

# Master of Public Administration Program

UCCS School of Public Affairs

# Student Handbook



May 2022

## Location

The School of Public Affairs is located on the third floor of the Academic Office Building (ACAD) on the UCCS campus.

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# KEY MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONTACTS

To call a UCCS phone number toll free, dial 800.990.8227, then ask the switchboard operator to transfer you to the person's extension number (last 4 digits of phone #).

## Program Director

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Professor and MPA Program Director  
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## Faculty

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Dr. Robert Wonnett	Scholar in Residence	719.255.5121	<a href="mailto:rwonnett@uccs.edu">rwonnett@uccs.edu</a>

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[Faculty biographies, research areas of interest, and current office hours](#) are available on the SPA website.

## Staff Contacts

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## Key Campus Contacts

<a href="#">EMERGENCY (University Police)</a>	3111 from a campus phone or 719.255.3111	<a href="mailto:police@uccs.edu">police@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Bookstore</a>	719.255.3247	<a href="mailto:books@uccs.edu">books@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Bursar (Tuition)</a>	719.255.3391	<a href="mailto:bursar@uccs.edu">bursar@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Campus Closure</a>	719.255.3346	<a href="mailto:eprepare@uccs.edu">eprepare@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Career Center</a>	719.255.3340	<a href="mailto:jobhelp@uccs.edu">jobhelp@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Disability Services</a>	719.255.3354	<a href="mailto:dservice@uccs.edu">dservice@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Excel Communication Center</a>	719.255.4770	<a href="mailto:cec@uccs.edu">cec@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Excel Writing Center</a>	719.255.4336	<a href="mailto:wrtgcntr@uccs.edu">wrtgcntr@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Financial Aid</a>	719.255.3460	<a href="mailto:finaidse@uccs.edu">finaidse@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Graduate School</a>	719.255.3417	<a href="mailto:gradinfo@uccs.edu">gradinfo@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Information Technology (IT)</a>	719.255.4357	<a href="mailto:helpdesk@uccs.edu">helpdesk@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">International Student Services</a>	719.255.7218	<a href="mailto:international@uccs.edu">international@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Kraemer Family Library</a>	719.255.3296	<a href="mailto:circdesk@uccs.edu">circdesk@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Parking</a>	719.255.3528	<a href="mailto:parking@uccs.edu">parking@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Registrar (Records &amp; Registration)</a>	719.255.3361	<a href="mailto:admrec@uccs.edu">admrec@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Recreation and Wellness Center</a>	719.255.4444	<a href="mailto:hlthcntr@uccs.edu">hlthcntr@uccs.edu</a>
<a href="#">Veteran &amp; Military Affairs</a>	719.255.3253	<a href="mailto:military@uccs.edu">military@uccs.edu</a>

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of Handbook

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration program at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) School of Public Affairs!

This Handbook will acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and Master of Public Administration (MPA) program to facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and earning the Master of Public Administration degree. Please read this Handbook carefully and consult your faculty advisor with any questions. It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the School of Public Affairs Academic Policies as well as the [Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#). All students are bound by these requirements as stated in the [UCCS Academic Catalog](#) and expanded upon in this Handbook.

Please be aware that the policies and procedures described here are subject to change and can be affected by changes in the policies of UCCS and the Graduate School. Check the [Academic Catalog](#) and [SPA's website](#) for the most up-to-date information.

## The School of Public Affairs

The School of Public Affairs (SPA) provides undergraduate and graduate professional education to current and aspiring leaders in public administration and public service, public finance, public and non-profit management, social and public policy, criminology and criminal justice, homeland security, and social work. The School's unique combination of rigorous academics, relevant research, practical application, and partnership networks empowers students with the tools needed to create significant impacts for a resilient community and world.

The School of Public Affairs offers the following graduate degree programs:

- Master of Public Administration (MPA)
- Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ)
- Master of Public Administration/Master of Criminal Justice (MPA/MCJ) dual degree
- Master of Public Administration/Master of Arts in Sociology (MPA/MA SOC) dual degree
- Master of Social Work (MSW)

SPA graduate students can also pursue a more limited course of study, earning graduate certificates in:

- Criminal Justice
- Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management Leadership
- National Security Intelligence
- Nonprofit Management
- Public Management

Many of these may be earned simultaneously with a degree program.

SPA undergraduate programs may be found [on the website](#). The Bachelor of Arts in Political Science to MPA Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) is described in Section 6 of this Handbook.

### **School of Public Affairs Mission Statement**

The mission of the UCCS School of Public Affairs is to improve the quality of life for people and their communities, here and abroad, through collaborative governance, public service innovation, community engagement, and research.

To accomplish this mission, we strive to

- Improve the quality of public, nonprofit, criminal justice, and national security systems.
- Educate leaders to meet societal challenges with compassion, vision, analytic rigor, and practicality.
- Foster critical thinking and decision-making, effective and confident communication, creative problem-solving, knowledge management, and global citizenship.
- Create, build, and maintain connections with current, past and future students and all the communities we serve.
- Ground our decisions and actions in integrity, diversity, collaboration, and excellence.
- Support and model civil public discourse, citizenship, responsibility, and respect.

### **The Master of Public Administration Degree Program**

The MPA degree prepares students to successfully take leadership roles in the public and nonprofit sectors. The MPA degree is multidisciplinary and designed to provide graduate professional education for individuals who wish to prepare themselves for administrative, management, and/or policy careers in government, the nonprofit sector, or organizations that are concerned with public affairs. The program also provides education and training for those already employed in the public or nonprofit sectors to enhance their skills and advance their careers. The MPA curriculum integrates theory and practice to give public and nonprofit managers and policy makers the knowledge and skills necessary to manage organizations, to formulate and implement policies, and to analyze policies and make recommendations for improvement.

### **Master of Public Administration Program Mission Statement**

The Master of Public Administration program provides high quality graduate education for current and future leaders in public, nonprofit, and private sector organizations, here and abroad, to prepare them for excellence in public service.

To accomplish this mission, we strive to meet the following goals:

- Advance public service through improving quality leadership of public, nonprofit, national security, and emergency management and criminal justice systems
- Teach students from diverse backgrounds to work collaboratively to meet societal challenges ethically, with compassion, vision, analytic rigor, and practicality
- Foster strategic leadership skills: critical thinking and decision-making, effective communication, creative problem-solving, knowledge management, multi-sector understanding, and global citizenship
- Support and model civil public discourse, citizenship, responsibility, and respect
- Facilitate a process of lifelong learning that evolves and adapts to the changing nature of the field and continuous development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required

### **Accreditation**

The UCCS MPA degree is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration's (NASPAA) commission on Peer Review and Accreditation. Graduates of the MPA program are assumed to have the following competencies, as enumerated by NASPAA.

The ability to:

- Lead and manage in public governance
- Participate effectively in and contribute to the public policy process
- Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions
- Articulate and apply a public service perspective
- Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

### **Administration**

The MPA program director is the key administrative officer for the program and serves as the central contact for questions regarding MPA policies. The MPA Committee provides faculty governance and guides the program. It is comprised of the MPA program director and core MPA faculty and staff. Additional input on the MPA program is provided by the MPA Student and Alumni Advisory Board.

