Master of Public Administration Program

Department of Political Science
Idaho State University

revised 05/2006
1. **What is the history of the MPA program at ISU?**

The M.P.A. program was developed in the mid 1970's to meet the growing public sector demand for administrative education. The placement rate for ISU M.P.A. graduates is high and many successful national, state, and local administrators are graduates of the ISU program. In recent years, graduates have been placed in such positions as university administrators, community development planners, grant administrators and health care managers.

2. **What are the requirements for admittance into the MPA program?**

Students must have a 3.00 GPA in upper-division undergraduate courses, score at the 35th percentile as an average of the three sections of the GRE, have 3 solid letters of recommendation, and must write a goal statement for the program. Reference forms and statement questions are provided to each candidate.

3. **Why do students have to take the GRE's?**

A graduate program is evaluated to a great extent by the average GRE scores of its students. Students must take the GRE before being considered for the program. To take the GRE make an appointment with the ISU Testing and Counseling Center (236-2130). GRE's are not easy. It is strongly recommended that you spend considerable time taking GRE practice tests. According to department policy, students with low GRE scores will be denied admittance to the program until they receive an acceptable score along with meeting other program requirements. The current standard is a GRE score at an average 35th percentile on the verbal, quantitative, and analytical sections of the test.

4. **How may credits may students take per semester?**

Department policy permits graduate students to take a maximum 13 credit hours per semester. Permission to take more credits per semester will not be granted.

5. **How long does it take students to finish the program?**

The MPA program requires 36 hours of course-work. If a student goes to school full-time (12 credits per semester) it will take them 1 1/2 years to complete the course-work. Students also need time to study for comprehensive exams. Full-time students can complete the degree successfully in 3 semesters and 1 summer school session. Part-time students with full-time jobs normally take 3-6 credit hours per semester.

6. **Why are MPA classes held primarily at night?**
Approximately three-fourths of MPA students work in full-time jobs located throughout southeastern Idaho. These students cannot attend classes during the day. Therefore, MPA classes are held in 3 hour blocks once per week at night.

7. **Can students take independent study classes instead of taking regular classes?**

No, it is departmental policy that students cannot take independent study classes to replace regular course-work. For example, you cannot ask to do an independent study on "organizational theory" since it is a regularly offered class. Independent studies are designed for specific research problems. For example, a student may want to investigate different leadership styles in Idaho local governments. This would require extensive reading, research and writing and would be an acceptable independent study topic. An independent study requires 135 hours of documented work for 3 credit hours.

8. **How are internships arranged?**

You are responsible for finding an acceptable internship position. The department has a list of internship contacts and will help place you in an internship position. An acceptable internship position is one in a public or non-profit organization that requires significant administrative work in personnel issues, organization planning, budgeting, etc. Students already working in a public agency are normally allowed to work on a special project where they "step outside" their normal work duties. All internships must be approved by the MPA Director.

9. **How are internships graded and what are the requirements?**

The department relies heavily on a formal evaluation from an on-site internship supervisor and a final paper to determine grades. The final paper is a 10-15 page critical analysis of the internship by the student. The student also keeps a daily journal that documents the required 270 hours (6 credits) of internship work. Students working in an internship position represent both the university and the program and the student's work should reflect appropriate professional behavior.

10. **What are the grade-point requirements for the program?**

Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 G.P.A. Both A’s and B’s earned in M.P.A. classes are both considered as strong performances in the program. A grade of C or below in the program is considered a failure and does not fulfill graduation requirements.

11. **What is a graduate committee?**
Every MPA student needs to form a graduate committee of two members from the department. One Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) from outside the department will be appointed by the graduate school. Students should choose members that they are comfortable with and who will be the student's "advocate" in oral examinations. You must designate one of the department members of the committee as "committee chair."

12. **Should students write a thesis or take written exams?**

Unless you want eventually to complete a Ph.D. in public administration, you should take the written comprehensive examination. A thesis requires a strong background in research methodology and normally is a long, long process. The written examination requires the student to study extensively but can be completed quickly so students can get on with their life and career.

13. **What is a "course of study" and when do students have to complete it?**

A course of study is simply the classes that you take to fulfill your core and specialized area of the MPA. It is available from the Department and must be completed and approved the semester before you plan on graduating. Students should carefully plan their course work with the program director to make sure their classes meet program requirements.

14. **What are MPA written and oral examinations?**

*Written exams are given three (2 times per school year.*

Students completing written examinations answer five questions over classes from their core area. Some professors will provide reading lists and other professors will not. This decision is up to each faculty member. In the last three years, about 75% of students have passed their written examinations and 25% have failed. Students who fail the written examination are given a chance to retake the areas (not the same questions) that they have missed during the next scheduled comprehensive exam dates. Once a student has passed the written examinations, an oral examination is scheduled with the student, the two departmental committee members and the GFR. The oral examination is an opportunity for the student to show case their knowledge of the field. All three committee members vote on whether to award the MPA degree to the student. The GFR evaluates the quality of the MPA candidate, the process, and ultimately the program.
IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY
Master of Public Administration
Admissions Scoring

1. Applicant GRE Percentile

   80th percentile or above: 10 points
   60th - 79th percentile: 8 points
   40th - 59th percentile: 7 points
   20th - 39th percentile: 6 points
   Below 20th percentile: 0 points

2. Applicant Upper-Division GPA

   4.00: 10 points
   3.80 - 3.99: 9 points
   3.60 - 3.79: 8 points
   3.40 - 3.59: 7 points
   3.20 - 3.39: 6 points
   3.00 - 3.19: 5 points
   Below 3.00: 0 points

3. Reference Letters

   Rated on a Scale of: 0 points (very poor) to 10 points (excellent).

