

Western Michigan University

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
HANDBOOK**

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This MPA Handbook should be used in conjunction with the WMU *Graduate Catalog*, available at <http://catalog.wmich.edu/>, which describes policies and procedures for graduate study at Western Michigan University. MPA students are encouraged to pay particular attention to the sections on "Student Rights and Responsibilities." All other applicable University policies are incorporated in this handbook by reference.

Issued: February 2008
Effective: Summer Semester, 2008

MISSION

The mission of the MPA program is to integrate teaching, research and service in a manner that enhances leadership skills, administrative capabilities, and managerial practices in local, state and national public-serving organizations at multiple sites in Western Michigan University's service area.

The School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) offers the MPA at WMU's Kalamazoo Campus, and the Battle Creek and Lansing regional sites. The School of Public Affairs and Administration was founded in 1975 and is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. Many SPAA graduates hold significant leadership positions in state and local governments, health care and social service organizations, nonprofit agencies, and academic institutions.

GOALS

The program leading to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) has been offered regionally since 1975 and provides advanced, practitioner-oriented education to in-career professionals and pre-career students aspiring to positions of administrative leadership in public, nonprofit, and healthcare organizations.

There are ten goals for the MPA program.

- 1) Students will demonstrate leadership, managerial, and administrative competencies.
- 2) Students will demonstrate an understanding of the cultural, political, economic, ethical, legal, and sociological environments of the field.
- 3) Faculty, staff, and students will value diversity.
- 4) Students will demonstrate research skills.
- 5) Faculty will integrate their research experiences within the context of instruction.
- 6) Students will be encouraged to engage in public and community service.
- 7) Students will demonstrate proficiency in oral presentations.
- 8) Students will demonstrate proficiency in written expression.
- 9) Students will demonstrate proficiency in selected information technologies.
- 10) The MPA curriculum will be available at multiple locations throughout the WMU service area.

MPA CURRICULUM

The MPA curriculum provides a foundation in the principles of public administration, addresses the practical responsibilities of the public manager, and reflects on the task of administrative leadership. The MPA program includes three components: the **MPA Core Program (18 credit hours)**, an **Area of Concentration (18 credit hours)**, and the capstone **Project Paper Seminar (3 credit hours)**. Pre-career students must also satisfactorily complete PADM 7120, an additional three credit hour (300 contact hours) professional field experience in an agency or organization approved by the student's advisor. The entire curriculum assumes that MPA students already have basic computer literacy skills and a working knowledge of the American political processes at local, state, and national levels. Prospective students without those skills are encouraged to acquire them before they begin MPA course work.

The current version of the MPA curriculum, including a multi-year plan of courses at each WMU campus, course schedules, and course descriptions, are available at the Web site of the School of Public Affairs and Administration: www.wmich.edu/spaa/. These plans and schedules are subject to change; for that reason, students are encouraged to review the Web site frequently. Academic advisors are available to assist students in planning their programs and revising their course plans as necessary.

THE MPA CORE PROGRAM (18 Credit Hours) (as of Summer Semester, 2008)

The Core Program includes course work in the theoretical foundations of public management, critical areas of administrative responsibility, research methods, and special topics. Students are required to complete the following six courses.

PADM 6000: Historical and Legal Foundations of American Public Administration (3 credit hours)

PADM 6180: The Political and Economic Environment of Public Administration (3 credit hours)

PADM 6060: Analytical Methods (3 credit hours)

PADM 6070: Quantitative Data Analysis (3 credit hours)

PADM 6080: Organization Theory and Behavior (3 credit hours)

PADM 6390: Managing Public Performance and Information Technology (3 credit hours)

Recommended Course Sequence

Students should follow these courses in this sequence whenever possible. It is understood, however, that the frequency of course delivery at some campuses may make it more difficult to meet these expectations. Nonetheless, PADM 6000, PADM 6180, and PADM 6070 should be among the first courses taken, if possible. PADM 6390, Managing Public Performance and Information Technology, should be taken after completing at least PADM 6180, The Political and Economic Environment of Public Administration, and PADM 6080, Organizational Theory and Behavior, unless otherwise approved by the student's advisor. PADM 6060, Analytical Methods, should be taken near the end of the program, shortly before PADM 6800, the Project Paper Seminar.

THE AREA OF CONCENTRATION (18 credit hours) (as of Summer Semester, 2008)

MPA students may select an area of concentration from one of six options:

- 1) Health Care Administration
- 2) Human Resources Administration
- 3) Law
- 4) Nonprofit Leadership and Administration
- 5) Public Management – Local Government Administration
- 6) Public Management – State Agency Administration

Each concentration includes core courses and elective courses that are selected by the student and approved by the student's advisor. The areas that constitute the concentration, the course options that are included, and course descriptions are found at the School of Public Affairs and Administration Web site: www.wmich.edu/spaa/Programs.htm.

MPA students who wish to have their area of concentration listed on their transcripts must follow the course areas and options described in the WMU Graduate Catalog. If a student does not wish to have a designated area of concentration, if a concentration would be inappropriate to a student's educational or career objectives, or if a desired concentration is not available at a particular campus, he or she may choose not to designate a concentration on the permanent program. Each student should carefully consider the content of available MPA concentrations in terms of individual career and educational goals.

With advisor approval, and under the supervision of a SPAA faculty member, a readings and/or an independent study course may be used to satisfy concentration requirements. See "Frequently Asked Questions" at the end of this handbook for further information about these courses.

THE PROJECT PAPER SEMINAR (Capstone) (3 credit hours)

The Project Paper Seminar (PADM 6800) is the capstone course of the MPA program and is required for all concentrations, but not the graduate certificates. It provides an opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice in a significant problem solving exercise. In this capstone seminar, MPA candidates will conduct an original, analytical research project (non-thesis) consisting of professional analysis of a management problem leading to practical implementation in governmental or nonprofit settings, or theoretical inquiry in the field of public administration. That project will produce either academic research that provides new generalized knowledge in the field or a solution to a public management problem in a specified agency. Other forms of professional inquiry and analysis may be acceptable if approved by the instructor (see below).