## 2. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

### Prerequisites

Applicants should have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, with grades sufficiently high to indicate ability to pursue graduate work, typically a cumulative undergraduate grade point average of 3.0 or better. MPA applicants may have an undergraduate degree in any field.

### Application Materials

Detailed requirements for applying to the School of Public Affairs may be found on [SPA's website](#). In general, applicants must submit the following:

- [Online Graduate School Application](#)
- Written statement that includes 500-word responses to the following three prompts:
  - What are your career aspirations and how can your academic experience contribute to your career goals?
  - What is relevant in your professional or academic background that contributes to your anticipated success in your masters' experience?
  - Please provide an example of how your personal characteristics helped you overcome a specific challenge.
- \$60 non-refundable application fee
- Official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended
- Current resume

NOTE: Those applying to dual degree programs must meet the application and admission criteria for each program. Please note that required application materials may differ from those of the MPA program.

Current UCCS undergraduate students applying to the BA in Political Science to MPA Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) may have different application procedures and requirements. Please refer to Section 6 in this Handbook for information.

English as a second language (ESL) students may apply after obtaining a minimum score of 80 on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS exams. If the applicant's scores do not meet these minimums, the program may take additional steps to assess English proficiency.

### Admission Calendar

Admission to the MPA program is made on a rolling basis, and applicants are notified as soon as an admission decision is made. Application deadlines are as follows:

#### MPA and MPA/MCJ dual degree

- Fall semester: August 1

- Spring semester: December 1
- Summer semester: May 1

If you miss the deadline, please contact the SPA Office at [spa@uccs.edu](mailto:spa@uccs.edu).

### **MPA/MA in Sociology dual degree**

- Fall semester: April 15
- Spring semester: November 15

Students who find they are not able to enroll during the semester for which they were accepted may defer enrollment for up to two semesters (including summer) by contacting SPA's graduate student services specialist.

## **Admission Status**

When an applicant meets all of the qualifications for admission, they are normally admitted with regular graduate status.

In cases where a prospective student shows potential but does not meet the minimum qualifications for admission, the program's admissions committee MAY decide to admit the student on provisional status. Such cases only occur when elements of the application suggest the student may be able to perform successfully in the program. Those admitted on provisional status must complete one course from PAD 5001, 5002, or 5006 with a grade of B or higher within two semesters of admission. Failure to meet the provisional criteria will result in dismissal from the program.

## **Readmission of Inactive, Withdrawn, and Suspended Students**

Occasionally, students find it necessary to interrupt their coursework for one or more semesters. An extended interruption, however, may result in the student being placed on inactive status. Students who do not enroll in any classes during the semester for which they were admitted and students who have not registered for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer), are placed on inactive status. Students who need to take a leave of absence of one year or more are required to fill out a [Leave of Absence form](#), available on the Graduate School website. If more than one year has passed since the student's original application, and a Leave of Absence form is not on file, the student must reapply by submitting a new full application packet. Admission also requires approval from the School of Public Affairs for re-entry into the program.

A dismissed student is eligible to reapply for admission no sooner than one year after dismissal. Approval or rejection of this application rests with the MPA program director.

### 3. MPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The UCCS MPA is distinctive in that it may be acquired entirely online, entirely in the classroom, or in combination. The majority of students take a combination of online and in-seat courses during their tenure in the MPA program. MPA faculty teach in both modalities; courses are equal in rigor.

#### General Requirements

To earn an MPA degree, a student must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework as outlined in the course requirements with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better;
- Complete an additional three semester hours of internship (if required); and
- Receive a grade of B- (2.7) or better in all courses, including the final capstone or thesis course(s).

#### Course Requirements

##### Core Courses

All MPA students must successfully complete the following required courses:

PAD 5001	Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service <i>students are expected to complete PAD 5001 within the first two semesters of enrollment</i>	3 credit hours
PAD 5002	Organizational Management and Behavior	3 credit hours
PAD 5003	Research and Analytic Methods <i>PAD 5003 should not be taken in the first semester of study</i>	3 credit hours
PAD 5004	Economics and Public Finance	3 credit hours
PAD 5005	The Policy Process and Democracy	3 credit hours
PAD 5006	Ethics and Leadership	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	18 credit hours

Course descriptions may be found in the [Academic Catalog](#).

##### Elective courses

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if additionally required), students must complete 12-15 credit hours of electives, depending upon choice of culminating experience. SPA offers a wide variety of electives. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

Some students choose to focus these elective hours around a particular area based on their interests and career goals and/or so as to earn one or more graduate certificates concurrently with the MPA degree. Available graduate certificates include: Nonprofit Management; Criminal Justice; National Security Intelligence; Homeland Security and Emergency Management; and Grant Writing,

Management, and Program Evaluation. Current MPA students are not eligible to pursue the graduate certificate in Public Management. Additional information on these certificate programs, including required courses, may be found on [the SPA website](#).

Where appropriate, students may include specialized courses offered by other departments and schools of the university, with prior written approval of the MPA program director.

### **Internship Requirements**

The MPA program includes professional experience among the requirements for degree completion. Pre-service students (those without at least one year of professional work experience in a public administration field) are also required to complete a 3-credit internship course, bringing the total credit hours required for the degree to 39.

Students are notified upon admission whether an internship is required for completion of program requirements. Should a student gain at least one year of professional experience during their tenure in the program, the student can submit a request to the program director for an internship waiver.

Students must have completed at least 9 hours of coursework in the program to enroll in Internship. A minimum of 240 hours of supervised work is required to earn 3 hours of credit. Internships are graded as Pass/Fail.

The internship course is not available for in-service students (those determined to have at least one year of professional work experience in a public administration field).

### **Internship Guidelines**

Internship guidelines are set forth in the MPA Student Internship Information Handbook, available [on the MPA website](#). Internships are designed to meet the needs of the student, host agency, and the MPA program. The work period may be for an academic semester or during the summer, and specific work schedules and student responsibilities are arranged with the internship agency prior to the start of the internship. Internships may be either process or project based and may be either paid or unpaid.

### **Internship Application and Administrative Procedures**

Students should contact the MPA internship faculty coordinator at least one semester prior to their planned enrollment to discuss internship intent, goals, and opportunities.

Students are responsible for identifying potential internships. The SPA office is able to facilitate this process, but final responsibility for securing an internship lies with the student. Students may initiate contact with organizations and may also contact their advisors and other faculty who may have expertise and contacts in the specific area of interest for suggestions concerning internships. However, students should not commit to placement before coordinating with the MPA instructor of record. Permission numbers are required to enroll in Internship/Field Study courses to ensure conditions have been met.

## Independent Study

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take PAD 9500: Independent Study with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. Students must submit the Petition for Independent Study form, found under [MPA Program Resources](#). With faculty assistance, students then develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs.

No more than six hours of independent study credit may apply toward MPA degree requirements.