4. Goal Statement

   Rated on a Scale of 0 points (very poor) to 10 points (excellent).
**ENTERING THE M.P.A. PROGRAM**

1. Make application to the Graduate School - $55.00 fee.

2. Submit application to the Department of Political Science for a graduate assistantship (optional).

3. Submit three (3) letters of recommendation to the Department of Political Science. These may be from former professors, employers, supervisors, or anyone else in a position to reasonably speak of your preparation and likelihood for success in graduate work. Be sure that the required reference forms are attached to each letter.

4. Submit a *Statement of Career Objectives* to the Department of Political Science. This should be from one (1) to three (3) pages in length and should address your hopes for your career with particular emphasis on why you have decided to pursue the M.P.A.

5. Have your transcripts sent to Graduate Studies (P.O. Box 8075, Pocatello, ID 83209). This should include all undergraduate and graduate transcripts from this or any other institution you have attended.

6. Sign up for and take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). You can sign up for it at the University Counseling and Testing Center. There is a fee - $115.00. On an individual request basis, we have also accepted GMAT scores. This is possible if you have already taken that test and obtained an acceptable score; otherwise, the GRE is required. You will not be admitted into the program without an acceptable score.

**REQUIREMENTS**

You want to be a **classified** student. For the M.P.A. degree you obtain this status by:

1. Scoring an average of at least the 35th percentile on the GRE aptitude test (you may need to take it more than once);

2. Having an overall 3.00 grade point average from your last two years of undergraduate work or 3.00 in 12 credits of graduate work;

3. Having three (3) letters of recommendation sent to the Department of Political Science;

4. Submitting a *statement of career objectives* to the Department.
Non-Academic Reference

The candidate for admission should sign, date, and circle their preference below:
I do/do not waive the right to examine this reference letter.

________________          __________
Candidate Signature  Date

__________ has applied for admission in the Master of Public Administration program at Idaho State University. You have been chosen as a reference writer for this applicant. Please return this sheet being sure to complete the box for question #7. In addition, attach a reference letter where you address questions 1-6.

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known the applicant?

3. Please discuss the applicant’s major strengths.

4. Please discuss the applicant’s major weaknesses.

5. Is the applicant ready to undertake graduate work in a professional program at the Master’s level? Why or why not?

6. Do you believe that this applicant will be a successful public administrator? Please explain your answer.

7. In terms of individuals that you have been associated with where would you rate this applicant in terms of overall ability? Please place a check under each criterion that indicates

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Please sign and date your review

___________________________   Date_______________
Reference Writer
Academic Reference Letter

The candidate for admission should sign, date, and circle their preference below:
I do/do not waive the right to examine this reference letter.

________________          ________
Candidate Signature  Date

__________ has applied for admission to the Idaho State University Master of Public Administration (MPA) program in political science. You have been chosen by the applicant as a reference. Please answer the questions below. Please return this sheet and answer questions 1-5 in the form of a reference letter on a separate sheet of paper.

1. In what capacity do you know the applicant?

2. How long have you known the applicant?

3. Please discuss the applicant’s academic strengths.

4. Please discuss the applicant’s academic weaknesses.

5. Do you think that the applicant is ready to undertake graduate school work? Why or why not?

6. In terms of college students that you have been associated with where would you rate this applicant in terms of overall academic ability? Please place a check under each criterion that indicates your rating of the candidate’s ability.

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Please sign and date your review

___________________________   Date_______________
Reference Writer
MPA Goal Statement

Please type your answers and fully develop your responses. The goal statement is an important part of the selection process.

1. Please describe your academic background paying particular attention to course-work that has prepared you for Master’s level study in public administration.

2. Please describe any experience you have had in public service (including non-profit administration). Include any volunteer work.

3. Please explain why you want to pursue a MPA degree including how the degree would influence your career path.

4. What do you believe is the fundamental role of a public administrator in democratic government?
IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Political Science
MPA Requirements

I. Core Courses

Choose six of the following nine courses. Each student must choose at least one course from each area and Political Science 551 is required for all students.

Area #1: Management of Public Service Organizations

POLS 554  Public Personnel Administration
POLS 552  Financial Administration and Budgeting
POLS 558  Public Administration Ethics
POLS 541  Administrative Law

Area #2: Methodology and Policy Analysis

POLS 622  Political Science Research Methods
POLS 553  Public Policy Analysis
POLS 622  Public Administration Research Methods

Area #3: Public Policy, Organizational Theory, and Public Grantwriting

POLS 551  Organizational and Bureaucratic Theory
(required of all students)
POLS 505  The Administrative Process
POLS 557  Public Grantwriting

II. Specialized Areas

Each student must take 12 credits in a specialized area. Courses that are used to fulfill a core requirement cannot also be counted as a specialized course.

