

Master of Public Administration Student Handbook



OLD DOMINION
UNIVERSITY

School of Public Service

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Last Updated July 2024



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I. MPA: Program Overview

Master of Public Administration Mission Statement

Our mission in the MPA program is to develop professionals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead and advance public service in a diverse, multi-sectoral environment. We expect our graduates to be capable of critical problem solving, effective communication, skillful implementation of policy and programs, and ethical application of management and leadership concepts. The MPA program serves the region, state, and nation; supports public administration and public service, and advances knowledge through applied and scholarly research.

Our Values

- We embrace diversity in all dimensions, promoting a more equitable society and generating new ideas to meet current and future societal needs.
- We welcome all students, valuing differences in race, culture, religion, gender, socio-economic background, ability, career stages, styles of learning, education, and career objectives.
- We integrate theory and practice through cross-sector engagement of communities.

II. Curriculum & Program Requirements

The MPA curriculum consists of 39 credit hours (13 courses – 3 credits each).

Courses are required in two categories:

Core Curriculum: eight (8) required courses – 24 credits

Electives: five (5) courses – 15 credits

Core Curriculum

The following courses are required of all MPA students.

PADM 651 Administrative Theory I: The Context of Public Administration

PADM 671 Public Budgeting and Financial Management

PADM 701 Public Policy Analysis and Evaluation

PADM 723 Ethical Foundations of Public Administration

PADM 736 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

PADM 753 Research Methods for Public Administration

PADM 746 Capstone Seminar in Public Administration

Data Analysis - select one of the following:

- FOUN 722 Introduction to Applied Statistics and Data Analysis
- MPHO 605 Introduction to Biostatistics for Public Health
- PADM 752 Introduction to Data Analysis

Note:

The only core classes regularly offered in the Summer are PADM 723, FOUN 722, and PADM 746.

Electives

Students may take elective courses in a number of different areas related to public administration. Students may choose to focus their elective courses in [specific areas](#), such as those listed below, or may take a combination of any 5 electives in public administration (including courses that fall under the areas listed below). With the prior approval of the MPA Graduate Program Director, students may also take graduate level courses (500/600/700) outside of the department – such as in Communications, Geography, or Public Health.

Concentrations

Multi-Sector Public Service

Nonprofit Management and Governance

Graduate Certificates

Public Procurement and Contract Management

Women's Studies

Social Justice & Entrepreneurship

Business Analytics and Big Data

The Graduate Certificate in Public Administration & Policy is not applicable to current MPA students, as the Master of Public Administration encompasses its curriculum.

Internship/Field Experience

Professional experience in a public or nonprofit setting is an important component of the MPA. Though not required, a formal internship is strongly recommended for all students without experience in a public or nonprofit agency. MPA students can earn up to three elective credits for internships. PADM 668 Internship/Field Experience is a 300-hour (3 credit hour) public service experience in an approved agency. All internships **must be approved in advance** by the Graduate Program Director.

PADM 696 (Directed Readings) and PADM 698 (Directed Research)

These courses are usually designed to accompany an internship position or special project. Students must coordinate the details of the course with a faculty member *prior* to registration.

Recommended Course Sequence

Students should enroll in PADM 651 (Administrative Theory) as early as possible in their studies. Research Methods (PADM 753) should also be completed early in the program. The remaining core courses are not required to be taken in a specific order; however, the Capstone Seminar (PADM 746) must be among the last of the core courses taken. PADM 746 has the following pre/co-requisites: PADM 651, PADM 671, and PADM 701. Students who wish to take a certain number of courses per semester or graduate in a specific timeframe should prioritize the core curriculum.

Course Catalog

Detailed course descriptions are available in the University catalog. Not all courses listed in the Catalog may be offered in your time as an MPA student, and delivery methods may vary.

Transfer of Credit

Upon the recommendation of the MPA Graduate Program Director, students may transfer up to 12 credit hours of approved graduate level coursework from a regionally accredited institution. Coursework must be beyond the undergraduate degree and may not come from a completed degree program. Transfer of credit must meet specific criteria and university guidelines for course validation. Students interested in transferring credits from a previous institution or incomplete degree program should contact the MPA Graduate Program Director and be prepared to provide documentation such as official transcripts and course syllabi.

Training in Responsible Conduct of Research

Old Dominion University has a policy of training all graduate students in the fundamentals of Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). This policy was adopted with the understanding that the knowledge and philosophy presented in the RCR training can enhance the professional development of all students, regardless of discipline. This requirement is present in the Graduate Catalog: catalog.odu.edu/graduate/universityrequirementsforgraduatedegrees/

All graduate students must complete the RCR training within their first twelve credit hours (4 courses) of enrollment at ODU. The MPA Program also requires that the training to be finished before completion of PADM 753, Research Methods for Public Administration. If the RCR training is not completed before a student's first 12 credit hours are completed, a registration hold will be placed on the student's account, preventing further enrollment until the RCR is completed.