MPA candidates who have completed at least 30 hours of course work, including all MPA Program Core courses, are eligible to enroll in the Project Paper Seminar. Exceptions to this prerequisite requirement can be made with the written consent of the student's MPA Advisor and the Instructor of Record. However, MPA advisors recommend that students enroll in the seminar as their last course whenever possible because of its nature as the *culminating course* for the entire program.

THE PROFESSIONAL FIELD EXPERIENCE/INTERNSHIP (3 credit hours)

For pre-career students only, another component of the MPA degree program is a planned professional field experience, or internship, equivalent to three credit hours (300 hour commitment of 20 hours a week for 15 weeks, or one semester). Students must enroll in PADM 7120 (3 credit hours) to complete this requirement. The first goal of the internship is to provide candidates with meaningful work experience, which will afford realistic exposure to the world of professional administration and to the organizational environment in which the dynamics of an agency are developed. The second goal of the internship is to acquaint candidates with the values and attitudes of administrators in public serving organizations and to learn about the clientele groups they serve. Third, the internship allows each pre-career MPA candidate to complete an agency project under the joint supervision of an academic and an agency representative which may be used in the final Project Paper Seminar if approved by the Seminar Instructor of Record. Students should note that, if they are admitted on pre-career status and remain in that status at the end of their MPA programs, no other three-credit course may be substituted for PADM 7120; satisfactory completion of the internship is a graduation requirement in such instances.

Internships normally correspond to the academic calendar beginning in January, May, or September. Internships may be paid or unpaid. It is the student's responsibility to seek an internship site that meets the requirements that are itemized below. The student, the School's MPA Internship Advisor, and the sponsoring agency agree in advance to internship arrangements.

The Intern is responsible for:

- Rendering a variety of useful, professional services as assigned by the agency;
- Following the rules and regulations of the sponsoring agency;
- Submitting a letter of understanding from the agency (where appropriate) describing the project/tasks to be accomplished during the internship;
- Enrolling in PADM 7120.

The School of Public Affairs and Administration is responsible for:

- Informing students about internship opportunities;
- Approving the agency letter of understanding describing the project/tasks to be accomplished;
- Making the Instructor of Record for the PADM 7120 course available to both the intern and the sponsoring agency to discuss questions or problems.

The Sponsoring Agency will be responsible for:

- Clarifying compensation arrangements before the internship begins;
- Providing the intern with significant administrative, non-clerical work experience, such as a specific project or variety of tasks, which will benefit the agency and the intern;
- Identifying a supervisor who will oversee the work of the intern;
- Meeting with an academic advisor or the internship coordinator as needed;
- Completing a written evaluation of the intern's performance before the PADM 7120 Instructor issues a grade.

Finally, MPA students who are not required to complete an internship may request one if they believe it would be beneficial in achieving their career goals. With the approval of the student's MPA Advisor, students may use the 3 credit-hour internship to help satisfy their Concentration requirements.

PROJECT PAPER GUIDELINES

Introduction

One of the most challenging steps leading to the successful completion of the Project Paper is selecting the problem or issue to investigate. Past experience suggests that some seminar participants devote inadequate thought to this important matter and as a consequence may find themselves caught up in a frustrating and seemingly endless project. The selection of a well-defined, "doable" topic, by contrast, can make the Project Paper one of the most rewarding components of the MPA degree program.

Before undertaking the work of research and writing the project paper, students must obtain approval of the project topic from their Instructor of Record and, where applicable, from an agency representative. Students are strongly encouraged to gain this approval at the latest during the semester prior to enrolling in the Project Paper Seminar. Students whose project papers focus on a significant agency issue or problem should involve the Instructor of Record and agency representative early in the process of selecting a topic. Involvement by the agency should help students receive full recognition of having helped solve an agency problem, even as a normal component of the work schedule rather than as an unrelated and outside activity.

PADM 6060 Analytical Methods and the Project Paper

In PADM 6060 Analytical Methods, students focus on formulating research questions, selecting analytical methods, developing conclusions and recommendations, and understanding the application and use of appropriate research methodologies in public administration. In short, this course teaches students how to design research, including the research project they will undertake for PADM 6800. Consequently, students contemplating enrolling in the Project Paper Seminar should take PADM 6060, if possible, no more than one year prior to enrolling in PADM 6800. PADM 6070 Quantitative Data Analysis must be taken prior to enrolling in PADM 6060.

In PADM 6060, students will prepare a research design that may serve as the Project Proposal for PADM 6800.

Criteria for Selection of the Project Paper Seminar Topic

The following criteria apply to the selection of the Project Paper Seminar topic.

- The topic should be one that can be completed within the semester in which the student is enrolled in the seminar.
- All topics involving research using human subjects, as defined by the university, must gain approval from the WMU Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Students are strongly encouraged to work with their Instructor of Record in advance of the seminar semester in preparing the documentation for an HSIRB application.
- Project papers do not need to meet the requirements of an official academic thesis, as defined by the university. However, neither is the paper to be merely an expanded single-course term paper. All seminar projects must contain substantial analytical content appropriate to masters' level graduate study and use rigorous methodologies relevant to the topic and approved by the Instructor of Record.
- The length of the project paper will vary depending on the nature of the topics and research design employed for the project.

- Per the university's multiple submission policy, the project paper may not consist of substantial portions of previous work submitted for credit in a prior course. However, with the permission of the Instructors of Record of PADM 6060 and PADM 6800, a research design proposal developed for PADM 6060 may be used as the basis for the research design in PADM 6800.
- The paper is not to be simply a report of activities undertaken by pre-career students during professional field experience/internship, a case study describing a single set of related incidents and decisions reached by other work colleagues, or a report of the day-to-day responsibilities of in-career students. However, when approved by the faculty mentor, the topic may include material related to the student's role and work responsibilities during the time covered by the seminar.
- The seminar topic, its research design and methodology, and the HSIRB application must receive the approval of the Instructor of Record (and HSIRB, where applicable) before the research or project activity can begin.