Specialized Area #1: State, Local, and Non-Profit Administration
(Choose 4 courses)

POLS 503  The Presidency
POLS 506  Intergovernmental Relations
POLS 509  Community & Regional Planning
POLS 541  Administrative Law
POLS 557  Public Grantwriting
POLS 612  State & Local Seminar
POLS 669  Independent Problems
ECON 539  State & Local Finance
GEO 599  Introductory GIS
SOC 566  Sociology of Community
Specialized Area #2: Environmental Administration.
(Choose 4 courses — Political Science 555 is required)

POLS 541 Administrative Law
POLS 553 Public Policy Analysis
**POLS 555 Politics of Environmental Problems (required)**
POLS 566 Public Lands Policy
GEOL 503 Principles of GIS

_Students may take other graduate level courses with an environmental emphasis from Biology, Geology, or Engineering, or other departments as approved by your MPA committee chair._

Specialized Area #3: Public Health Administration
(Choose 4 courses)

POLS 553 Public Policy Analysis
POLS 557 Public Grantwriting

_Students may take other graduate level courses from Health Care Administration (HCA), Health Education (HE), and Master of Public Health (MPH) as approved by your MPA committee chair._

Specialized Area #4: The Legal Environment of Administration
(Each student must choose 4 courses. Sociology 531 and Political Science 543 are required.)
POLS 504 Legislative Process
SOC 531 Criminology (required)
POLS 542 Constitutional Law (Separation of Powers)
POLS 543 Constitutional Law (Civil Liberties) (required)
POLS 541 Administrative Law
POLS 506 Intergovernmental Relations
POLS 669 Independent Problems

III. Public Administration Internship

Each student must complete six (6) credit hours of an approved internship.
Master of Public Administration in Political Science
Application Checklist

1. Send a completed Application for Admissions to Graduate School, and $55.00 application fee, to:
   Graduate Studies
   Campus Box 8075
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8075

2. Ask each college or university you have attended to send two official transcripts to:
   Graduate Studies
   Campus Box 8075
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8075

3. Have official transcripts of your scores on the GRE general examination sent to:
   (You will not be admitted to the program until you have a satisfactory GRE score)
   Graduate Studies
   Campus Box 8075
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8075

4. Have three letters of recommendation, preferably from professors who know your recent academic work, sent to:
   Department of Political Science
   Campus Box 8073
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8073

5. Send a statement of personal goals to:
   Department of Political Science
   Campus Box 8073
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8073

6. To apply for financial assistance, send a completed Application for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship, by March 15, for fall and November 1, for Spring to:
   Department of Political Science
   Campus Box 8073
   Idaho State University
   Pocatello, ID 83209-8073
Idaho State University  
Department of Political Science  
Application for Teaching Assistant and Fellowship

Application for a graduate:

_____ Teaching Assistantship  
_____ Fellowship  

College of ___________________________________________ Department of _________________

Graduate major or minor ___________________________________________
Areas (order of preference ________________________________ if needed).

See announcement concerning assistantships and fellowships available.

An individual applying for financial aid specified above should complete this form and forward it to the dean of the college or chairman of the department to which application is being made. In addition the applicant must complete the Application for Admission to Graduate Study and send that form to the Admissions Office. A complete set of official copies of transcripts from colleges or universities attended must be sent to the Admissions Office and a set to the college or department to which this application is being made. The set sent to the department will be forwarded promptly to the Admissions Office to complete requirements of two completes in that office. This application, letters of recommendation and transcripts must be received by March 15 or earlier in case of certain departments (see announcements) and ordinarily awards will be made soon after that date, but prior to May 1.

Name in Full _____________________________________________

First  
Middle  
Last  

Present Address _____________________________________________

Home Address ________________________________________________

Place of Birth ________________________________________________ Date of Birth _______________

Citizenship _________________________________________________

Colleges attended  

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<tr>
<th>Colleges attended</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Major Field of Study</th>
<th>Degrees Granted</th>
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*If still in college, indicate the date on which requirements for the degree will be met. Admission and financial aid are provisional in this case.*)
If you have a reading knowledge of any foreign languages, list such languages and indicate for each whether you read with fair, good or excellent facility.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Purpose of taking graduate work.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

What do you plan to do after receiving your degree?

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Honors, fellowships or scholarships, if any, which have been awarded to you.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Assisting positions held while in college, if any, and dates.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

If employed since graduation, give positions held (including present position, if any) with names of institutions or firms, and dates. In case of teaching positions, give rank or title and the subjects taught.

_____________________________________________________________________________
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Names and addresses of three college teachers who will serve as reference and *Have Been Requested* by you to send recommendations to the dean of the college or the chairman of the department concerned.

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Student’s Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

*Idaho State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity institution and does comply with the various State and Federal statutes and Executive Orders designed to insure equal opportunity.*