeal the program's decision to the graduate college.

Students who are denied admission have the option to reapply once to the MPA program but must offer substantive changes to their application materials so that the complete application file merits reconsideration. Admission is not guaranteed if a student resubmits a second application. Meeting the minimum academic requirements does not guarantee admission to the MPA program.

## INFORMATION ON COURSEWORK

Graduate programs are required to adhere to the restrictions listed in Boise State University's Graduate Catalog, and it is recommended that students review those requirements prior to application and admission into the program. You will find information regarding degree requirements, language of instruction, course substitutions, undergraduate course, previously applied courses, non-degree seeking students, aggregate restrictions, readings and conference and independent studies, course planning, duration of study, public service internship, and grade requirements on the following pages.

## Degree Requirements

Course Number and Title	Credits
<b>Core Requirements</b>	
PUBADM 500 Administration in the Public Sector	3
PUBADM 501 Public Policy Process	3
PUBADM 502 Organization Behavior and Management	3
PUBADM 504 Public Budgeting and Financial Administration	3
PUBADM 505 Personnel Administration for Public Service	3
<b>Methods Sequence</b>	
SPS 501 Social Science Research Design	3
Select one (1) of the following:	3
SPS 502 Quantitative Methods for the Social Sciences SPS 503 Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences SPS 505 Public Policy Analysis SPS 506 Program Evaluation	
<b>Electives</b>	
Select 12 credit hours of coursework from the noncore MPA courses listed in this catalog. Students may also work with an advisor to identify relevant graduate coursework in other programs at Boise State University.	12
Public Service Internship	0-3
<b>Culminating Activity</b>	
PUBADM 692 Capstone Course	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>36-39</b>

## Language of Instruction

According to Boise State’s Graduate Catalog, “English is the language of instruction at Boise State University. As a graduate student, you must be proficient in English and may be required to demonstrate a prescribed level of ability in one or more other languages. If language ability beyond proficiency in English is required by a graduate program, the means of verification are defined by the program.”

## Course Substitutions

In general, students are not allowed to substitute courses to fulfill requirements related to core courses. Courses associated with the Graduate Certificate in Applied Public Administration cannot be used as a substitution for any MPA core course requirements under any circumstances, but may be used to partially satisfy emphasis requirements with appropriate approvals.

## Undergraduate Courses

In general, all credit applied to a graduate degree or certificate must be graduate-level academic credit, however an undergraduate course may be applied to meet the credit requirements of a graduate certificate or degree, subject to the following restrictions:

1. The course must be an upper-division course and must be in a discipline outside the major field of study of the MPA program.
2. A grade of B or better must be earned in the course.
3. The course cannot represent effort for an undergraduate thesis, internship, practicum, independent study or research, conference or workshop, experiential learning, study abroad, seminar, or colloquium.
4. All applied undergraduate credit must be approved by the Graduate College and the program coordinator of the graduate program that offers the degree or certificate.

## Previously Applied Courses

In general, any course applied to a previously earned degree or certificate of any type at any institution cannot be applied to meet the credit requirements of a MPA degree. The only exception is a course applied to a master's degree previously earned at a regionally accredited U.S. institution or non-U.S. institution approved by the Graduate College and the Registrar. Each course allowed under this exception is subject to the following additional restrictions:

1. A grade of B or better must have been earned in the course.
2. The course cannot represent effort for a graduate culminating activity or for experiential learning.

Courses allowed under this exception are limited by the fundamental requirement that at least two thirds of the total credit requirement for the MPA degree must be earned at Boise State University since admission to the program.

## Non-degree Seeking Students

Students who have not yet been admitted to the program **may take up to 9 credit-hours for one semester prior to admission** (PUBADM 500 or PUBADM 501 are recommended). Pending approval by the student's advisor and the Program Director, these credits may be used toward the student's total required credit hours for the MPA program once admitted. These classes may be any combination of 500-level credits when space is available on the roster and with instructor permission.

## Aggregate Restriction

No more than one-third of the total credit requirement for a graduate degree or certificate, exclusive of culminating activity credits, can be met by the aggregate of credits earned in undergraduate courses, pass-fail courses, and university-wide courses numbered 590, 594-596, 598, and 696 (or equivalent courses that may appear as transfer credits). An exception to this restriction may be considered when the courses are outside the major field of study, are taken to expand interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary educational experiences, and are approved by the program coordinator and the Graduate College through an academic appeal, using the Graduate Appeal Form

## Readings and Conference and Independent Studies

The program has determined that students may take no more than nine credits from the following categories: Readings and Conference (595) or Independent Studies (596).