All PADM 6800 seminar papers will be evaluated for grading purposes on the basis of the following criteria: quality and clarity of the writing, thoroughness and quality of the research, completeness of documentation and literature review, and the clarity and completeness of the paper's organization. An oral presentation of the paper's topic and findings will also be required and evaluated as part of the seminar grade. The evaluation criteria for the Project Paper Seminar will also be described in the course syllabus. The PADM 6800 Instructor of Record may submit the student's final paper to an outside faculty reader for comment and grade recommendation prior to assigning the final grade for the seminar.

Recommended Classes of MPA Project Paper Topics

The following are types of projects deemed acceptable by the School's faculty, although other topic categories may be acceptable upon approval of the Instructor of Record and the School's MPA Committee [or Director].

- Applied Analytical Research: Applied research using analytical and applied research methods to solve a particular policy or management problem of a specific public or non-profit sector agency. Examples of such projects include: program, policy, and project proposals, needs assessments or evaluations, management studies, and budgetary and fiscal studies. While all applied project papers must have a strong analytical component, they may result in the production of practical administrative products as a component of the project paper. These administrative products may include new program proposals, new or revised management plans and systems, employee or operations manuals, strategic agency plans, etc.
- Empirical Scholarly Research: Empirical research into the behavior, events, and other phenomena found in the administration of public and non-profit organizations. This research must follow accepted social science research designs and methodologies (quantitative, qualitative, or blended approaches) for evaluating empirical models and testing hypotheses. The Instructor of Record must approve the project's research design early in the research process. Examples of projects of this type include studies of organizational and administrative behavior and processes, organizational development and change, citizen interaction with administrative agencies, and the examination of policy making and implementation.
- Legal or Historical Studies: Legal or historical analyses, using accepted legal or historical research methods, and focused on public or nonprofit policy making and policy or program implementation issues.

- **Contemplative Treatise:** Students may undertake artistic or philosophical approaches that explore issues of importance to public managers. The paper should be a scholarly examination of theoretical issues and based heavily on a literature review that poses and addresses a central question.
- **Other Projects:** Occasionally, unique projects not defined above are presented to take advantage of rare opportunities to examine issues or problems relevant to public administration as a field of inquiry or practice. Such projects may be approved with the endorsement of the Instructor of Record if they meet the seven criteria for selection of seminar topics described above, and the requirements for original research described below in this manual.

Project Paper Proposal

Each Project Paper research proposal and its research design will include the following elements, tailored to the nature of the student's approved seminar project:

Abstract: A concise paragraph describing the topic, project focus, and key research question.

Project Description: An introduction to the topic and its applied importance to the field and practice of public administration

Preliminary Literature Review: A preliminary review of professional and scholarly literature establishing how this project is placed within the context of the wider body of knowledge about the topic. Professional or scholarly literature reviews are not to be annotated bibliographies; they are to be integrative reviews that establish where the student's project can be placed in the broader content and theoretical context of prior published research and analysis. The requirements for the approach and content of acceptable literature reviews should be clearly stated in the course syllabus.

Data Collection Strategies: A description of the information and data sources and methodologies to be used in conducting the project.

Research Question and Methodology: The nature of the methodology to be employed in conducting the project analysis, and a clear statement of the research question(s) and, where relevant, hypotheses of the research.

Project Outline: A preliminary outline of the research paper

Timeline: A schedule of dates of when the student expects to complete the key steps in the research/project analysis process.

Projects involving the use of proprietary agency data, interviews with agency personnel, or on-site observations of agency operations will require a letter of agency endorsement for the project. Students are advised to inform their employers when the employer or its employees are to be part of the content of the project paper.

All projects must entail *original research and writing*, defined as meeting the following criteria:

- The research project has not been previously conducted. If the study is a replication study, it must not have been previously conducted of the project subjects or the agency unless the project involves longitudinal studies of administrative phenomena.
- The study must contain strong analysis as the basis for project findings, recommendations, and/or products.
- The project has used the appropriate methodologies germane to the topic and its academic or professional field.
- The research question (applied or otherwise) may not have been recently examined in the chosen agency context, or otherwise already extensively covered in the literature of the field.
- The paper provides an opportunity for the integration of the content of the student's MPA curriculum, as defined by the Instructor of Record.
- The paper must represent substantially new research, as defined by the Instructor of Record.

At the Instructor of Record's discretion, all papers may be subject to analysis by *Turnitin* or other relevant plagiarism software, in compliance with university policy.

Project Paper Format and Research Resources

The School of Public Affairs and Administration has adopted the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition) as the standard for citation, punctuation, format, headings, pagination, etc. The Publication Manual is available at many commercial bookstores and online booksellers. A summary version of its style guide is also available online. MPA Project Papers must follow APA requirements for style, paper headings, citations and references, pagination, and tabular presentation of data, unless specifically exempted by the supervising Instructor of Record.

There are a number of valuable books on research methods in public administration or the social sciences. Students are encouraged to browse these resources, or contact a SPAA faculty member for recommended reading in these areas. The following sources are useful for planning a research project for the Seminar.

Babbie, E. R. 1992 *The Practice of Social Research*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

O'Sullivan, E., Russell, G., and Berner M., 2003. *Research Methods for Public Administration*. New York: Longman.

Students requiring a refresher on the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research design, or the use of blended approaches, would be well served to read John W. Creswell. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. ISBN: 0-7619-2442-6 (paperback).

Project Paper Organization

The finished project paper for applied analytical or empirical scholarly research projects should usually contain the following sections, in the following order.