Degree Works

Students should use [Degree Works](#) to check on the status of their degree progress, confirm their registration status, check for holds, plan out their degree, and see their current GPA.

III. Scholarships

[The Spore Scholars Endowed Scholarship](#) was established to assist graduate student(s) enrolled in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. The recipient(s) must maintain a grade point average of 3.25 or higher and must have professional experience in municipal government or the nonprofit sector.

[The Wolfgang Pindur Endowed Scholarship in Applied Research](#) is funded by an endowment given by the School of Public Service to assist a full-time or part-time master's student (MPA) and/or a doctoral student (PhD in Public Administration). An essay concerning the student's commitment to public service and demonstrating skills of applied research will need to be provided.

Other scholarship opportunities will be shared with students periodically.

See the "[Graduate Financial Aid](#)" section of the University Catalog for more information.

IV. Department & University Policies

Continuance Policy

To qualify for continuing towards graduation, students must achieve a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in Graduate level courses. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the student being placed on probation, as per the university graduate policy. Students who fail to raise their GPA to 3.0 or better within the probationary semester are indefinitely suspended from the program. Please see the Old Dominion University Graduate Catalog for further information on grade appeals and reinstatement from indefinite suspension.

Students in Good Standing

Instructors may issue a grade of “I” for a course that is not completed on time. Incomplete grades must be completed within one semester after the course has ended or the course will be automatically changed to “F”. Students with more than 6 hours of incompletes will not be allowed to register for courses until the incompletes are resolved. Students must complete all requirements for the MPA degree within eight years of beginning the program. Students who take longer than eight years must seek validation for out-of-date credit.

Provisional Status

Students admitted provisionally to the MPA program must complete their first four courses (12 credit hours) in the program with a 3.2 GPA average. After this requirement is completed, the provisional status will be removed.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

Federal mandates require that students who are receiving federal financial aid (student loans) successfully complete at least 80% of all attempted credits. Grades for credits attempted but not completed include ‘W’, ‘F’, and ‘I’. If the SAP of 80% is not met, the student’s aid will be suspended. This suspension can be appealed with proper documentation and the formation of an academic plan to reach SAP. If the academic plan is adhered to throughout the probationary period, aid can be reinstated.

Advising

Once advising has taken place via email, phone, Zoom, or in person, the advisor will release the student’s registration hold (AD), permitting students to register online. [Other holds](#) originating from other departments cannot be removed by the academic advisor or the Graduate Program Director. Students should communicate with their academic advisor at least once each academic year. Students can review courses.odu.edu for past, current, and intended course offerings.

Registration

The time period for course registration is listed on the University Academic calendar. Registration for the Spring and Summer semesters usually opens in late October, and registration for the Fall semester usually opens in late March. Classes fill quickly - don’t wait to register!

Students should register as soon as the system allows. Overrides into full courses are only provided by instructor permission at their own discretion. Don't 'overbook' your schedule – only register for the classes you plan to take.

A guide on how to register is available on the odu.edu website. Advisors cannot register for you; you must log in to your Midas student portal and access Leo Online in order to enroll in classes.

Graduate Student Enrollment

Regular full-time graduate enrollment is 3 classes per Fall and Spring semester. If you work more than 30 hours per week and/or have additional responsibilities, you may wish to take 1-2 classes per semester. Keep in mind that our program consists of regular reading, writing, and research assignments, and is more time-intensive than most undergraduate programs.

Graduate students must be enrolled in at least 4 credits in a given semester to be eligible for most financial aid, including federal loans. For MPA students, this equates to at least 2 courses per semester, as each course is worth 3 credits.

Summer enrollment does not affect part-time/full-time student status. However, students should be aware that summer courses are offered in three sessions: Session 1, lasting the first half; Session 2, lasting the second half; and Session 3, lasting the full Summer semester.

Academic Calendar

Take note of the add/drop deadline for any semester in which you have enrolled in classes.

Students must withdraw from a course by this deadline in order to receive a tuition refund.

Students who do not withdraw from this deadline will not receive a full refund and will have a 'W' listed on their transcript. Improper or unofficial withdrawal could result in an 'F' being listed on the student's transcript.

Student Responsibility for Catalog Information: “Students are held individually responsible for the information contained in the Undergraduate and Graduate [Catalogs](#). **Failure to read and comply with University regulations will not exempt students from whatever penalties they may incur.**”

V. Academic Integrity

The following behaviors along with classroom disruptions violate this policy, corrupt the educational process, and will not be tolerated.

Cheating: Using unauthorized assistance, materials, study aids, or other information in any academic exercise

Plagiarism: Using someone else's language, ideas, or other original material without acknowledging its source in any academic exercise.