## Culminating Experience

### Capstone Seminar

All MPA students, except those pursuing the thesis option, are required to complete PAD 5361: Capstone Seminar. The Capstone Seminar is taken during the last semester of the student's degree program. **All core courses must be completed before the Capstone Seminar is taken.**

*Capstone Seminar cannot be taken during the summer semester or transferred in from another school or university.*

For capstone projects, students work with a client in a public or nonprofit agency to identify a problem and then, using the knowledge and skills they have gained in the program, carry out a project then write and present a paper to address the problem. Projects take many different forms including program evaluations, surveys and interviews, business or marketing plans, etc. The purpose of the course is to provide students with an opportunity to integrate what they have learned and apply their knowledge and skills to a real-world problem. Further, it provides the faculty with an opportunity to assess the student's achievement of MPA core competencies.

The School of Public Affairs provides Capstone Seminar/Thesis Orientation [materials online](#) and a Question & Answer session each semester to offer information and guidance. Students should complete the following steps no later than the semester prior to enrolling in PAD 5361: Capstone Seminar:

- Identify a partner agency for the Capstone project
- Submit evidence of CITI training completion
- Obtain an agreement from a UCCS faculty member to serve as a second reader on the Capstone project
- Work with the faculty member serving as the Capstone second reader to draft a proposal and assess the need for IRB approval
- If IRB approval is required, work with the Capstone Seminar instructor to submit an IRB proposal for review prior to the start of the semester in which they will enroll in the Capstone Seminar



### **Capstone Course Committee**

The capstone course is guided by a primary course instructor. That instructor's role is to guide the student in selecting a project and specifying its scope, to assist the student as needed in conducting the project, and to provide extensive feedback to the student on various drafts of the project.

Student work on the capstone is guided by a committee comprised of three persons: the first reader (primary course instructor), a second reader (a SPA faculty member), and a third reader (client). All three readers must ultimately approve the project prospectus. All will help the student with the project and will evaluate the final report and presentation, although the first reader serves as the student's primary guide.

### **The Second Reader**

The second reader should be a SPA faculty member who is not listed as the instructor of record for PAD 5361 for the semester in which the student is enrolled. If a full-time faculty member with subject-matter expertise is not available, students may select a SPA lecturer with subject-matter expertise in the area of the project with the approval of the primary instructor. The lecturer must have a current appointment to the graduate faculty.

Second readers should be selected because they have expertise in the content area of the project. Students should consult with them early in the process to get recommendations for references to form the foundation of the client-based project and/or suggestions concerning target journals and references for research projects.

### **The Third Reader**

The third reader is the client, i.e., the representative of the organization for which the student is conducting the project.

### **Role of Readers**

While the first reader will have the primary responsibility for supervising the student's project, the second and third readers have responsibility for 1) approving the student's project prospectus, 2) commenting on project drafts and approving the final project report, 3) attending and participating in the oral presentation of the project, and 4) evaluating the student's work. Additionally, the third reader serves to link the student with the client organization and reports on the utility and professionalism of the student's work for and with the organization.

The first reader determines the student's grade but will seek input from other readers to determine the final grade.

### **Thesis Option**

In PAD 6950: Master's Thesis, students conduct a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collect original data or analyze existing data in new ways. The thesis requires 6 hours of credit that spans two semesters. The thesis option is available to MPA students who have achieved an exceptional academic record and who wish to pursue

independent research in greater depth than would normally be possible in Capstone Seminar. It is suited for students who intend to pursue a PhD degree or to enter a research or policy environment upon completion of the MPA degree.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

- Matriculation in the MPA program
- Successful completion of all core courses
- Overall GPA of 3.5 or higher
- Demonstrated ability to pursue research work, as evidenced by two submitted research papers developed in SPA courses or elsewhere
- Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest
- Agreement from a SPA faculty member to serve as the thesis committee chair along with two additional faculty members to serve on the thesis committee
- Minor exceptions to the above criteria may be made in exceptional circumstances

A student desiring to pursue the thesis option should meet with their faculty advisor to establish eligibility under the above criteria. After establishing eligibility, the student should recruit three faculty members to serve on the student's thesis committee -- one to serve as the committee chair and two to serve on the committee -- and then complete the thesis application form. Once complete, the thesis application form should be submitted to [spa@uccs.edu](mailto:spa@uccs.edu) for review and approval.

Although the formal procedures entail application through the faculty advisor, the student is encouraged to make informal contacts with appropriate subject-matter faculty to determine interest and availability.

## **Online MPA**

Students may complete the MPA degree entirely through online classes, an option that may be attractive for students living outside of the local area, or for those who require more flexibility in taking courses. As with all degree programs, students need to plan carefully to ensure that they are able to finish their degree in a timely fashion; this is particularly true of online programs. Online only students should work diligently with their faculty advisor to plan online coursework options. In addition, online education requires the use of technology to connect with students, faculty, and other campus experiences. Please check the [UCCS Quality Online Education resources webpage](#) for the latest technical requirements as well as links to online student services.

## 4. MPA/MASTER OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (MCJ) DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The fields of public administration and criminal justice are closely connected. The MPA is a professional degree designed to prepare students for a variety of positions in public and nonprofit management and policy analysis, while criminal justice studies prepare graduates to work in organizations within the substantive policy area. The joint degree program prepares its graduates for overlapping careers in public, nonprofit, and private organizations that require both criminal justice and management knowledge. The dual degree also prepares students for research careers or advanced graduate studies. Students take the cores of both programs and choose electives that best suit their career and personal goals, completing both degrees in 54 hours versus the 72 hours it would take to complete each degree separately.

### General Requirements

To earn a dual MPA/MCJ degree, a student must:

- Complete a minimum of 54 credit hours of graduate coursework with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better, including:
  - A minimum of 9 core hours in criminal justice
  - 15 core hours in public administration
  - 3 hours of research methods
  - Culminating experience of either 3 hours of capstone or 6 hours of thesis
  - Students choose at least 6 credit hours of criminal justice electives
  - The remaining hours are chosen from either CJ or PAD electives
- Complete three semester hours of internship (if required)
- Receive a grade of B- (2.7) or better in all courses, including the final capstone or thesis course(s).

### Course Requirements

#### MPA Core Courses

PAD 5001	Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service <i>students are expected to complete PAD 5001 within their first two semesters of enrollment</i>	3 credit hours
PAD 5002	Organizational Management and Behavior	3 credit hours
PAD 5004	Economics and Public Finance	3 credit hours
PAD 5005	The Policy Process and Democracy	3 credit hours
PAD 5006	Ethics and Leadership	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	15 credit hours

## MCJ Core Courses

CJ 5001	Criminal Justice Systems, Policy and Practice	3 credit hours
CJ 5002	Criminological Theory	3 credit hours
CJ 5007	Violence	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	9 credit hours

## Research Methods

CJ 5003	Research and Analytic Methods	3 credit hours
	<i>CJ 5003 should not be taken in the first semester of study</i>	

Course descriptions may be found in the [Academic Catalog](#).

## Elective courses

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if additionally required), students must complete 21-24 credit hours of electives, depending upon choice of culminating experience. SPA offers a wide variety of electives. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

A minimum of 6 elective hours must be in coursework taught by Criminal Justice faculty. Available elective courses include a mixture of specialized criminal justice and/or public administration courses, workshops, and other formats. Students may choose to focus these elective hours around a particular area based on their interests and career goals. Where appropriate, students may include specialized courses offered by other departments and schools of the University, with prior written approval of both program directors.