- a) Title page (must adhere to Graduate College guidelines)
- b) Abstract (a 200 word summary that includes topic, major findings, and conclusions)
- c) Executive Summary (a longer summary that describes the paper in greater detail, but not to exceed two pages (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font))
- d) Table of Contents (with page numbers)
- e) Introduction (a statement of purpose and organization of the paper, including the expected contribution to knowledge in the field of public administration)
- f) Literature Review (a review of the most important documents from related scholarly research and professional sources)
- g) Research Design and Methodology
- h) Data Analysis and Findings
- i) Conclusions and Recommendations (summary of findings, conclusions drawn, recommendations for action or further study)
- j) References (in APA style)
- k) Appendices
- l) Agency approval letter (where applicable)

The project paper organization for legal, historical, and contemplative and other acceptable projects will be established by the Instructor of Record.

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB)

The role of HSIRB is to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects. Research may be defined as any systematic investigation designed to develop or contribute to generalized knowledge. Any research protocol involving human subject participants must be submitted to HSIRB for approval, even if the student believes the project will result on an approval finding of “approval not required” or “exempt from review.” More information about human subject research can be obtained from the Research Compliance web page at the GoWMU web site, or by contacting a PADM 6800 instructor.

MPA students who intend to conduct research in PADM 6800 that will involve research in human subjects should contact the PADM 6800 instructor assigned to their course section prior to the beginning of the semester in order to gain HSIRB approval in sufficient time to complete the Project Paper during the semester in which the student is registered for the course.

Seminar Schedule

Two weeks prior to the start date for Project Paper, each student needs to e-mail a 1-2 page description of the proposed topic to cpa-spaa@wmich.edu or risk being removed from the course. The assigned faculty members will use this information to decide which students fit best with the skills and experience of the assigned faculty members.

The Project Paper Seminar will usually consist of three live classroom sessions involving all students currently enrolled in a section of PADM 6800, plus additional meetings between the supervising faculty member, the student, and (where applicable) the student's supervisor or other agency representative as needed. Some faculty members may elect to add a fourth group meeting. Seminar meetings will generally be held on Saturdays during the first or second week of the semester at a time and location announced in the schedule of classes. At the first meeting, the faculty supervisor may facilitate an MPA program evaluation, will outline expectations for the MPA Project Paper, and will conduct a general discussion of appropriate topics, data gathering procedures, deadlines, and grading criteria. In order to provide seminar participants with as much time as possible to prepare, the first meeting is scheduled early in the semester.

The second seminar meeting will ordinarily be scheduled two to three weeks after the first meeting. Between these two meetings, where applicable, seminar participants should consult with their supervisor or another agency representative and identify the topic, which will serve as a focus of their study. At the second seminar session, each participant will present a formal but brief project proposal of his/her topic. The Project Paper proposal must include: (a) a clear, concise statement of the problem or issue to be investigated; (b) a brief background on the problem or issue to be investigated; (c) published and/or other sources of data (interviews, survey research instruments, questionnaire forms, etc.); (d) procedures to be employed in analyzing the information to be accumulated; (e) major section and sub-section headings which are likely to be found in the final report; and (f) a tentative timetable (for the literature search, interviews, questionnaires, writing, etc.). This second meeting will ordinarily occupy most of the day since each participant will present an outline of his/her MPA Project Paper orally and receive feedback from peers and the supervising faculty member.

If appropriate, other meetings between the student, an agency representative, and the supervising professor can be scheduled in the field following the second seminar session.

The third (and final) seminar session is ordinarily held near the end of the semester (approximately week eleven). In the intervening periods, students will have conducted the academic and professional literature review, collected and analyzed all the information needed to resolve the issue under study, completed the necessary analytical and research tasks, and written at least a preliminary draft of the final project paper. At the Instructor of Record's discretion, this preliminary draft of the paper may need to be submitted to allow the instructor to make suggested changes and constructive comments to aid the student in improving the quality of the final draft.

At the third meeting, each student will deliver an oral presentation of his/her findings. This is to be a formal presentation and students should prepare for distribution copies of any charts, graphs, tables, or other summary materials, which will enhance understanding by other seminar participants. (Arrangements for audio-visual equipment should be completed well in advance of this meeting.) The formal presentation format stems from the faculty's belief that professional administrators must be able to make effective, persuasive presentations before groups of peers or policy makers such as city council members, county commissioners, or state legislators. The final seminar grade will reflect, in part, the professionalism and effectiveness of this formal presentation. Under exceptional circumstances, and with the Instructor of Record's approval, students may be allowed to make their presentations in other venues.

At the Instructor of Record's discretion, the final Project Paper document may be due at the third class session, or at a latter date prior to the end of the semester. Subject to individual variation among supervising faculty members, faculty may require up to four copies of the final paper. Normally, the student will retain one copy; one copy will be read and evaluated by the supervising faculty member and returned to the student with the final grade affixed, and a third copy may be provided to the agency representative for the agency's records or for its comments and/or recommendations. A fourth, final, and bound copy, as specified by the School, will be retained in the library of the School of Public Affairs and Administration. Students should be aware that project papers are subject to public access.

APPLICATION, ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission to the MPA Program is competitive and consideration is based on undergraduate GPA, work history and experience, career goals, written communications skills (in English), and demonstrated intellectual capacity to undertake graduate study in a quality manner. Graduate admissions test scores, such as those for the GRE or GMAT, are not required by the School. It should be noted that academic units such as the School of Public Affairs and Administration may establish standards that are more rigorous than those of The Graduate College. In those instances, admission and dismissal decisions are based on those higher standards.

Students may obtain a copy of the guidelines used by the MPA Admissions Committee in reviewing and acting upon applications for admission to the MPA program by contacting the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

In general, however, the following admissions requirements are in effect.