Fabrication: Inventing, altering or falsifying any data, citation or information in any academic exercise.

Facilitation: Helping another student commit, or attempt to commit, any Academic Integrity violation, or failure to report suspected Academic Integrity violations to a faculty member.

Plagiarism

The Old Dominion University (ODU) Code of Student Conduct defines plagiarism as follows:

using someone else's language, ideas, or other material without a proper citation in an academic exercise (including but not limited to submitting work of another person, making minor changes to borrowed materials, taking credit for group work without participating, etc.)

Plagiarism at Old Dominion University is an act of academic dishonesty that has serious consequences, up to and including expulsion from the University. Note that plagiarism is specifically covered in the ODU Honor Pledge. Refer to the Code of Student Conduct for details about sanctions and penalties for this behavior.

Avoiding Plagiarism

- *More than three words is plagiarism.* This is a good yardstick to use when wondering whether quotes are appropriate. They are if you are copying more than three words in sequence.
- *One source is not "common knowledge."* Common knowledge does not require citation. But something is not common knowledge if you have found just one source for the information.
- *When in doubt, cite!* If you have any doubt about whether to cite a source, err on the side of making the attribution.
- *If your co-author sounds surprisingly eloquent, make sure the contribution is his or her own.* We often work in groups and co-author papers and projects. You should ask the question of your co-author if you doubt the work is their own. In group work, you are responsible for the project/paper in its entirety.
- *Look away.* When you are writing, do not have open books or papers in front of you. Read your sources, and then put what you have read into your own words.
- *Writing is hard work.* Paraphrasing is relatively easy, writing is hard. Learning to be a good writer is part of what your college education is about.
- *Just because it's on the Internet, doesn't mean it's yours.* The Internet is a fantastic resource and search engines are terrific research tools. You must cite Internet web sites, and if you use a quote, use appropriate quotation procedures.
- *Paraphrasing is more than changing a verb tense or reordering a list.* There is a difference between citing a source for a fact and creating a bad quote.
- *Use a Style Guide.* Purchase a style guide and refer to it. Popular and timeless guides are by the American Psychological Association, Strunk and White, and Kate Turabian.

Original Work Policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote clarity and general understanding about multiple use of work in student papers, term projects, examinations, and other work. A paper prepared and submitted to meet a requirement for one course cannot be used, in whole or substantial part, to meet a requirement in another course. One possible exception is when students make full disclosure of an intended second or multiple use to the instructor in the latter course and receive approval (mere reference in the subsequent paper is not sufficient). Another exception might be the use of an insignificant part of the paper in a second course, such as a conceptual scheme drawn from an external source or a set of bibliographic references. Students should check with their professors to avoid misunderstandings.

Citing your Sources

Use the American Psychological Association (APA) formatting and style guide to cite your sources, create a reference page, and frame the layout of your assignments.

Resources for APA Citations and References:

- Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association
- Purdue Owl: APA Formatting and Style Guide (7th Edition)
- Penn State University Libraries: APA Quick Citation Guide
- ODU Library Guides: Citation Management
- EndNote

Authoritative Sources

Students should primarily use peer-reviewed journal articles or government resources to research for papers, projects, and assignments. Use the [ODU Library website](#) (Monarch OneSearch) to search academic databases or use Google Scholar to search for credible sources of information.

VI. Courses

Canvas is ODU's online portal for coursework, collaboration, and communication. Class announcements are usually made via Canvas. Turn on email notifications to be alerted of any updates.

Textbooks are listed on the syllabus and can be purchased through the ODU bookstore, via Amazon, or on a variety of other vendors. Materials can be rented or purchased, hard copies or digital, though your instructor may have specifications in this regard. Make sure you take note of the proper edition that you need for a course.

Timeliness

Keep track of all deadlines your instructor has posted. It is recommended that students keep a calendar with due dates for assignments. The course schedule may be revised as the semester progresses, so be sure to check Canvas regularly for any changes. Students should contact their instructor as soon as possible if they need to request flexibility for any assignment deadline.

Advice for Classwork

- Read all course materials.
- Be prepared and plan ahead.
- Verify assignment requirements – ask questions if clarification is needed.
- Always double check your spelling and grammar.
- Keep it to the point – be concise while writing.
- Follow due dates – take note of deadlines.
- Check your ODU student email account every day.
- Read the syllabus!

Technology Policies

Use your ODU student email account for all communication with faculty and staff. Be inclusive, professional, and respectful in your online correspondence.

Instructors reserve the right to halt device usage at any point of time in the class session or term.

Include your UIN in emails to faculty and staff – place it in your signature so you never forget!

Use the odu.edu website as a guide when questions or concerns arise.