## Internship/Field Study

The student's need for an internship/field study is determined by the MPA and MCJ program directors at the time of admission. Students who have not had at least one year of professional experience according to the requirements for each degree program are required to complete either PAD 6910: Internship or CJ 6910: Field Study in Criminal Justice, as designated in their admission letter. The Internship or Field Study course replaces one elective course. Students for whom an internship is required by both programs should work with their advisor to find a placement that satisfies all requirements. A minimum of 240 hours of supervised work is required to earn 3 hours of credit. Students must have completed at least 9 credit hours of coursework to enroll in an internship/field study course.

## Independent Study

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take PAD or CJ 9500: Independent Study with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. Students must submit the Petition for Independent Study form, found under [MPA Program Resources](#). With faculty assistance, students

then develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs.

No more than nine hours of independent study credit may apply toward dual MPA/MCJ degree requirements.

### **Culminating Experience**

Please see information regarding the Capstone and Thesis options under Section 3: MPA Program Requirements, Culminating Experience above.

## **5. MPA/MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIOLOGY DUAL DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

The School of Public Affairs in collaboration with the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences offers a dual graduate degree in Public Administration and Sociology. The Master of Arts in Sociology (MA in Sociology) provides methodological and theoretical frameworks to transcend individual experience in order to understand social life and is guided by a vision of social justice. Together, the two disciplines offer students a strong foundation to advance public service, work collaboratively to meet social challenges, and better understand key social phenomena using multiple lenses. Graduates will be equipped to hold leadership positions in public and nonprofit programs designed to ameliorate important social problems.

Students enrolled in the dual MPA and MA in Sociology program complete both programs simultaneously in 53 credit hours, instead of the 66 credit hours required if each degree is completed separately. Students complete foundation coursework in both degrees but have the flexibility to customize their programs by choosing elective coursework in public administration and sociology that best suits their interests and career objectives. The culminating experience (e.g., capstone or thesis) is a collaboration between the two programs. Students without significant professional experience in public service will be required to take an additional 3-credit-hour internship.

### **General Requirements**

The dual degree program requires a minimum of 53 credit hours, including:

- 15 credit hours of Public Administration (PAD) core courses
- 4 credit hours of Sociology (SOC) core courses
- 7-8 hours of research methods course work from SOC
- 21-24 credit hours of PAD and SOC elective courses

Students enrolled in the dual MPA/MA in Sociology program must maintain academic standards for both programs:

- A grade point average of B (3.0 on a 4-point scale) or better is required for degree candidacy
- Grades of B- or better in all PAD courses
- Grades of B or better in all SOC courses

## Course Requirements

### MPA Core Courses

PAD 5001	Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service <i>students are expected to complete PAD 5001 within their first two semesters of enrollment</i>	3 credit hours
PAD 5002	Organizational Management and Behavior	3 credit hours
PAD 5004	Economics and Public Finance	3 credit hours
PAD 5005	The Policy Process and Democracy	3 credit hours
PAD 5006	Ethics and Leadership	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	15 credit hours

### MA in Sociology Core Courses

SOC 5050	Proseminar in Sociology <i>SOC 5050 must be taken in the student's first fall semester.</i>	1 credit hour
SOC 5160	Social Theory II	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	4 credit hours

Prerequisites – not counted toward degree requirements

*Incoming graduate students who have not taken an undergraduate course in Social Theory are also required to take*

*SOC 5150 Social Theory I*

*(1 credit hour)*

*Incoming graduate students who have not taken an undergraduate course in Social Statistics are also required to take*

*SOC 5020 Social Statistics*

*(1 credit hour)*

### Research Methods

SOC 5070	Research Methods	4 credit hours
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And one of the following advanced methods courses:

SOC 5170	Advanced Statistics and Research	4 credit hours
SOC 5180	Community Organization and Analysis (Ethnography)	3 credit hours
SOC 5200	Program Evaluation	3 credit hours
SOC 5370	Sociology of Media and Popular Culture (Content Analysis)	3 credit hours
SOC 5830	Race and Ethnic Relations (Participant Observation)	3 credit hours
SOC 5950	Inequality, Crime, and Justice	<u>3 credit hours</u>
	Total:	7-8 credit hours

Course descriptions may be found in the [Academic Catalog](#).

## **Elective courses**

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if additionally required), students must complete 21-24 credit hours of electives, depending upon choice of culminating experience.

Elective courses include a mixture of specialized public administration and/or sociology courses, workshops, and other formats. Students may choose to focus these elective hours around a particular area based on their interests and career goals:

- At least 6 elective credit hours from PAD
- At least 6 elective credit hours from SOC
- Additional 9-12 elective credit hours will be selected from either PAD or SOC, depending on the student's interests as identified in their degree plan

Transfer credits are not permissible.

## **Internship Requirement**

The MPA program includes professional experience among the requirements for degree completion. Pre-service students (those without at least one year of professional work experience in a public administration field) are also required to complete a 3-credit internship course, bringing the total credit hours required for the MPA/MA SOC dual degree program to 56.

Students are notified upon admission whether an internship is required for completion of program requirements. Should a student gain at least one year of professional experience during their tenure in the program, the student can submit a request to the program director for an internship waiver.

Students must have completed at least 9 hours of PAD coursework to enroll in Internship. A minimum of 240 hours of supervised work is required to earn 3 hours of credit, as well as additional academic requirements. Internships are graded as Pass/Fail.

The internship course is not available for in-service students (those determined to have at least one year of professional work experience in a public administration field).

## **Internship Guidelines**

Internship guidelines are set forth in the MPA Student Internship Information Handbook, available [on the MPA website](#). Internships are designed to meet the needs of the student, host agency, and the MPA program. The work period may be for an academic semester or during the summer, and specific work schedules and student responsibilities are arranged with the internship agency prior to the start of the internship. Internships may be either process or project based and may be either paid or unpaid.

## **Internship Application and Administrative Procedures**

Students should contact the MPA faculty internship coordinator at least one semester prior to their planned enrollment to discuss internship intent, goals, and opportunities.

Students are responsible for identifying potential internships. The SPA office is able to facilitate this process, but final responsibility for securing an internship lies with the student. Students may initiate contact with organizations and may also contact their advisors and other faculty who may have expertise and contacts in the specific area of interest for suggestions concerning internships. However, students should not commit to placement before coordinating with the MPA instructor of record. Permission numbers are required to enroll in Internship/Field Study courses to ensure conditions have been met.

## **Independent Study**

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take PAD 9500: Independent Study with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. Students must submit the Petition for Independent Study form, found under [MPA Program Resources](#). With faculty assistance, students then develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs.

No more than six hours of independent study credit may apply toward the MPA degree requirements.

## **Culminating Experience**

### **Capstone Seminar**

Please see information regarding the Capstone Seminar option under Section 3: MPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS, Culminating Experience.

