WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
Bowling Green, Kentucky

MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
(MPA, #051)

PROGRAM POLICY HANDBOOK

Effective Fall Semester 2013
Note: some changes take effect Spring Semester 2014

The WKU MPA Program is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration

NASPAA is the Global Standard in Public Service Education
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PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to welcome and assist prospective and new students as they are admitted into and move through the MPA Program.

MPA PROGRAM MISSION

(The Mission Statement was adopted after comments and revisions were received from—faculty, alumni, employers, students and advisory committee.) Revised June 26, 2013.

The MPA program prepares graduate students from diverse backgrounds to be productive leaders and managers in public service by sharing knowledge, encouraging excellence in research and practice, and fostering an environment of professionalism within the communities we serve.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree is offered at Western Kentucky University through the Department of Political Science. The MPA is designed to provide knowledge and skills appropriate for professional career development in public and non-profit organizations.

As our mission states, the MPA program prepares graduate students from diverse backgrounds to be productive leaders and managers in the public service by sharing knowledge, encouraging excellence in research and practice, and fostering an environment of professionalism within the communities we serve. We have a 40 year history of providing quality education and practical experience to our students through community partnerships with organizations such as Kentucky’s area development districts, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Center for Local Governments. Graduates go on to serve in a variety of local, state, federal, and nonprofit organizations, and many have successfully pursued doctoral degrees upon graduation from the MPA program.

Requirements for the degree reflect the need for an understanding of both the political and administrative nature of public organizations and the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the field. The curriculum provides a balanced blend of study of both the theory and practice of public administration.

Effective Spring 2014, ALL students admitted to the MPA program will be required to complete 39 semester hours, consisting of 18 hours of required course work, 18 hours of electives determined in consultation with the MPA Advisor, and 3 hours credit to be earned by taking one of three courses—PS 598, or PS 505 or PS 597. All candidates for the MPA degree must also successfully pass a written MPA comprehensive exam. No thesis is required. All requirements for the degree must be completed within six years of the date of initial enrollment. Courses accepted for transfer credit must meet this six year time limit.

All course work can be completed on-campus in Bowling Green. The MPA can also be completed at the Fort Knox/Elizabethtown, Owensboro, and Glasgow regional campuses via a
combination of on-site interactive television courses and courses offered online. To accommodate the schedules of busy professionals, most required classes and electives are offered in the evenings. In addition, several elective courses are offered during the summer and winter semesters.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The MPA degree is divided into three components: 1) core courses, 2) elective courses, and 3) internship. Students must satisfy all three components in order to earn their degree. The MPA Program has developed an annualized matrix of course offerings to assist students in the planning of their degree. This annualized course matrix is found on the website and updated frequently to meet needs of students and faculty. Schedule of courses are offered on the WKU website.

1) Core Courses (18 hours)
All MPA students must complete the six courses listed below:

   PS 501 - Methods of Political Inquiry  
   PS 538 - Ethics and Bureaucracy  
   PS 540 - Seminar in Public Sector Organizations  
   PS 541 - Public Personnel Management  
   PS 542 - Governmental Financial Management  
   *PS 545 - Seminar in Public Policy Analysis  
   or  
   *PS 546 - Public Policy Evaluation  
   *Students may elect either course in consultation with the MPA Advisor.

All students entering the MPA program are highly encouraged to take PS 520 - Elements of Public Administration during their first semester.

2) Elective Courses (18 hours)
In consultation with their MPA Advisor, students may select from the following departmental elective courses:

   PS 500 - Workshops in Public Administration (1.5 hours, may be repeated for credit)  
   PS 510 - Problems in National Government  
   PS 511 - Seminar in State Government  
   PS 512 - Kentucky Government and Politics  
   PS 520 - Elements of Public Administration  
   PS 524 - Administrative Law  
   PS 543 - Politics and Administration in Rural Communities  
   PS 549 - Special Problems in Public Administration  
   PS 580 - Directed Study

PS 500 and PS 580 may each be repeated for a combined total of six credit hours. PS 580 may be taken for a total of six credit hours.
Courses from other academic departments may be acceptable for inclusion as electives provided permission is obtained from the MPA Advisor prior to the student's enrollment in any such course. A maximum of 12 hours credit accepted from any other department can be applied toward the MPA degree. All transfer credits from other educational institutions must be approved by the MPA Advisor and by the Office of Graduate Studies. Additionally, students may not take more than 12 hours before being admitted to the program. Please see graduate catalog for complete requirements.

3) Internship (3 hours)
The MPA degree at WKU requires an internship of all students. There are three options available to meet the internship requirement for MPA students.