VII. Graduation

To graduate, students must satisfy all University, college, and major requirements. Students must file an application for graduation Leo Online by the published deadline. Students must be enrolled in the semester in which they graduate. Commencement ceremonies are held each Fall and Spring. Students graduating in the Summer should participate in the prior Spring Commencement Ceremony. Participation in commencement does not equate to graduation.

Pi Alpha Alpha

Pi Alpha Alpha (PAA) is the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. PAA recognizes outstanding students in public administration, policy, and affairs. Membership is offered to high-performing students for a nominal fee in their last semester of study.

VIII. Resources

Department Resources

MPA Newsletter

The MPA Newsletter is a quarterly publication that keeps students informed of important programmatic updates and exciting professional opportunities. We urge students to review the newsletter when it is published to take advantage of the information shared. The department also welcomes students to share professional accomplishments, academic awards, and job opportunities with peers via the newsletter. Email the Graduate Program Director to get in touch.

MPA Linked In

Follow the ODU Master of Public Administration [Linked In](#) page for regular updates on events, job and internship opportunities, and student and faculty accomplishments.

School of Public Service Student Association

The SPS Student Association was established to increase connection among cohorts and encourage networking with fellow students. This student-led organization offers professional development, leadership, and community engagement opportunities. Event and meeting invitations will be sent to all students on a regular basis.

Master of Public Administration Advisory Board

The MPA Advisory Board consists of members who practice public administration in our communities across the city, state, and nation. Many members of the Advisory Board are ODU alumni who have connections in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Members offer mentoring, networking, and guest speaking experiences for MPA students.

University Resource Guide

Bookstore: <https://www.bkstr.com/olddominionstore/home>

Canvas: canvas.odu.edu

Career Development Center: <https://www.odu.edu/career-services>

College of Business: <https://www.odu.edu/business>

Counseling: <https://www.odu.edu/counseling-services>

Degree Works: degree.odu.edu

Dining: <https://olddominion.campusdish.com/>

Educational Accessibility: <https://www.odu.edu/accessibility>

English Proficiency: <https://www.odu.edu/admission/proficiency>

Financial Aid: <https://www.odu.edu/finaidoffice>

Graduate Admissions: <https://www.odu.edu/admission/graduate>

Housing: <https://www.odu.edu/housing>

Information Technology Services: <https://www.odu.edu/information-technology-services>

International Admissions: <https://www.odu.edu/admission/international>

International Student Resources: <https://www.odu.edu/international>

Leo Online: <https://ww1.odu.edu/ts/software-services/leoonline>

LGBTQIA+ Initiatives: <https://www.odu.edu/life/support/wgec/lgbt>

Military Connection Center: <https://www.odu.edu/military-connection>

myODU: my.odu.edu

Office of Intercultural Relations: <https://www.odu.edu/oir>

Recreation & Wellness: <https://www.odu.edu/recreation-wellness>

Service & Civic Engagement: <https://www.odu.edu/leadership-learning/service>

Student Email: <https://ww1.odu.edu/academics/student-computing/student-email>

Student Engagement & Traditions: <https://www.odu.edu/student-engagement-traditions>

Student Outreach & Support: <https://www.odu.edu/life/dean-students/student-outreach>

Transportation & Parking: <https://www.odu.edu/parkingservices>

Tuition & Fees: <https://www.odu.edu/tuition>

University Libraries: <https://www.odu.edu/library>

Women & Gender Equity Center: <https://www.odu.edu/life/support/wgec>

Monarch Citizenship

The Honor Code, Honor Pledge and Monarch Creed are the guiding principles of all Monarchs at ODU. They are the shared fundamental beliefs that commit all Monarchs to provide the highest level of integrity to the University, the community and themselves.

Code of Student Conduct:

<https://www.odu.edu/about/monarchcitizenship/student-conduct/code>

University Honor Code

“We, the students of Old Dominion University, aspire to be honest and forthright in our academic endeavors. Therefore, we will practice honesty and integrity and be guided by the tenets of the Monarch Creed. We will meet the challenges to be beyond reproach in our actions and our words. We will conduct ourselves in a manner that commands the dignity and respect that we also give to others.”

Honor Pledge

“I pledge to support the Honor System of Old Dominion University. I will refrain from any form of academic dishonesty or deception, such as cheating or plagiarism. I am aware that as a member of the academic community it is my responsibility to turn in all suspected violations of the Honor Code. I will report to a hearing if summoned.”

Monarch Creed

Make personal and academic integrity fundamental in all endeavors.

Offer service to the University and the community.

Nurture a climate of care, concern and civility to others.

Accept responsibility for all [my] actions.

Respect the dignity, rights, and property for all people.

Commit to the ongoing pursuit of intellectual and personal development.

Heighten awareness of individual and cultural similarities and differences.

Contact Information

Mailing Address:

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