### **Thesis Option**

In PAD 6950/SOC 7000, Master's Thesis students conduct a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collect original data or analyze existing data in new ways. The thesis requires 6 hours of credit that spans two semesters. The thesis option is available to Dual MPA/MA in Sociology students who have achieved an exceptional academic record and who wish to pursue independent research in greater depth than would normally be possible in the Capstone Seminar. It is suited for students who intend to pursue a PhD degree or to enter a research or policy environment upon completion of the Dual MPA/ MA in Sociology program.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

- Matriculation in the Dual MPA/ MA in Sociology program
- Successful completion of all core courses
- Overall GPA of 3.5 or higher
- Demonstrated ability to pursue research work
- Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest
- Agreement from one public administration faculty member and one sociology faculty member to co-chair the thesis committee along with agreement from one additional public



administration or sociology faculty member to serve as the third member of the thesis committee; integration of faculty from both Sociology and Public Administration is required

Students pursuing a Master's Thesis will take both PAD 6950 Master's Thesis (3 credit hours) and SOC 7000 Master's Thesis (3 credit hours), typically during the final two semesters of the program. Minor exceptions to the above criteria may be made in exceptional circumstances.

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through their faculty advisor to establish eligibility under the above criteria. After establishing eligibility, the student should recruit three faculty members to serve on the student's thesis committee -- one public administration faculty member and one sociology faculty member to co-chair the committee and one public administration or sociology faculty member to serve as the third thesis committee member -- and then complete a thesis application form. Before students are allowed to enroll in PAD 6950 or SOC 7000 Master's Thesis, they must complete the required approval processes for both the MPA and the MA in Sociology.

## **6. ACCELERATED MASTER'S PROGRAM (AMP) BA IN POLITICAL SCIENCE TO MPA DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

The School of Public Affairs in collaboration with the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences offers a unique opportunity for highly qualified undergraduate Political Science majors to begin pursuing the Master of Public Administration (MPA) while simultaneously completing the Bachelor of Arts (BA). Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) students may count up to 9 credit hours of eligible graduate-level Political Science courses toward both their BA and MPA degrees, allowing them to complete both degrees in an accelerated time frame.

The BA in Political Science enables students to understand and write about political and legal questions of governance of global, national, regional, and local significance. The Master of Public Administration prepares students to take leadership roles in the public and nonprofit sectors. The MPA degree is multidisciplinary and designed to provide graduate professional education for individuals who wish to prepare themselves for administrative and/or policy careers in public, nonprofit, national security, and criminal justice systems. The BA in Political Science to MPA AMP helps students cultivate self-awareness and understanding of their local, national, and global impact, and be prepared to participate effectively in a society that encompasses diverse political experiences, perspectives, and realities. Graduates will be prepared to take leadership roles in the public and nonprofit sectors.

## Eligibility Requirements

The Accelerated Master's Program (AMP) allows high achieving students to pursue existing Bachelor's and Master's degrees in an accelerated manner. The program allows students to take graduate level courses which will count towards graduation requirements for both their Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Both current UCCS and new transfer students are eligible to apply after meeting the following criteria:

- Current UCCS student with at least 30 credit hours completed at UCCS
- Junior class standing or higher
- Cumulative CU GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Declared Political Science major
- Completed at least 15 credit hours in the Political Science major
- Any Minimum Academic Preparation Standards (MAPS) deficiencies must be completed prior to admission to the AMP program
- Meet the standards and admissions requirements for the BA in Political Science and MPA programs, as outlined in the UCCS Academic Catalog

## Application Process

### Declare Intent

The AMP student declaration process is described [on the Graduate School website](#). Undergraduate students interested in the AMP program should speak with their undergraduate program directly about eligibility and career goal fit as well as talk with undergraduate advising about interest in the program. If the student meets the requirements outlined below, they should fill out an [online intent application](#). This application states that the student currently intends and is eligible to begin taking dual counting courses during the student's bachelor degree studies (i.e., graduate level courses that will be applied toward both the bachelor and master degrees). Students also submit a one-page (double-spaced, one-inch margins) essay to the MPA program director outlining the student's career goals.

*This intent application does not admit the student into the graduate program.*

After the intent application is approved by the MPA program, the student's undergraduate advisor is notified and the student is allowed to take courses from the approved list that will count in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. Again, students must be admitted to the AMP prior to taking the dual-counted courses. **Retroactive approval is not permissible.**

### Application to the MPA program

During the student's senior year, they can apply to the graduate program using the [online graduate school application](#) and supporting materials as detailed in Section 2 of this Handbook.

The application is streamlined for students with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher; these students need to complete the writing prompts but no recommendations or additional transcript submission is required.

## General Requirements

The BA in Political Science program requires completion of a minimum of 120 credit hours, including:

- A minimum of 36 credit hours in the discipline, of which 30 credit hours must be with a grade of C or better
- At least 21 credit hours must be in upper-division courses (3000+ level)
- All students must take an exit exam and complete a portfolio before graduation

To earn an MPA degree, a student must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better.
- Students without at least one year of professional work experience in a public administration field must complete an additional 3 credit hours of internship, bringing the total number of required credit hours to 39.
- Receive a grade of B- (2.7) or better in all courses, including the final capstone or thesis course(s).

Dual credit courses counting toward both the BA and MPA degrees must be from the approved list below; students must earn a grade of B or better in those courses.

## Course Requirements

Please refer to the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science sections of the [Academic Catalog](#) for specific course requirements. The BA in Political Science to MPA AMP program allows students to count up to 9 credit hours toward both the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and the Master of Public Administration degrees.

In order for credits to be double-counted, the following conditions must be met.

- Dual credit courses must be from among the following list of approved courses:

PSC 5025 / PSC 4025 Congressional Processes

PSC 5080 / PSC 4080 The U.S. Electoral Process

PSC 5230 / PSC 4230 United States in World Politics

PSC 5280 / PSC 4280 International Political Economy

PSC 5451 / PSC 4451 Environmental Law

PSC 5460 / PSC 4460 Administrative Law

PSC 5470 / PSC 4470 Constitutional Law

PSC 5480 / PSC 4480 Civil Rights and Liberties

- Dual credit courses must be completed with a B or better
- Dual credit courses must be taken for graduate credit (5000+ level)
- Student must be admitted to the AMP prior to taking the dual-counted courses. Retroactive approval is not permissible.

A total of 9 credit hours of graduate level Political Science coursework subject to the above conditions will be counted toward the 12-15 credit hours of required electives for the MPA degree. **All other MPA requirements remain as described in Section 3 of this Handbook.**

## 7. STUDENT SUCCESS

### Advising

Advising within the School of Public Affairs is a primary responsibility of faculty. Support is provided by the graduate student services specialist.

Upon admission to the MPA program, students are assigned a faculty advisor; this information is provided in the student's admission letter. Students may request that they be assigned a faculty advisor with particular expertise in a field in which they are interested. Faculty advisors are experts in their fields and can advise students on appropriate electives and how to successfully navigate the degree program, professional networking within the field, capstone/thesis planning, and career planning.

The faculty advisor is responsible to help the student successfully navigate the program. Newly admitted students should meet initially with the graduate student services specialist to discuss registration, program requirements, and preliminary degree planning.

International students are additionally supported by the [International Affairs Office](#), which assists them with other issues such as visa requirements.

### Student Resources

The School of Public Affairs and MPA program value student success. Resources exist at Program, School and Campus levels to assist students in many areas. SPA faculty and staff are available to help match resources to needs. MPA students who believe they could benefit from academic support are encouraged to reach out to their instructors and/or faculty advisor. All MPA students are invited and encouraged to attend informational and developmental opportunities provided by the School of Public Affairs and others.

