Master of Public Administration Program

Department of Political Science
Idaho State University
MPA Frequently Asked Questions
(F.A.Q.S)

1. What is the history of the MPA program at ISU?

The M.P.A program was developed in 1974 to meet the growing public sector demand for administrative education. Graduates have been placed in such positions as university administrators, community development planners, grant administrators, health care managers, and directors of not-for-profit organizations. The placement rate for ISU M.P.A. graduates is high and many are successful national, state, and local administrators.

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

Students must have a minimum 3.00 GPA in upper-division undergraduate courses, score at the 40th 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. If a student has a GPA of 3.5 in the final 60 hours of undergraduate work, the GRE requirement is waived.

3. How many 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. Students must maintain a cumulative 3.0 G.P.A. Both A's and B's earned in the 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.

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

The MPA degree may be achieved through the successful completion of at least 33 semester credit hours of approved course work plus 3 credits of public service internship. The internship requirement may be waived for students who have substantial professional work experience in public service or the not-for-profit sector. The MPA director will determine if a student's experience is substantial, and if so can approve waiver of the internship requirement. Twenty-seven credit hours must be completed in courses selected from prescribed “core areas” with 12 additional hours completed in designated optional areas of emphasis.

5. Why are MPA classes held primarily in the late afternoon or evening?

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 primarily held in 3 hour blocks once per week at night and twice a week in 75 minute blocks.

6. 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.

7. 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. The internship requirement may be waived for students who have substantial professional work experience in public service or the not-for-profit sector. The MPA director will determine if a student’s experience is substantial, and if so can approve waiver of the internship requirement.

8. 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 the grade. The internship grade is pass or fail. The student also keeps a daily journal and that journal documents the required 200 hours (3 credits) of internship work. The requirements for the final paper will be discussed with the faculty internship director. Students working in an internship position represent both the university and the program and the student’s work should reflect appropriate professional behavior.

9. What is a graduate committee?

Every MPA student needs to form a graduate committee of two members from the department. You must designate one of the department members of the committee as “committee chair.” One Graduate Faculty Representative (GFR) from outside the department will be chosen by the student. Consult with your committee chair as to who may serve as your GFR. A listing of members of the graduate faculty is in the Graduate Catalog. Students should choose members that they are comfortable with and who will be the student’s “advocate” in oral examinations.
10. **What is a “Program of Study” and when do students have to complete it by?**

A program of study is simply the classes that you take to fulfill your core and specialized areas 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.

11. **What is the MPA Capstone seminar?**

MPA candidates may elect to take the MPA Capstone course (POLS 6680-Capstone in Public Administration) in lieu of comprehensive exams. POLS 6680 will be taught only in the Spring semester. If a student elects to take that course, they will write a major paper and defend that paper in front of their committee and they will not have to complete written exams. Written exams are still an option (along with a case presentation) for students that for a good reason (they move out of town) cannot complete the capstone course.
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (M.P.A.)
IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY

ENTERING THE M.P.A. PROGRAM

1. Make application to the Graduate School.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. Sign up for and take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). You can sign up for it at the University Counseling and Testing Center. 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. The Graduate School provides guidance on what combination of GPA and GREs scores are necessary for admittance.

REQUIREMENTS

You want to be a classified student. For the M.P.A. degree you obtain this status by:
1. Having an average score in the 35th percentile or above on any one of the three sections of the GRE exam. (You may need to take it more than once, the GRE is waived if your GPA is 3.50 or better in your last two years of undergraduate work);
2. Having an overall 3.00 grade point average from your last two years of undergraduate work or 3.5 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 of Political Science.
Applications are scored on the following rubric:

1. Applicant GRE Percentile, if applicable
   - 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).
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

_________________________  __________
Reference Writer          Date
IDaho State University
Department of Political Science
Master of Public Administration

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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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?

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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 coursework 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?
I. Core Courses

All students must take 27 credit hours of core area courses. Students must choose nine courses from this list, one of which is POLS 6680 Capstone in Public Administration.