## Course Planning

After being admitted, students should schedule a time to meet with their advisor to fill out the Program Development Form (PDF), found on the program website under the Forms section. The PDF aids students and their advisors in mapping out which courses the student will take when, given the student's interests and the program's course offerings. Understanding which courses are required, course progressions, and other program requirements can ensure students complete their coursework in a timely manner. Regularly meeting with your advisor (each semester or as you see fit) is suggested to ensure that students understand their requirements for graduation and can adjust their PDF accordingly.

A "Course Rotation" can be found on the program website; there, students will find a list of courses, along with when they can reasonably expect to be offered. Students should understand that sometimes events occur—such as faculty sabbaticals or curricular changes—that may affect the predicted course rotation. Therefore, PDFs should be treated more as a map for navigating the curriculum than as a contract. Work with your advisor to submit and Academic Adjustment Form for electives not specifically outlined in the degree requirements. With approval, such courses can apply to your MPA degree.

The program is more prescriptive, however, when it comes to the core curriculum. Students should plan to enroll in PUBADM 500 during their first semester of admittance to the program, complete the rest of the core requirements before enrolling in PUBADM 692 in the last semester of coursework as core requirements courses cannot be taken in conjunction with PUBADM 692.

## Duration of Study

According to the Graduate College Catalog, “The minimum duration of study for the master’s degree is one academic year after admission to the program. All requirements for a master’s degree (including transfer courses) must be started and completed within a single continuous interval of no more than seven years. This single continuous interval includes summers and any semesters in which you are not enrolled. In addition, it must encompass all courses applied to the degree, including transfer courses.”

## Public Service Internship

All students are required to complete a three-credit internship for a total of 39 credits unless all or part of these credits are waived. In order to receive graduate credit for your internship, you must contact the program’s Internship Coordinator, Dr. Greg Hill, before applying for any internship positions (within or outside the State of Idaho). The internship is meant to be a meaningful experience for both the MPA student and the organization in which the internship is served. Through the internship, students can further enhance their preparation for administrative work. At the same time, they are expected to make a valuable contribution to their assigned organizations. Therefore, the internship is usually served when the student is near completion of the MPA program.

Find more information about internship credit as well as the Internship Application for Academic Credit form on the program’s website under the Funding section.

Students who have at least one year of substantive administrative, management, or professional experience in or with the public or nonprofit sector may petition the graduate director to waive the internship requirement. This petition must be submitted AFTER a student has been admitted to the MPA program and should include a letter detailing the basis for the petition, along with a recent copy of the student’s résumé. Instructions to petition for internship waiver or to obtain an internship are available on the program’s website under the Funding section

## Grade Requirements

Student must maintain a 3.0 GPA every semester. If the student fails to meet the semester GPA requirement and the failure is the second occurrence since admission to the program, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the program by the Graduate College. If the student fails to achieve a program GPA of 3.0 or better, the student is ineligible for a degree. Student cannot list a course on the Application for Admission to Candidacy if it is graded lower than a C. Transfer courses can only be listed if they are a B or higher. If the student does not meet consecutive semester or overall 3.0 GPA requirement, the student may appeal for reinstatement through the School of Public Service and then through the Graduate Dean. The following section specifies the program's grading system.

## MPA Graduate Grading System

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Numeric Equivalent</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>A</b>	93-100%	Excellent. "A" work shows exceptional ability to not only read and understand the material, but also demonstrate critical analytical skill in determining the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, philosophies, and comments. Distinguished work requires a consistent application of concepts with original analysis integrating literature and concepts into course work. The student initiates and effectively responds to questions. The student has demonstrated a quality of work and accomplishment far beyond the normal requirements and shows originality of thought and mastery of material.
<b>A-</b>	90-92.9%	
<b>B+</b>	87-89.9%	Good. "B" work shows a good understanding of the material, marginal participation in class, and the ability to do what is asked. The student's achievement is an acceptable level of accomplishment, showing initiative, comprehension of material, and the ability to work with concepts.
<b>B</b>	83-86.9%	
<b>B-</b>	80-82.9%	"B-" work demonstrates that the student's accomplishment, while "passing," is deficient, demonstrating limited integration, application and analysis. Minimum requirements have been met but without distinction. Work is technically passing, but this level of academic performance in graduate coursework at Boise State triggers probationary status when the cumulative GPA drops below 3.0
<b>C+</b>	77-79.9%	Not acceptable. Student has demonstrated a minimum level of competence in meeting course objectives. See Boise State Graduate College policy regarding maintenance of a cumulative minimum GPA.
<b>C</b>	73-76.9%	
<b>C-</b>	70-72.9%	
<b>D- F</b>	Less than 70%	Failing work.