Many campus-level student resources exist. Below are links to some of the most frequently used academic, financial, social, and health resources available to MPA students.

[Kraemer Family Library](#) provides a wealth of physical and virtual information and services. The [School of Public Affairs/Kraemer Family Library liaison](#) is also the Web Services Librarian for UCCS. Effective communication – written and verbal – is an important component of the MPA program. Fostering effective communication is part of our mission. The [Excel Writing Center](#) is a valuable partner in assisting students of all skill levels to become aware of personal idiosyncrasies and to improve writing ability. The [Excel Communication Center](#) offers presentation practice and feedback, tutoring for creating presentations, and facilitation for small groups.

Programs, resources, and verification of benefits are provided by the Office of [Veteran and Military Affairs](#).

[International Affairs](#) provides international student and scholar services and works with education abroad programs.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with [Disability Services and University Testing Center](#) for accommodation requests.

The Multicultural Office for Student Access, Inclusiveness and Community ([MOSAIC](#)) supports and creates opportunities that assist all UCCS students in developing a sense of community and place on campus, with an emphasis on supporting and advocating for students from underrepresented communities. There are numerous [clubs and organizations](#) that exist on campus that welcome students to participate.

Both physical and [mental health services](#) are available via the Gallogly Recreation and Wellness Center. If you or someone you know has the potential for personal and/or psychological matters to complicate or interfere with your efforts or academic success, please reach out for anonymous screenings or services.

Professional development and career guidance and opportunities are coordinated via the [T. Rowe Price Career and Innovation Center](#). Students and alumni have access to [Handshake](#) to search for and find relevant career opportunities.

## **Financial Resources**

The cost of degree program will vary based on several factors such as residency status, number of credit hours taken per semester, online course fees, etc. Costs may be estimated using the Bursar Office's [Estimate Your Bill](#) tool.

The MPA program qualifies as a Western Regional Graduate Program. Residents of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming are eligible to pay in-state tuition for this program. The benefit is automatically applied to qualified students' tuition bill based on their legal residency.

Financial assistance is available to support those students who would not be able to attend SPA without aid. The primary source of information about need-based student financial assistance as well as scholarships and other non-need-based aid is the [UCCS Office of Financial Aid, Student Employment and Scholarships](#). Additional information on financial assistance programs may be obtained through the [Graduate School](#).

The School of Public Affairs offers scholarships and a limited number of graduate teaching or research assistantships to students.

## Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society

Pi Alpha Alpha is the global honor society for public affairs and administration. Each spring, MPA students are invited to join Pi Alpha Alpha if they have met the following criteria:

- Have finished at least 50% of their MPA courses
- Have maintained a minimum 3.7 GPA in their graduate coursework

The purpose of Pi Alpha Alpha membership is to formally honor current MPA students who demonstrate their commitment to public service through their personal persistence and outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration. Pi Alpha Alpha recognizes its members' commitment to fostering integrity, professionalism, and effective performance and in promoting the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. Members are able to denote membership on their resume, which signals degree completion with distinction. As with other academic honoraria, there is a national induction fee.

## Student Conduct and Response to Significant Situations or Events

The School of Public Affairs and MPA program subscribe in full to the university's expectations for student conduct and academic integrity.

UCCS has a number of mechanisms in place to respond to student crisis situations, or to incidents or behaviors involving students that threaten the quality of campus life. Crisis situations may be accidental, occur without warning, or be intentional and meant to cause harm to students or the campus community. The Office of the Dean of Students maintains a [list of relevant policies and codes](#) that every student should read and become familiar with, including but not limited to:

- Student Code of Conduct
- UCCS Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Protected Class Discrimination Harassment
- Student Academic Ethics Code Policy
- Student Classroom Behavior Policy

### Student Code of Conduct

All students are expected to know and follow the [UCCS Student Code of Conduct](#). This document addresses expectations of students as well as prohibited conduct. A portion of the Code appears here:

*It is the duty of all students involved in the conduct process to participate honestly and conscientiously. Students are expected to read this Code, make a timely report of an incident, and file all necessary complaints through the Office of the Dean of Students.*

### Student Academic Ethics Code

Students are also expected to know and follow the [Student Academic Ethics Code Policy](#), which says that, “Students shall observe complete honesty in all academic matters to include course requirements, classroom activities, research, and scholarship.” Violations of the code include but are not limited to:

- Committing acts of plagiarism
- Using unauthorized materials or receiving unauthorized assistance during an examination or in connection with any work done for academic credit
- Giving false or misleading information regarding an academic matter
- Rendering unauthorized assistance to another student by knowingly permitting him or her to see or copy all or a portion of an examination or any work to be submitted for academic credit
- Falsifying material relating to course registration or grades, either for oneself or for someone else
- Accessing or altering any academic record by any means without authorization
- Turning in same or similar work for multiple courses without permission from faculty to do such

### **CARE Team**

The [CARE \(Campus Assessment Response and Evaluation\) Team](#) will assess and coordinate responses to significant campus situations and events involving University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) students, which require intervention in order to assist the community and its members to return to a more homeostatic state of functioning. These events may include: death or significant trauma, problematic student situations involving medical or psychological concerns, and campus emergency situations that directly affect the well-being of students. The CARE Team has the authority to respond and coordinate intervention to all student crisis incidents with the concurrence of the Chancellor. Issues of inappropriate student conduct are referred to the Office of the Dean of Students. Allegations of criminal wrongdoing will be referred to Public Safety. Allegations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination shall be referred to the Office of Institutional Equity in accordance with university policy.



## 8. ACADEMIC POLICIES

University of Colorado policies govern the CU system and include Regent laws and policies, Administrative Policy Statements, and other university-wide requirements. UCCS-specific policies and procedures are nested beneath these university-wide policies as necessary to govern the unique needs of this campus. All of these policies may be found on the [website of the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance](#). Additionally, the [UCCS Graduate School policies and procedures](#) govern academic matters for graduate students. Some of the more frequently referenced policies are presented in this Handbook, together with specific guidance that governs students within the School of Public Affairs and MPA Program.

### Governing Catalog

The [Academic Catalog](#) that governs a student's graduation requirements is the one in effect at the time of the student's most recent admission into the school/college of their degree program.

### Time Limit

Students must complete their degree no later than six years after the starting date of the first class counted toward degree requirements, *even if that course is taken as a non-degree seeking student*. A student who fails to complete the degree in the six-year period must file a petition for extension with the program director and have it approved by the Graduate School Dean. The petition, giving reasons why the student should be allowed to continue in the program, must be endorsed by the program director.

Although the MPA program requires intensive commitment, it does not require full-time study, and many SPA students take courses on a part-time basis. All core courses are offered in the classroom and online, alternating delivery modes so that each course is offered in both formats every year (at a minimum). Electives may be offered in the classroom, online, or in intensive or hybrid formats. Students in the MPA program should generally expect to complete the degree in not less than two and no more than six years; the average completion time is about three years.

### Typical Course Load

SPA students typically enroll in three (one course) to six (two courses) credit hours each fall and spring semester. Graduate students are considered to be full time when taking five or more credit hours during fall or spring semesters or three or more credit hours during summer semester.