Internship requirement can be satisfied by one of the following options with consent of the MPA academic advisor:

a) PS 598 Internship in Public Administration (3 hours) OR
b) PS 505 Washington Internship (3 or 6 hours)**
   Students electing the six hour internship may substitute three of the hours for one of their elective courses OR
c) PS 597 Professional Seminar in Public Administration

Students entering the MPA program with appropriate previous public sector experience may, upon approval, have the internship requirement of PS 598 or PS 505 substituted with PS 597. In order for the substitution to be considered, a current resume and a job description indicating sufficient public sector experience must be submitted to the MPA Director before Form C is filed. If substitution is approved, the students will enroll in PS 597.

PROCEDURAL CHECKLIST FOR MPA STUDENTS

The program and the Office of Graduate Studies require a series of steps and forms to be filed to enable the student to make orderly progress toward the completion of the MPA degree. It is important that students follow these steps in processing the appropriate forms and in completing the program requirements.

Admission Procedures
Students desiring admission to the MPA program must complete each of the following prior to the first semester of enrollment:

(1) Complete the Application for Admission via online application found on Graduate Studies website and submit application along with the required fee;
(2) Request that official transcripts of the undergraduate and/any graduate work (from all undergraduate and/any graduate institutions attended) be sent directly to the Office of Graduate Studies;
(3) Take the GRE and request that Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores be sent to the Office of Graduate Studies.
It is also **highly recommended** that students submit directly to the MPA Director the following materials:

1) Current Resume  
2) 3 letters of reference  
3) Statement of how and why a MPA degree will be important to the student’s career aspirations.

**Program Content and Timetables**

The following procedures are required in order to ensure that you are making progress toward your MPA degree.

**(1) Program of Study (Form C)**

This form includes a listing of the MPA program curriculum courses which the MPA student agrees to complete in order to receive the MPA degree. The form will include all approved transfer credits.

**NOTE:** All MPA students are strongly advised not to register for any course work without prior consultation with the MPA Advisor.

(a) The Program of Study (Form C) must be completed in cooperation with the MPA Advisor during the **first semester** of enrollment in MPA course work (or before reaching 12 hours of credit);  
(b) The Form C must be filed with and accepted and approved by the Graduate Studies Office during the **first semester** of enrollment in MPA course work.

**(2) Program Course Substitutions (Course Change Form)**

It is possible that some elective courses listed on a student’s Form C may not always be offered at a time suitable for completion. Changes (substitutions) for courses already included on the Form C must be requested and approved by the MPA Advisor prior to enrollment in any alternative course work. The course change form must be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies as well.

**(3) Transfer Credit**

Up to 12 semester hours of transfer credit from an accredited institution may be accepted toward meeting the course requirements for the MPA degree. These courses must be properly identified as graduate level courses. Courses accepted for transfer credit must fall within the 6 year limit for degree completion. These courses must be evaluated prior to the student filing Form C.

Requests for transfer credit must be approved by the MPA Director and Office of Graduate Studies. All requests for transfer credit must include supporting documentation regarding course content and requirements. Course outlines, syllabi and reading lists are appropriate for this requirement. The Office of Graduate Studies must approve all requests for transfer credits.
(4) Admission to Candidacy (Form D)
This form enables the Graduate Studies Office to review your progress toward your MPA degree.

(a) Form D (Admission to Candidacy) Criteria include certification that:
   (1) GRE scores and Form C are on file;
   (2) any "conditional" status has been satisfied;
   (3) student maintains a 3.0 or above in all graduate course work.

(b) The Form D may be filed at any time after the student has completed 15 graduate credit hours and before completing 21 credit hours.

(5) Program Completion
The completion of the MPA program includes the successful passing of all courses on the student's Form C, the successful completion of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, and the filing of an application for degree/graduation form (along with the requisite fees) with the Office of Graduate Studies.

(a) Students are expected to file for graduation either during the semester previous to the semester of graduation or early in the semester they expect to graduate. These forms may be obtained and filed online on the Office of Graduate Studies’ website.
(b) Students who have completed at least 27 semester hours of their MPA coursework (including all of the required core courses) are eligible to apply to take the written MPA Comprehensive Exam. (See Appendix B for the appropriate application form).
(c) Upon successful passage of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, a Form E (report on the Comprehensive Exam) will be filed by the MPA program with the Office of Graduate Studies.
(d) All necessary course work must, of course, be completed, all "incompletes" removed, and all other forms and records must be complete and on file before the MPA degree will be officially awarded by the Office of Graduate Studies.