To be admitted to the program on Regular Admission status (without conditions), the applicant must demonstrate:

- 1) An undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or better (4.00 scale), and a 3.00 GPA in all previously taken graduate course work.
- 2) Evidence presented in two essays required for the application that (a) the applicant's reasons for seeking admission are compatible with the program's educational mission, goals and objectives, (b) the applicant has the capacity to think and communicate orally and in writing in English at the Committee's expected level of graduate study.
- 3) In at least two required letters of reference, evidence that the applicant has the capacity to adequately complete graduate study. These letters of reference are to be submitted separately from the applicant's application materials. Applicants are strongly encouraged to have letters submitted by former college instructors and/or supervisors of the applicant's professional employment or volunteer activities.
- 4) Evidence that the applicant's employment, academic or volunteer background is related to public administration in a governmental, nonprofit, or health-care organizational setting.

Students may be admitted to the program on Probationary Admission status if they demonstrate:

- 1) An undergraduate GPA of 2.75-2.99 and a record of three years of progressively responsible professional employment in one or more governmental, nonprofit, or health care organizations. A GPA of 3.00 earned in previous graduate coursework may be used by the Committee as evidence of graduate study capacity that helps offset a weak undergraduate GPA. A GPA of 3.00 or better in the final 60 hours of undergraduate study may be used by the Committee as offsetting evidence to an overall undergraduate GPA of less than 2.75.
- 2) The ability to meet criteria 2, 3 and 4 under Regular Admission status, as specified above.

Students unable to meet the requirements specified above under Regular or Probationary Admission will be denied admission to the MPA program.

Re-Application

Students denied admission, and who subsequently wish to re-apply to the MPA program, are advised to complete three core courses in the MPA program, under Non-Degree (Graduate) Status. Solid performance in those courses will improve the student's chances for admission. However, admissions decisions will be made using all of the criteria specified above; a high grade point average in these MPA courses is not a guarantee of admission.

Transfer from Probationary to Regular Admission Status

To transfer from probationary to regular student status in the program, students must successfully complete six credit hours of MPA core courses and one three-credit hour required course in one of the program's concentrations, with a B or better in each course and with a graduate grade point average of 3.25 or better. Students may count such courses taken while under Non-Degree (Graduate) Status, if (1) a B or better grade was earned in the course, and (2) the course was taken no earlier than one academic year prior to application to the program. One academic year is defined as two semesters plus one summer session.

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

Students may apply for admission to the MPA program on the World Wide Web or by requesting an application packet from the School of Public Affairs and Administration, Battle Creek campus or Lansing campus. Additional information about online applications can be found on the Web at the following URL: <http://www.wmich.edu/spaa/AdmisMPA.htm>

The application process consists of the following steps:

1. Applicants receive a Application for Graduate Admission and Departmental Information Form (DIF).
2. Applicants submit the Application for Graduate Admission to the Office of Admissions and Orientation. Include a nonrefundable application fee payable to Western Michigan University, and one official transcript from every previous undergraduate and graduate institution attended other than Western Michigan University. (Applicants who have already secured Non-Degree (Graduate) Admissions Status do not need to pay the fee again.)

3. Applicants submit Departmental Information Form (DIF) to the School of Public Affairs and Administration. Include one official transcript from every previous undergraduate and graduate institution attended other than Western Michigan University, responses to the two (2) departmental essay questions, and a copy of your current resume. In addition, two (2) letters of reference must be submitted by the referees separately from the other application materials.
4. Applications should be received by June 1st for Fall Semester admission, October 1st for Spring Semester admission, and February 1st for Summer Semester admission. Applications that are still incomplete at the time the Admissions Committee of the School of Public Affairs and Administration meets will be deferred until a subsequent meeting.
5. The MPA Admissions Committee meets three times a year to review completed applicant files. Meetings are scheduled for mid-June, mid-October and mid-February. Applicants will be informed of the decision of the Admissions Committee within three weeks of their decision.

Students may begin taking MPA courses while the formal application process is underway on Graduate Non-Degree status. This status does not constitute or guarantee future admission into the MPA. No more than nine credit hours of MPA courses taken on Non-Degree Application status may be counted toward the degree. An application for Graduate Non-Degree status can be found here: <http://www.wmich.edu/admissions/gradapp/GradPTGform.pdf>

APPLYING FOR GRADUATION

MPA students must check with their designated advisor before they apply for graduation in order to assure that the advisor has submitted a signed permanent program to the Registrar's Office. Students must then submit a graduation application; the deadlines to apply for graduation are December 1st for April graduation, February 1st for July and August graduation, and August 1st for December graduation.

A \$45 application fee will be billed to your student account. You can find more information on the process at the Registrar's webpage <http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/graduation/>. Upon receipt, the Academic Records Office initiates an audit of the student's transcript to determine if all degree components are being met. The auditor sends a letter to the student informing him/her of any remaining components before graduation. Applications for graduation are available at the Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, or Lansing campuses, at the School of Public Affairs and Administration, or on the Web at <http://www.wmich.edu/registrar/graduationaudit.html>.

FINANCIAL AID

Because the kinds, amounts and eligibility standards for financial aid change frequently, students should consult the following Web sites periodically for the most current information or contact the Financial Aid and Scholarships office at (269) 387-6000 or finaid-info@wmich.edu

- <http://www.wmich.edu/finaid>
- <http://www.wmich.edu/~grad/appointments/>
- <http://www.wmich.edu/spaa/Masters.htm>

PI ALPHA ALPHA

Pi Alpha Alpha is a national honor society that recognizes outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in the field of public affairs and administration. Those universities and colleges that are members of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) are eligible to establish a Pi Alpha Alpha chapter. Pi Alpha Alpha is a member of the Association of College Honor Societies, a national organization dedicated to encouraging fraternal and specialized honor societies in establishing and maintaining high standards, scholarship and achievement of their members.

The society seeks to promote the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. Pi Alpha Alpha objectives foster integrity, professionalism and effective performance in the conduct of government and related public service activities. Pi Alpha Alpha membership identifies those with the highest performance levels in educational programs preparing them for public service careers.