### Grading Policies

Grades offered in SPA courses, with the exception of PAD 6910: Internship, which is offered on a pass/fail basis only, are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

- **A** = Work beyond the level of a typical graduate student; exemplary work. (An A equals 4 grade points, an A- equals 3.7 points; there is no A+ grade.)

- **B** = Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0, and a B- equals 2.7 points.)
- **C** = Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).
- **D** = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade point).
- **F** = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

### **Acceptable Grades**

Students must receive a grade of B- or better in all courses applied toward the degree. In order to remain in good academic standing and to receive the degree, a student is required to maintain at least a B (3.0) grade point average, which includes all work required for the MPA degree while taken at UCCS (classified and unclassified) and may differ from the University grade point average.

A student who receives a grade below B in a course may repeat that course once, with the approval of the MPA program director, provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree. The grade received in a repeated course may substitute for the original grade and only the latter grade will be used in calculating the student's MPA grade point average required for graduation. However, all grades received during the student's graduate school experience will appear on the student's transcript and will be used in calculating the student's UCCS grade point average.

The calculation of a student's *program* grade point average (GPA) shall be based on all coursework applied to the degree, including any courses taken as a non-degree seeking student. (NOTE: Courses taken in non-degree status are not included in the calculation of graduate school cumulative GPA on the official transcripts but are included in the calculation of the program GPA as conducted by SPA staff for graduation purposes.)

### **Retroactive Grade Changes**

Students are not permitted to request grade changes for courses in which a final letter grade (other than an Incomplete) has been received except as a result of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not enter into an agreement with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

### **Standards of Performance**

In order to be in good standing, students must have an overall GPA of 3.0 or better in all coursework. A grade of B- or better is required in all courses. The academic performance of each student will be reviewed at the end of each semester. A student who has a GPA of less than 3.0 will be placed on probation; additionally, any student receiving a grade of F in any course is automatically placed on probation. Students who are placed on probationary status are notified via their UCCS email account, the official means of communication.

After a student has been placed on probation, they have a maximum of two semesters, or one calendar year, to raise her/his GPA to 3.0. Failure to raise the cumulative GPA to 3.0 in the time period outlined will result in suspension from the program.

A suspended student is eligible to apply for readmission one year after removal from the program. Approval or rejection of this application rests with the MPA program director.

## **Incompletes, Withdrawals, and Repeating Courses**

### **Incompletes**

A grade of Incomplete may be granted when a student has successfully completed a substantial portion of the course (75% or more) *and* is prevented from completing the class by circumstances beyond their control. The course instructor has discretion as to whether to grant an Incomplete, and students should be aware that not all faculty will do so. If the instructor agrees to grant an Incomplete, the student must make arrangements to complete the remaining coursework with the original instructor within one year, although instructors may impose a shorter completion deadline at their discretion, which should be in writing. The student may not “sit in” on the class in subsequent semesters.

Once the coursework is completed, the instructor will change the I grade to a letter grade. The Incomplete notation will appear along with the final grade on the student’s transcript. If the coursework is not completed within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F. Incompletes for the capstone seminar are rarely granted and only in exceptional circumstances.

### **Drops and Withdrawals**

Deadlines for dropping a course are set by the Office of the Registrar. Students are responsible for knowing the drop and add deadlines and procedures published in the [Course Information Center](#).

Students will be allowed to drop and add of their own accord through census date (the 12th day of classes of the regular semester or the 6th day of classes of the summer term). Courses that meet less than the full 16 week term in fall and spring and 8 weeks in the summer have special pro-rated drop and add deadlines.

There are no refunds on individual courses dropped after the course census date.

Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of “F” for the course.

### **Repeating Courses**

A student who receives a grade below B in a course may repeat that course once, with the approval of the MPA program director, provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree. The grade received in a repeated course may substitute for the original grade and only the latter grade will be used in calculating the graduate program GPA required for graduation. However, all grades received

during the student's graduate school experience will appear on the student's transcript and will be used in calculating the student's University GPA.

These and other [UCCS Graduate School policies](#) may apply.

## **Transfer Credit**

### **Application of Graduate Credit Earned at Another School or University**

Up to nine graduate-level (semester equivalent) credit hours of relevant coursework completed at another accredited institution or at a UCCS unit other than the School of Public Affairs may be applied toward the MPA degree. To be eligible for transfer, courses must have been taken within five years of the request for transfer credit, have an earned grade of B or above, and have not been applied toward another degree. In order for a course to substitute for a core class, the course must have been completed at a NASPAA-accredited school. Should a transferred course become six or more years old before the student finishes the degree requirements, it will no longer count toward the degree unless revalidation criteria apply. All transfer work must be approved in writing by the MPA program director. Students should request transfer of credits immediately after admission.

### **Credit Earned at UCCS SPA before Admission into MPA program**

A maximum of 12 graduate-level credit hours taken as an unclassified (nondegree) student at the UCCS School of Public Affairs may be applied toward the MPA degree. No credit applied to another degree may be applied to the MPA. Courses must have an earned grade of B or above and have been taken within five years of the request for application of credit. Should a course become six or more years old before the student finishes the degree requirements, it will no longer count toward the degree unless revalidation criteria apply.

## **Course Validation Process**

MPA students have six years, from the date of the start of course work, to complete all degree requirements. The program director must approve applying any course to the degree that was taken more than six years prior to the semester of graduation, and all such courses must be validated by special examination. Courses that have been validated will be eligible for use towards graduation for two years. If the student takes longer than that from time of validation to complete the degree, a new course validation will be required.

The School of Public Affairs MPA faculty will consider (but not guarantee) validation of a course older than six years through the following process.

1. Course validation will only be considered for courses in which at least a B was earned.
2. Students will submit a [Course Validation form](#) for each course in question to the MPA program director.
3. The MPA program director will schedule a meeting to include the student and a second faculty member with content expertise related to the course in question. After that meeting, the MPA program director will notify the student if they are approved to continue the validation process.

4. If the student is approved to continue the process, they will submit to the MPA program director written review of what was learned in class, how the course applies to their profession, and what has changed in the field since the course was taken.
5. The MPA program director and/or a faculty content expert will conduct a second discussion with the student to discuss the paper and ask any additional questions needed to assess the currency of the student's knowledge.
6. The MPA program director will inform the student and the graduate student services specialist of the decision on course validation.

## **MPA Graduation Procedures**

All students **must apply for graduation** during the semester in which they anticipate graduating by completing the [steps outlined on the Graduate School website](#). Do not procrastinate, as deadlines are early in the semester.

- Students should meet with their faculty advisor to determine which requirements remain for graduation.
- Students must complete and submit an [application for admission to candidacy](#) by the specified deadline.
- Students must apply for graduation using the [online diploma card](#) in the student portal.
- Students who would like to participate in the commencement ceremony (optional) should register at the [commencement website](#), where additional information about the ceremony may be found as well.

Students who have completed all the requirements for the MPA degree can apply for candidacy and graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students who complete their degree requirements in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. No graduation ceremony is held in the summer.