## Retaking PUBADM Credits/Classes

The graduate college policy limits students to retaking only certain credits and only with written approval from the program and limits the student to retaking a class only once. The School of Public Service does not generally authorize retaking a class. In general, students may not retake PUBADM courses regardless of whether the course was taken for graduate credit or taken as credit to be applied to an undergraduate program. If extraordinary circumstances exist, admitted MPA students may provide written appeal of this policy to the program Director within 30 calendar days of when grades were made available to students through their Student Center in their my.BoiseState profile. Students who register for a class without approval will be administratively withdrawn.

## Transfer Credit

Boise State University has a cooperative agreement made with Idaho State University and University of Idaho so MPA credits earned at those establishments may, with approval, be accepted towards your MPA degree at Boise State.

The MPA program allows up to 9 credits to be transferred from another regionally accredited U.S. college or university according to the following guidelines:

1. Grades must be “A” or “B”;
2. Credits applied to meet requirements of a previously earned degree or certificate of any type at another institution are not eligible; undergraduate credits are not accepted for credit.

All credits earned from other institutions require approval through submitting a Request for Approval of Transfer Credits form. This form can be found on the program’s website under the Forms section.

# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

## Financial Aid

To receive financial aid students must be accepted into the MPA program and be enrolled in sufficient credits per University policy. Retention of financial aid is driven by University policy on satisfactory completion of academic credit.

## Graduate Assistantships

Graduate Assistants (GA) must be full time students (at least 9 credits). Graduate assistants work 20 hours per week on assigned projects from their designated professor or professors. In return, they are paid an hourly rate (up to a minimum stipend amount) and receive a waiver of tuition and registration fees, including out-of-state tuition and the Student Health Insurance Policy. Submit your application online through clicking the highlighted “Graduate Assistantship” under the Assistantship, Grant, & Opportunities passage under the Funding section on the program’s website. Please include a cover letter, resume, and complete transcripts with the application packet. Students who are awarded a GA must complete an application each semester. GAs demonstrating satisfactory performance in their duties may retain their position each term, up to 6 semesters, if they are making satisfactory progress toward degree requirements and if the School of Public Service has sufficient funding for the position. GAs may receive an “I” in a class and retain their GA position if approved by the School of Public Service.

## Conference Travel

The MPA program aims to support students in presenting their work at conferences. Participation in conferences provides useful professionalization and research experiences and can promote our program outside of Boise State University. The process for applying for and receiving program funding for conference travel should be made fair and transparent. The application is provided below after the policy section.

### Policy:

1. For the purposes of funding conference travel, MPA students must be enrolled in credits
  - a. at the time travel arrangements are made/purchased and
  - b. at the time of actual conference travel.
2. Students must present either a paper or a poster during the conference (solo or co-author). Failure to do so will result in re-payment of all travel costs.
3. Students may request funding support for one conference (up to \$700) or for two conferences (up to \$500 each) per year during their time in the program. All costs exceeding these amounts must be born by the student and will not be covered by the MPA Program. Preference will be given to students who have not yet received funding for conference travel from the program.
4. Students must submit the request form to the Director of the Program and, once approved by the Director and student’s advisor/chair, work with the School of Public Service travel coordinator and Program administrative assistant in making arrangements and completing

all required paperwork. Chairs are responsible for making sure that conferences align with the student's academic and professional goals, and that students are well prepared to present.

5. Students who are funded to present at conferences must present their work to students and faculty in the School of Public Service before presenting at the conference, in order to gain practice presenting and to receive feedback on the presentation.

**Conference Travel Funds Request Form**  
PhD Program in Public Policy and Administration

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of conference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Conference location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of your participation (include an explanation of how participation relates to your academic or career goals):**

**Funding amount requested: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of how funding will be used:**

**Have you been funded by the program in the past? Please explain.**

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

Denied (if denied, provide justification)\_\_\_\_\_

**Student Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Advisor/Supervisory Chair  
Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Program Director  
Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

# APPLICANT FAQS

## What kind of jobs do people get after their MPA?

MPA graduates work in all types of governmental, nonprofit, and corporate settings. At the federal level, Boise State MPA graduates have worked for the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the GAO, the State Department, and on the staffs of members of Congress. At the state level, our graduates have worked for a number of state agencies including the Departments of Health and Welfare, Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Labor, the Office of Performance Evaluation, Division of Human Resources, and the State Board of Education. At the local level, our graduates have worked for cities and counties as City Administrators, in Mayors' offices, budget offices, law enforcement, fire departments, parks and recreation, and planning offices. Many MPA graduates work in the nonprofit sector for organizations including the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Girl Scouts, the Idaho Conservation League, and professional associations such as the Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry, the Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Idaho Cities, and Idaho Association of Counties. Other MPA graduates work for corporations in governmental affairs divisions including examples from Zions bank, Micron Technology, and Walmart.