THE MPA COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

The MPA Comprehensive Exam is structured to measure the student's ability to integrate and apply knowledge acquired in MPA coursework to current and/or hypothetical problems involving public management and/or policy. The written exam consists of five substantive areas, all of which directly relate to the MPA core courses. All core courses must be completed and 27 hours within the Program before a student is eligible to take the comprehensive exam. "Core course" topics will cover the following general areas:

(1) ethical norms and issues (PS 538);
(2) public sector organizations, theory, structure, and behavior (PS 540);
(3) applications of personnel management in the public sector (PS 541);
(4) applications of public financial management (PS 542);
(5) public policy analysis and/or evaluation (PS 545 or PS546).
The specific content of each exam question will be prepared by the faculty responsible for that subject matter area. Students will be provided with suggested study materials and they are strongly urged to consult with each respective faculty member prior to the exam.

The MPA Comprehensive Exam is offered once per semester (Fall, Spring, Summer) on the WKU Bowling Green campus. The exam dates are the first Saturday in December, the third Saturday in April and the last Saturday in July.

Completed forms should be sent via email to Victoria.gordon@wku.edu or mailed to:

MPA Director, #305 Grise Hall
Western Kentucky University
Department of Political Science
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11060
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1060

The Exam is graded on a pass/fail basis and a passing grade on all five areas is required. The exam is assessed on the basis of: 1) fails to meet expectations; 2) meets expectations; 3) exceeds expectations. Students are permitted to apply to re-take any question(s) not successfully passed on the exam. Students who fail to meet expectations may apply to retake that section of the exam. The second exam must be completed no later than the end of the semester following the first exam. Students need to refer to the Office of Graduate Studies website and graduate catalog for instructions if they do not pass after the second re-take. Students may be dismissed from the program by the Office of Graduates Studies. Upon successful passage of the MPA Comprehensive Exam, a Form E (report on the Comprehensive Exam) will be filed by the MPA Program with the Office of Graduate Studies.

**ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MPA STUDENTS**

**Graduate Assistantships**

The MPA Program has graduate assistantship positions available each semester. Students are usually awarded the assistantships for an entire academic year. Effective Fall semester 2013, if a student desires consideration for an available GA position, an Application for Graduate Assistantship must be submitted to the MPA Program Director. Three letters of reference and a resume should also accompany the Application. Continuation of a GA position are handled in the same way—and GA’s wanting to return the next year must submit a continuation application, but new reference letters and resume are not required.
Outstanding MPA Course Paper

Each academic year, MPA faculty identify student course papers for consideration. A committee of the MPA faculty reviews these submissions and determines the best paper. The name of the author of the selected paper is inscribed on a plaque.

Outstanding MPA Graduate (Fall and Spring graduation)

Each Fall and Spring semester, a committee of the MPA faculty reviews all the graduates for that semester and selects the outstanding graduate based on scholarship, research, contribution to the MPA Program, and other factors of relevance. The name of the selected graduate is inscribed on a plaque.

Research Presentation Opportunities

MPA students are encouraged to pursue their individual research interests. Accordingly, the MPA faculty act as sponsors in working with students in the development and presentation of research. Annual meetings of the Kentucky Political Science Association (KPSA), Southeastern Conference of Public Administration (SECoPA) and other conferences provide opportunities for students to present and receive external feedback on their work.

Networking and Mentoring Opportunities

At the beginning of the Fall semester, the MPA program sponsors an orientation of new and returning MPA students and invites alumni and faculty to share information and develop external linkages to the broader community. On a more limited basis, an orientation is held each January as well for new students. Networking opportunities are also provided for all students through the local Metro Louisville chapter of the American Society for Public Administration. Students are provided with information on professional organizations and are encouraged to become members.
Communication is essential to the success of our students and the mission of the WKU MPA Program. All faculty in the MPA Program have regular office hours to assist students. In cases where students need assistance beyond these normal office hours, instructors can be reached via telephone or email. An organization site has also been established using Blackboard for the MPA faculty and students.

List of MPA Faculty

Saundra Ardrey, PhD  
Daniel Boden, PhD  
Jeff Budziak, PhD  
Victoria Gordon, DPA  
Jeffrey Kash, PhD  
Scott Lasley, PhD  
Roger Murphy, PhD  
Joel Turner, PhD  
Shannon Vaughan, PhD  
Edward Yager, PhD

List of MPA Adjunct Faculty

Kevin DeFebbo  
Michele Tolbert  
Nick Brake

If any part of this handbook conflicts with the WKU Graduate Catalog, the WKU Graduate Catalog takes precedence and that portion of this handbook becomes null. Anyone discovering a conflict between this handbook and the WKU Graduate Catalog, or a potential conflict, should report said conflict to the Director of the MPA Program immediately.

Revisions and Updates Completed by MPA Faculty Sub-committee  
Reviewed Spring semester 2013 and updated Summer 2013 and distributed Fall 2013