Students who are on the graduation list but find they are not able to complete the program requirements before graduation should notify the graduate student services specialist as soon as possible. They may then reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

## **Student Academic Complaints and Appeals**

### **MPA Student Academic Complaints and Appeals**

Formal procedures by which a currently enrolled student may seek to remedy academic complaints within the School of Public Affairs are described below. Student appeals are challenges to academic actions or decisions, including but not limited to actions such as an academic grade or evaluation of a student's work in a course, seminar, or other academic forum; a decision with respect to a student's

academic standing in a program or at the School; unjust treatment by a faculty member in a class; or actions related to thesis or capstone procedures.

***Step One: Informal Resolution***

The student is strongly encouraged to first attempt to informally resolve the grievance through discussion with the faculty member(s) involved.

***Step Two: Filing the Grievance***

If the student is unable to resolve the dispute with the faculty member(s), they should file a written grievance with the MPA program director. Absent unusual circumstances, the grievance should be filed within 30 days after the student learns of the event that gives rise to the grievance.

The written grievance may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the MPA program director. The grievance should clearly state the basis for the complaint and the remedy requested, and should include any evidence that supports the grievance, such as course syllabi, assignments, and statements from other students.

Students should be aware that grades and other evaluations of student work are traditionally within the jurisdiction of individual instructors, and are not likely to be changed absent evidence that the faculty member 1) determined the grade based on considerations other than student performance; 2) substantially differed from previously announced criteria or procedures in determining the grade; or 3) violated university or school policy in determining the grade. The student bears the burden of proof on these allegations.

***Step Three: Investigating the Grievance***

The MPA program director will acknowledge receipt of the grievance, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin the investigation of the circumstances of the grievance. They may request additional information from the student and faculty member(s) involved.

If the grievance involves the need for substantial academic expertise in a particular field in order to assess whether there is a basis for the grievance, the program director may appoint a panel of faculty members with expertise in the area to investigate the grievance and recommend a decision to the program director.

In the event that the MPA program director is involved in the grievance, they shall refer the investigation of the grievance to the assistant dean of the School of Public Affairs for investigation pursuant to the rules of the Graduate School.

***Step Four: Decision by the MPA Program Director***

Within 30 days of the filing of the grievance, the MPA program director shall provide a written report containing their decision on the disposition of the grievance to the student and the faculty member(s).

### ***Appealing the Decision of the MPA Program Director to the Assistant Dean***

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MPA program director, the student may appeal to the assistant dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the program director's decision, following the same procedure specified in Step Two above. The assistant dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MPA program director in deciding the disposition of the grievance, and any other materials they consider relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the program director's decision, the assistant dean shall provide a written report containing their decision on the disposition of the grievance to the student, the faculty member(s), and the MPA program director.

### ***Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean***

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MPA program director and the assistant dean, the student may appeal to the dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the assistant dean's decision, following the same procedure specified in Step Two above. The dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MPA program director and assistant dean in deciding the disposition of the grievance, and any other they consider relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the assistant dean's decision, the dean shall provide a written report containing their decision on the disposition of the grievance to all of the parties involved.

### ***Campus-Level Appeals***

Grade appeals are decided within the School of Public Affairs; the dean has final jurisdiction. If a resolution to the problem identified in the student's appeal on other academic issues cannot be reached on the department or School level, the student may submit a written appeal to the dean of the Graduate School according to [Article V of Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#).

### **Campus Level Student Code of Conduct and Academic Ethics Code Violations**

As described in Section 7 of this Handbook, all students enrolled in credit or non-credit courses at UCCS are bound by the [UCCS Student Academic Ethics Code Policy](#) and the [UCCS Student Code of Conduct](#).

#### **Student Code of Conduct**

The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct is to maintain the general welfare of the university community. The university strives to make the campus community a place of study, work, and residence where people are treated, and treat one another, with respect and courtesy.

Students are expected to read this Code, make a timely report of an incident, and file all necessary complaints through the Office of the Dean of Students.

#### **Student Academic Ethics Code Policy**

Any individual who has a good faith belief that a Code violation has taken place should immediately report the circumstances to the faculty member of the course involved or to the program director/chair of the department where the course is offered.

If a faculty member has reason to believe that a Code violation has occurred (due either to the faculty member's own observation or due to a report by a third party), the faculty member shall discuss the matter with the student, provide the student with the supporting documentation and ask the student for a response.

If the student admits to the Code violation or the faculty member finds that a Code violation has occurred, then it is the faculty member's prerogative to impose a sanction at the course level. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. downgrading the student on the assignment/exam/activity in which the academic Code violation occurred, with or without the opportunity to redo;
- b. failing the student on the assignment/exam/activity in which the academic Code violation occurred, with or without the opportunity to redo;
- c. lowering the student's grade for the course;
- d. failing the student for the course.

If the faculty member believes that a sanction more severe than a course-level sanction should be levied, then the faculty member shall follow all department and college procedures for such sanctions. The program director or dean may levy more severe sanctions including probation, suspension, expulsion, or withholding or revoking a degree.

Students may dispute the faculty member's finding that a Code violation has occurred by following the appeals process outlined below. Students may not appeal course-level sanctions.

### ***Step One: Filing the Appeal***

If the student contends that they are innocent of a Code violation and is unable to resolve the situation with the faculty member(s), they should file a written appeal with the MPA program director. Absent unusual circumstances, the appeal should be filed within 30 days after the dispute.

The written appeal may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the MPA program director. The appeal should contain all relevant information.

### ***Step Two: Investigating the Appeal***

The MPA program director will acknowledge receipt of the appeal, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin an investigation. They may request additional information from the student and faculty member(s) involved.

In the event that the MPA program director is involved in the dispute, they shall refer the investigation of the appeal to the assistant dean of the School of Public Affairs for investigation.

### ***Step Three: Decision by the MPA Program Director***

Within 30 days of the filing of the appeal, the MPA program director shall provide a written report containing their decision to the student and the faculty member(s).



***Appealing the Decision of the MPA Program Director to the Assistant Dean***

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MPA program director, the student may appeal to the assistant dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the program director's decision, following the same procedure specified above. The assistant dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MPA program director in deciding the disposition of the appeal, and any other materials they consider relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the program director's decision, the assistant dean shall provide a written report containing their decision on the disposition of the appeal to the student, the faculty member(s), and the MPA program director.

***Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean***

If a student is not satisfied with the results of the appeal process to the MPA program director and the assistant dean, the student may appeal to the dean of the School of Public Affairs within 14 days of notification of the assistant dean's decision, following the same procedure specified above. The dean shall then review the materials submitted by the student, the materials submitted to and used by the MPA program director and assistant dean in deciding the disposition of the appeal, and any other materials they consider relevant to the inquiry. Within 14 days of receiving the student's appeal of the assistant dean's decision, the dean shall provide a written report containing their decision on the disposition of the grievance to all of the parties involved.

***Campus-Level Appeals***

Students may dispute the faculty member's finding that a Code violation has occurred at the campus level only after exhausting the SPA appeals process. Students may not appeal course-level sanctions, but may appeal more severe program- or School-level sanctions such as probation, suspension, expulsion, or withholding or revoking of a degree as levied by the School. This process is outlined in the [Student Academic Ethics Code Policy](#).