- POLS 5505 Democracy and Governance
- POLS 5541 Administrative Law
- POLS 5551 Public Organizational Theory
- POLS 5552 Public Budgeting and Finance
- POLS 5553 Public Policy Analysis
- POLS 5554 Public Workplace Issues
- POLS 5558 Public Administration Ethics
- POLS 6622 Advanced Topics in Research
- POLS 6623 Program Assessment
- POLS 6680 Capstone in Public Administration

POLS 5519 Research Methods for Political Science may be substituted for POLS 6622 if needed.

II. Specialized Areas

All students must take 12 credit hours in a specialized areas listed below. Courses that are used to fulfill a core requirement cannot also be counted as specialized courses. (Students should follow instructions under each specialized area).

Specialized Area #1: State, Local, and Non-Profit Administration

Required Course:
- POLS 5567 State and Local Public Administration

- POLS 5505 Democracy and Governance
- POLS 5506 Intergovernmental Relations
- POLS 5509 Community & Regional Planning
- POLS 5541 Administrative Law
- POLS 5552 Public Budgeting and Finance
- POLS 5553 Public Policy Analysis
- POLS 5554 Public Workplace Issues
- POLS 5567 State and Local Administration
- POLS 5558 Public Administration Ethics
- POLS 5566 Public Lands Policy
- POLS 5578 Federal Indian Law
- POLS 5579 Tribal Governments
- POLS 6612 Seminar in State & Local Government
- POLS 6616 Seminar in Public Policy and Administration
POLS 6623  Program Assessment

The following courses outside the Political Science department may be used to meet the course requirement for the state, local, and non-profit administration concentration. No more than two courses may be used to meet the requirement.

COMM 5541  Interpersonal Communication
COMM 5552  Conflict Management
COMM 5554  Management Communication
ECON 5533  Economic Development
ECON 5539  State & Local Finance
ENGL 6607  Advanced Professional Writing
HIST 5589  GIS for Social Sciences
SOC 5566  Sociology of Community
SOC 5567  Community Networking
SOC 6615  Social Institutions

Specialized Area #2: Environmental Administration.

Required courses:
POLS 5555  Politics of Environmental Problems
POLS 5566  Public Lands Policy
or
POLS 6606  Environmental Law and Regulation

Choose two courses:
POLS 5505  Democracy and Governance
POLS 5506  Intergovernmental Relations
POLS 5509  Community and Regional Planning
POLS 5553  Public Policy Analysis
POLS 5558  Public Administration Ethics
POLS 5566  Public Lands Policy
POLS 6606  Environmental Law and Regulation
POLS 6623  Program Assessment

The following courses outside the Political Science department may be used to meet the course requirement for the environmental administration concentration. No more than one course may be used to meet the requirement.

COMM 5541  Interpersonal Communication
COMM 5552  Conflict Management
ENGL 6607  Advanced Professional Writing
HIST 5589  GIS for Social Sciences

Appropriate science course may be substituted with consent of the Master of Public Administration program director.
Specialized Area #3: Public Health Administration

Required course:
MPH 6609 Seminar in Public and Community Health

Choose three courses:
PHIL 6600 Ethics in Health Care (This course is strongly recommended)
POLS 5505 Administrative Process
POLS 5553 Public Policy Analysis
POLS 5558 Public Administration Ethics
POLS 6623 Program Assessment

Appropriate science course may be substituted with consent of the Master of Public Administration program director.

Interdisciplinary Specialized Area in Criminal Justice

Choose four courses:
SOC 5531 Criminology
SOC 5592 Topics in Criminal Justice
SOC 5536 Elite Deviance and Crime
SOC 5538 Sexual Crimes
POLS 5542 Constitutional Law
POLS 5543 Civil Rights and Liberties

Other courses appropriate to the Criminal Justice emphasis may be taken by the student with the consent of the MPA advisor.

III. Public Administration Internship

Each student must complete at least 3 but no more than 9 credit hours of an approved internship. Three credit hours of internship are equal to 200 hours of work as an intern. The internship requirement may be waived for students who have substantial professional work experience in public service of the not-for-profit sector. The MPA director will determine if a student's experience is substantial and be allowed to waive the internship requirement. The student must sign up for 3 credits of POLS 5559- Public Service 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:
   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 1, 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 Arts and Letters. Department of Political Science

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 Dates Major Field of Study Degrees Granted Dates of Degrees

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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.

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.)