Students in the School of Public Affairs and Administration who have completed at least 20 hours of graduate course work and have attained a GPA of at least 3.85 are eligible for nomination to the faculty. Faculty members review the names of potential nominees and then select those to be inducted into the Western Michigan University Chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1) Am I required to take the GRE General Test or subject matter test?

No. GRE test scores are not always the best predictors of a student's ability to complete the MPA degree. A prospective student who has taken the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination recently, however, is welcome to submit his/her scores with application materials voluntarily if he/she wishes to provide additional evidence of ability to succeed in the program.

2) What is the difference between an in-career student and a pre-career student?

An in-career student has been employed full-time by a professionally relevant public agency or nonprofit organization for at least six months. For in-career students, the MPA degree program includes 39 credit hours of coursework. A pre-career student is a recent college graduate or student who does not have work experience in the areas of public administration, health care, or nonprofit organizations. For pre-career students, the MPA degree program is 42 credit hours of coursework, including a three credit-hour internship with an approved agency of local, state, national government, or other appropriate organization.

Note: Students who are employed full-time *outside* of a relevant public agency or nonprofit organization may be considered pre-career unless otherwise approved. They will be required to satisfactorily complete a PADM 7120 internship in an approved public or nonprofit organizational setting. Questions concerning status are addressed by the Admissions Committee at the time of admission.

3) Can courses in the MPA program be waived without substitution of another course?

On a limited basis, yes. There are four circumstances under which a course may be waived without substitution of another three-credit course. First, if a student is admitted to in-career status, the three-credit PADM 7120 course is waived, and the student's program is reduced from 42 to 39 credits.

Second, students with less than 6 months employment whose resumes reflect work or volunteer activity for a period equivalent to the one semester, 20 hour per week internship (a total of 300 contact hours) with a governmental, non-profit, or health care organization or may qualify for a waiver of PADM 7120 (the internship requirement). Additionally, pre-career students who after being admitted to the program secure full-time employment in a government, non-profit, or health care agency for a period of at least six (6) months prior to completion of the MPA may be granted a waiver of the internship requirement with approval of an advisor.

Third, if a student passes a standard statistics examination administered by faculty of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, or presents evidence of equivalent graduate or undergraduate coursework in statistics, PADM 6070 may be waived and a substitute course will not be required.

Fourth, a student may, with advisor review and approval, have his/her program reduced by no more than three credit hours if he/she produces evidence of completion of an extensive training program in a non-accredited institution or in a non-credit program sponsored by an accredited educational institution. Programs of this kind must substantially parallel in type, duration, quality, and content the MPA program element for which credit is waived. Written documentation of satisfactory completion must be maintained in the student's folder.

It is important to remember that the standard program is 42 semester hours for pre-career students and 39 semester hours for in-career students. To maintain integrity of the MPA curriculum, the goal is for most students to complete the applicable number of hours of credit. With these four exceptions, all other waivers require substitution of a course with an equal number of credit hours.

4) Can course work taken at the undergraduate level (1000, 2000, 3000, or 4000 level) be used to satisfy MPA degree components?

According to the School of Public Affairs and Administration only 5000 level courses and above may be counted toward the MPA degree program. Policy established by The Graduate College prohibits credit previously used to satisfy undergraduate degree requirements from being used to satisfy credit hour components of graduate degrees. It is possible to use previous undergraduate training or course work as a basis for waiving certain MPA program components if the course work was taken recently and the student earned high grades in that course work. However, if a course is waived as a result of undergraduate course work an equivalent number of graduate credit hours must be substituted. The credit hours for this course are still necessary for degree completion and must be substituted with another graduate course, as noted above.

5) Can credit from graduate-level courses from other universities or courses used to satisfy components of another degree at Western Michigan University (WMU) be utilized to satisfy MPA degree components?

Yes. The Graduate College policy on the transfer of credits (as outlined in the [Graduate Catalog](#)) is as follows:

A student enrolled in a master's program must complete a minimum of 24 semester hours at Western Michigan University. Any credits transferred into a master's program from other universities may not exceed sixteen semester credit hours. Graduate credit may be transferred from other schools provided:

1. The credits were earned in an institution accredited for graduate study and are of "B" grade (3.0) or better. Moreover, the student's overall grade point average for all graduate work taken at the other institution must also be "B" (3.0) or better.
2. The credit is earned within a six-year period prior to graduation from Western Michigan University, is represented on an official transcript of the other university, and is identified as graduate credit.
3. The student's department verifies that the transfer credits contribute to the student's degree program and includes them in the student's Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study.
4. The graduate dean approves the inclusion of the transferred credits in the student's Graduate Student Permanent Program of Study.

Second Master's Program

A student enrolled for a second master's degree from Western Michigan University must complete a minimum of 24 additional semester hours at Western Michigan University. Any credits transferred internally into the second master's program may not exceed sixteen semester credit hours.

Transfer credit from outside institutions will be awarded for coursework or other educational experiences substantially parallel in type, duration, quality, and content to the MPA program element for which credit is sought. Credits completed for another Master's degree at WMU will only be transferred to meet MPA requirements with approval of an academic advisor and/or the MPA committee.

6) Am I required to confer with my academic advisor before enrolling for classes each semester or session?

The MPA Committee recommends that all newly admitted MPA students arrange to meet with their academic advisor before scheduling their first MPA course or courses. At the first meeting the academic advisor will summarize degree components and answer questions posed by the student. Based on the student's career goals, the advisor will suggest course work that should be included in the Core Program and the Area of Concentration.

It is extremely important that students meet again with an academic advisor when nearing the completion of MPA degree components. At this meeting the student and advisor review the student's program to ensure that all of the program components have been completed. The MPA Committee also recommends that students meet with an advisor periodically while enrolled in the MPA program. Some MPA students confer with their advisor before enrolling each semester.