## What is the difference between the MPA and the Master's in Political Science?

The MPA degree is a blend of theory and practice intended to prepare leaders and experts primarily for service in the public and nonprofit sectors. The MPA is a management degree for the public and nonprofit sectors. It is a practitioner's degree and utilizes an applied capstone experience as a culminating assessment. The Master of Political Science is more theory-driven and has a culminating activity of writing a traditional thesis.

## How many credits does it take to complete the MPA?

36 to 39, depending on whether students complete an internship. Students without at least a year of significant public or nonprofit sector experience are required to complete a three-credit internship. The MPA Program Director in consultation with the Internship Coordinator will determine if prior work experience is substantial enough to waive the internship requirement.

## What is the culminating activity for an MPA program?

There is a three-credit capstone course in which students work in teams to complete an applied research project on behalf of a client organization or group in the community. The capstone

allows students to apply their knowledge, skills, and abilities gained in their coursework to real life situations under the guidance of a SPS faculty member.

### **When are classes held?**

Most MPA classes meet in the evening between 6:00-8:45 PM in order to accommodate students who are working during the day. There are exceptions, however, and MPA classes have met in early morning, afternoon, and weekend formats. Boise State also allows for compressed class formats such as a 3-week session.

### **Are there online classes?**

There are a few classes that are offered in a hybrid format in which in-person and online sessions alternate. It is expected that more courses will be offered in an online format in the near future.

### **Can I take classes in other programs as part of the MPA?**

Yes. Classes from other programs or departments can be used in consultation with your Academic Advisor. Courses should be offered at the 500-level or above, and be relevant to the degree program and/or the student's career goals.

### **What is the relationship between the MPA and Graduate Certificates offered by SPS?**

Currently, the School of Public Service offers six Graduate Certificates: Applied Public Administration; Dispute Resolution; Environmental Governance; Nonprofit Administration; Policy Research; and State, Local, and Regional Governance. MPA students are allowed to count coursework completed as part of these programs as part of their elective requirements. Certificate programs have separate admissions process, and admission to the MPA does not guarantee admission to those programs.

### **When does the Admissions Committee admit students to the MPA?**

The Committee meets twice each year, shortly after the October 1 and January 15 application deadlines for admissions materials to be submitted.

### **Can I take MPA classes before I am admitted?**

Yes, a maximum of 9 credits may be taken one semester prior to admission, 3 of which can be a core class (PUBADM 500 and PUBADM 501 are recommended). You must first apply to the Graduate College and be admitted as a non-degree seeking graduate student. Admission to the Graduate College and to the MPA program are separate processes.

## **Do I have to take the GRE to be considered for admission?**

The GRE is not required if your undergraduate GPA is 3.2 or greater.

## **Can I transfer graduate credits from another institution into my MPA?**

Yes, 9 credits can be transferred in from other institutions. Your Academic Advisor and the MPA Program Director will evaluate these potential transfer courses with you. Final approval comes from the Graduate College. The Graduate College does not allow classes that have already been applied to a Master's program to transfer to the MPA, however, certificate credits can be transferred.

## **Are there graduate assistantships available to MPA students?**

Yes, there are a limited number of GA's available to MPA students. Typically, GA's earn a stipend ranging between \$12,000 to \$15,000 over a 9-month period in addition to a waiver of their tuition and fees. GA's are expected to enroll full time (9 credits) and to work 20 hours a week. The application for graduate assistantships are available in the forms section of the Public Policy and Administration website.

## **Can I take classes part time?**

Yes. Most students go part time. There is a 7 year time frame in which Boise State expects students to finish after admission. If necessary, you can apply for an extension.

## **Is there an MPA student organization?**

Yes. There is the MPA Association, open to all current, former, and prospective students. The MPAA has a Facebook page and organizes brown bag lunches featuring speakers of interest as well as social events.

## **What is the internship requirement?**

If you have less than a year of significant public or nonprofit sector work experience, you will be required to complete a three-credit internship. There is a faculty member who handles internships and will assist you in finding an internship appropriate for you. Boise State requires 45 hours of work for each credit of internship. Internships can be completed in Fall, Spring, or Summer terms.