7) Must MPA students complete all course work criteria before enrolling in the Project Paper Seminar, PADM 6800?

Students enroll in the Project Paper Seminar, PADM 6800 after completing at least 30 semester hours of credit, including all MPA Core Program courses, unless given written permission from their academic advisor to enroll earlier. Under normal circumstances, PADM 6800 should be the last course in the student's MPA program. Ideally, PADM 6060 should be taken within one academic year prior to enrollment in PADM 6800.

It is very important that the students needing an internship establish and maintain close communication with the academic advisor or internship coordinator early in the program to ensure that the Professional Field Experience/Internship assignments will be scheduled at the most opportune time for completing the program.

8) Under what conditions may students in the MPA degree be terminated from the program?

Any MPA student who has fallen below a 3.0 grade point average after completing nine or more credit hours may be terminated from the program. Any student who falls below a 3.0 average anytime after completing 15 credit hours will be automatically terminated. Pre-career students who perform inadequately in the Professional Field Experience/Internship will not be awarded the MPA degree. Students may also be terminated for serious violations of University rules or standards of conduct, as enumerated in the [Graduate Catalog](#), the [WMU Code of Conduct](#), or other official University publication.

9) Should students in the MPA degree complete all core courses before going on to take courses in the area of concentration?

Ordinarily, no. PADM 6000: Legal and Philosophical Foundations of Public Administration, PADM 6180: Political and Economic Environment of Public Administration, and PADM 6070: Quantitative Data Analysis should be taken early in a student's program. Students take other core and elective courses when conditions allow. Many specialized courses that students may wish to include in their area of concentration are offered only infrequently and should be taken when available. The variability of course scheduling is one important reason why MPA students are encouraged to contact their academic advisor before enrolling each semester or session.

10) Can I include a specialized course in my MPA program if no such course is included on the list of approved MPA courses?

There are a number of areas in which neither the School of Public Affairs and Administration nor cooperating departments have developed specific courses. In some cases it is possible given sufficient interest for the School to utilize what are termed "variable topic courses" (for example PADM 5990 Topics in Public Administration) to offer "tailor made" courses for a group of MPA students wishing to study a specialized subject matter. Alternatively, it is possible in some subject matter areas to compensate for lack of specialized courses by arranging either an independent reading program (under the PADM 5980 number) and/or an independent research project (under the PADM 7100 number). Up to a maximum of three credit hours of independent readings (PADM 5980) and up to a maximum of three credit hours of independent research (PADM 7100) may be included in the programs of MPA students, but only with prior approval of the academic advisor. Finally, it may be possible for MPA students to enroll in specialized graduate courses at other accredited institutions and transfer the credit earned to Western Michigan University. In this case, also, the student should explore options and have academic advisor approval first. Students must earn a grade of "B" or better in any course that is to be transferred into the MPA program, and the student's cumulative GPA at the transferring institution must be at least a 3.0.

11) Is there a time limit for completing the MPA degree?

Yes, University policy stipulates that all MPA requirements must be completed within six years of enrolling in the first course. The six-year clock starts when the first class is taken, not when the student is admitted to the program. If program requirements are not completed within this time frame, a student must apply for an extension of the six-year limit, using a form provided by The Graduate College which can be found here: <http://www.wmich.edu/grad/forms/extension.form.pdf>. The student's advisor, the chair of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, and the dean of The Graduate College must review and approve the form. If approved, the student is given a new deadline by which the degree must be completed.

12) Some courses from other WMU departments which I had hoped to include in my MPA degree program list as prerequisites undergraduate courses that I have not taken. Is it necessary for me to take such undergraduate prerequisites and, if so, can they be counted toward satisfaction of degree components?

Some departments more stringently enforce prerequisite criteria than do others and there may even be some variation among professors teaching the same course. It is recommended that the student contact the instructor scheduled to teach the desired course and ask if the prerequisite will be enforced. As a general rule, it is best to take the recommended prerequisite course to avoid a lack of preparation. If the prerequisites carry a 1000 to 4000 class number, they cannot be counted toward completion of degree components.

- 13) I am a pre-career student in the MPA program and my undergraduate education was unrelated to the field of Public Administration. My MPA advisor suggested that I take additional courses, the total of which considerably exceeds the standard 42 credit hours to satisfy MPA components. Should I follow this advice?**

Yes. Advisors have the knowledge and experience to make such curriculum recommendations. Students need to take the minimum of 42 credit hours to satisfy MPA degree components assuming that they have simultaneously satisfied all stipulated components for the Core, the Area of Concentration, the Project Paper Seminar and the Professional Field Experience (internship). Given the competitiveness of today's job market, the advisor may recommend that students, especially individuals whose undergraduate education was in fields unrelated to public administration, undertake more than the minimum credit hours in order to better qualify themselves for meaningful professional employment.

- 14) Can you tell me more about Western Michigan University's joint degree program with Thomas M. Cooley Law School?**

The joint degree program came into existence in December, 2001, when the two institutions signed a memorandum of understanding. This innovative program recognizes the close connection between the law and public sector management. Furthermore, law school students who become attorneys often need enhanced administrative knowledge in their practices, and MPA alumni can often benefit from a deeper understanding of the law in areas such as administrative law, civil rights, natural resources, and international law. Our joint program with Thomas M. Cooley Law School effectively grants six hours of Cooley credit to Cooley Law students who undertake the MPA degree. Similarly, Cooley Law School awards six semester of MPA credit to MPA students who enter and succeed in law school. More information can be found at the department's web site: <http://www.wmich.edu/spaa/JDMPA.htm>.

APPENDIX: FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL

Dr. Melisa J. Beeson: Assistant Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration; Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration and Philanthropic Studies from Indiana University. Dr. Beeson comes to Western Michigan University with more than 10 years experience in university administration and teaching at Ball State University (Muncie, IN). She served as Assistant Professor, Department of Technology, Assistant Director of the Ball State University Career Center, and Assistant Director – Constituent Relations of the Ball State University Alumni Association. Prior to her work at Ball State, Dr. Beeson served as Interim President and Program Manager for Junior Achievement of East Central Indiana and was a media relations intern at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Beeson earned her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Journalism from Ball State University, Master of Public Administration from the University of Kentucky, and Master of Arts in Student Affairs Administration from Ball State University. Her teaching and research interests focus on nonprofit organizations, evaluation and assessment, and women’s philanthropy. Dr. Beeson has published in the *Journal of Student Employment* and the *Journal of Student Financial Aid*. In addition, she has presented at the Assessment Institute, the nation’s oldest and largest event focused exclusively on Outcomes Assessment in Higher Education.

Dr. Anna A. Filipova: Assistant Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA); Ph.D. in Public Administration, Western Michigan University (WMU). Dr. Filipova was formerly Assistant Professor at the Air Force Academy, Bulgaria, for six years. Since 2003 she also served the SPAA at WMU as a graduate research/teaching assistant and part-time instructor. During that time she won the 2004 Research Ethics Fellows Award from the WMU’s National Science Foundation and the 2006 Student Award Program grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation. The grant supported her dissertation field research. Her graduate teaching experience includes courses on organization theory and behavior, organization development, human resources administration, and analytical methods. Areas of specialization include organization and leadership studies, human resources administration, and ethics.

Dr. Barbara S. Liggett: Associate Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration; Ed.D., Western Michigan University. Dr. Liggett was formerly Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Executive Advisor for Quality at WMU and has prior teaching experience in the departments of Management and Political Science. Dr. Liggett also served as Director of Management Analysis for Genesee County and salary administrator at City National Bank of Detroit. She has an extensive consulting services practice in human resources services and leadership problem solving in the public and nonprofit sectors in Michigan, Florida, and Japan. Dr. Liggett is a certified mediator, specializing in employee grievance resolution. She has published in *Public Voices, Perspectives, American Review of Public Administration*, and *SuperVision*. Additionally, she has written chapters for two books and produced numerous technical reports for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Japanese Ministry of Labor. Dr. Liggett also edits manuscripts for Jossey-Bass Publishers and South-Western College Publications. Her areas of interest are leadership theories and application, human resources management, supervision, nonprofit organization infrastructures, and Japanese employment practices.

Ms. Janice Maatman: Faculty Specialist, School of Public Affairs and Administration; M.Div., Princeton Theological Seminary. As the Director of Nonprofit Education Programs and the American Humanics Campus Director, she teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in Fund Raising, Nonprofit Leadership, Event Planning, and Board and Staff Relations. She advises students and supervises an internship program and student association. Ms. Maatman also served as the co-director of United Christian Fellowship, an ecumenical campus ministry at Bowling Green State University; Executive Director of Ministry with Community, a soup kitchen, drop-in center, and a clubhouse for the chronically mental ill; and as the Community Planning and Fund Distribution Director for the Greater Kalamazoo United Way.

Matthew S. Mingus: Professor and Director, School of Public Affairs and Administration; Ph.D., University of Colorado at Denver; M.P.A., University of Victoria, British Columbia. Dr. Mingus primarily teaches Foundations of Public Administration, Organizational Behavior and Change, and Research Methods, and he is both a Fulbright Scholar and a Truman Scholar. His research is focused on comparative public administration, U.S.-Canada relations, and the foundations of American public administration, and has been published in the *International Journal of Public Administration*, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis*, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *Canadian Foreign Policy*, *Administrative Theory and Praxis*, *Public Administration Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Dr. Robert Peters: Associate Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration; Ph.D., University of Michigan. Dr. Peters has served as the Director of the School of Public Administration since 2000 and as Director of the Masters of Public Administration program since 1998. In addition to his administrative role, Dr. Peters teaches courses in budgeting, health care administration, state and local government, and data analysis. He has published in *Studies in Economic Reform and Social Justice*, *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*, *International Journal of Public Administration Education*, *Public Administration Education*, *Public Works Management & Policy*, *Public Budgeting and Finance*, *SPAE Forum*, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, *Symbolic Interaction*, and *Urbanism, Urbanization, and Change*. He has held faculty positions in the Graduate Department of Public Policy and Administration at Rutgers University-Camden and the Department of Political Science/Public Administration at Temple University. In 1992 he was a candidate for the United States House of Representatives in Pennsylvania's 16th Congressional District. His areas of specialization include budgeting, finance, and intergovernmental relations.

Dr. James Visser: Associate Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration; Ph.D. in Political Science, the University of Oklahoma. Dr. Visser was formerly Assistant Vice President for Economic Development, and Dean of Continuing Education at WMU; Executive Director of the Kalamazoo Downtown Development Authority, and Director of Economic Development with the City of Kalamazoo. Dr. Visser also held a faculty position in the Department of Political Science at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. His graduate teaching experience includes courses on the political environment and future of bureaucracy and public management, local government administration, and managing community growth and development. Areas of specialization include management and leadership of public organizations, local government administration and inter-local collaboration, and community and economic development. Dr. Visser has published in *American Review of Public Administration*, *Public Performance and Management Review*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, *Economic Development Quarterly*, and the *American Journal of Distance Education*.

Dr. Udaya Wagle: Assistant Professor, School of Public Affairs and Administration: Ph.D., University of Massachusetts, Boston. Dr. Wagle previously taught at the University of Massachusetts (Boston) and Marist College (New York). Dr. Wagle teaches research methods and data analysis courses in the School. His expertise spans political economy, public policy, and quantitative research, broadly construed. His research interests include economic and political inequality, poverty, social policy, and international

development. Dr. Wagle has published, inter alia, in *International Political Science Review*, *International Social Science Journal*, *Journal of Economic Inequality*, *Journal of Human Development*, *Policy Sciences*, *the Social Science Journal*, and *South Asia*.