

PUBLIC AFFAIRS, MPA

The Master of Public Affairs (MPA) Program provides education in public management and policy analysis that prepares students for careers in public policy and administration within the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

The award-winning La Follette School faculty includes economists, political scientists, sociologists, and public affairs scholars who teach the skills and tools needed for a career in public affairs. They are experts in social policy, health policy and management, public administration, public policy analysis, environmental policy, poverty, and tax policy and government finance.

Beyond campus, the city of Madison, as the state capital, provides a wealth of opportunities for La Follette School students to participate in outreach and acquire practical experience as professional project assistants or interns with public and private entities. Students benefit from the strong relationships that La Follette School faculty have with these organizations, in keeping with the Wisconsin Idea of public service. This includes the Wisconsin Family Impact Seminar and Campus Connect—opportunities that use evidence-based research to inform policymakers and improve public policy.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DOUBLE DEGREES, DUAL DEGREES, AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Some students earn additional credentials while they work toward their public affairs degrees. Students must follow double degree (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/?policy=doubleddegrees>) and dual degree (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/?policy=dualdegreesgradprof>) policies. The following combined degree and certificate programs have been established, though students choose to embark on double degrees and graduate certificates beyond those listed below:

- Law (Juris Doctorate)
- Master of Public Health
- Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning
- Doctorate in Neuroscience
- Energy Analysis and Policy Certificate through the Nelson Institute in Environmental Studies
- Business, Environment, & Social Responsibility; Entrepreneurship; or Strategic Innovation offered through the School of Business.

Law and Public Affairs (MPA/JD)

Increasingly, careers in the federal, state, and local governments, as well as nonprofit organizations and private sector businesses require an understanding of public administration, policy analysis, and public affairs, as well as law. Many students choose to pursue the dual law and public affairs degree because of their interest in employment in government agencies, government relations law practice, or other policy-oriented firms and organizations.

For most students, the dual degree program will add about a year of study to the three years it takes to complete law school but will save approximately one year of study compared to doing the two programs separately. Students earn a Master of Public Affairs degree and a Juris Doctor. It is recommended that students apply to both programs at the same time.

Public Health and Public Affairs (MPA/MPH)

The La Follette School and the School of Medicine and Public Health offer education in public health policy, policy analysis, and global governance to address critical health and health policy issues in the United States and throughout the world.

The dual degree program generally takes three years to complete, including summers. Students earn a Master of Public Affairs degree and a Master of Public Health degree.

Neuroscience and Public Affairs (MPA/PhD)

Advances in neuroscience have important policy implications for child welfare and education, community development, mental health and health care, bioethics and aging, environmental risks, and national security. The Neuroscience and Public Policy Program (NPP) courses prepare students to work in the growing array of domestic or international policy jobs involved in the management of science and its integration into policy analysis and design. Students become good scientists and effective communicators, managers, and advocates of good public policy.

This combined degree program typically takes five years to complete, including summers. Students earn a Master of Public Affairs degree and a Doctor of Philosophy in Neuroscience. Degree requirements are completed in the first three years. The focus of the fourth year is on research and thesis development, as well as completion of the PhD Preliminary Exam. Students continue doing research and defend their thesis in the fifth year.

Urban and Regional Planning and Public Affairs (MPA/MS in URPL)

The La Follette School and the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture offer education in planning, policymaking, and public affairs to address domestic and global environmental, housing, and transportation policy issues. This double degree takes three years to complete, including summers. Students earn a Master of Public Affairs degree and a Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning.

ADMISSIONS

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Please consult the table below for key information about this degree program's admissions requirements. The program may have more detailed admissions requirements, which can be found below the table or on the program's website.

Graduate admissions is a two-step process between academic programs and the Graduate School. **Applicants must meet the minimum requirements (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/requirements/>) of the Graduate School as well as the program(s).** Once you have researched the graduate program(s) you are interested in, apply online (<https://grad.wisc.edu/apply/>).

Requirements	Detail
Fall Deadline	January 1
Spring Deadline	This program does not admit in the spring.
Summer Deadline	This program does not admit in the summer.
GRE (Graduate Record Examinations)	Not required but may be considered if available.

English Proficiency Test Every applicant whose native language is not English, or whose undergraduate instruction was not exclusively in English, must provide an English proficiency test score earned within two years of the anticipated term of enrollment. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Requirements for Admission policy: <https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241> (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1241/>).

Other Test(s) (e.g., GMAT, MCAT) n/a

Letters of Recommendation Required 2

The parts of the application include:

- Resume / CV
- Statement of purpose addressing our questions
- Two letters of recommendation
- Unofficial transcript showing a minimum GPA of 3.0 out of 4.0 (or equivalent)
- Supplemental application including:
 - Prerequisite check
 - Quantitative essay about current or past professional work requiring quantitative or analytic skill or experience and how it has prepared you for graduate study in public affairs (recommended)

Prerequisite courses include: ECON 101 Principles of Microeconomics, A A E 101 Introduction to Agricultural and Applied Economics, PSYCH 210 Basic Statistics for Psychology or MATH 221 Calculus and Analytic Geometry 1 or MATH 222 Calculus and Analytic Geometry 2 or STAT 301 Introduction to Statistical Methods or SOC/C&E SOC 360 Statistics for Sociologists I, or STAT 371 Introductory Applied Statistics for the Life Sciences, and POLI SCI 104 Introduction to American Politics and Government. Applicants without this background may be admitted with the understanding that these courses will be completed before beginning the program.

The program may require admitted applicants to take the on-campus English as a Second Language Assessment Test and register for any recommended English as a second language course(s) in the first semester of graduate study.

The La Follette School of Public Affairs only admits for the fall semester. The priority deadline for admission is listed above in the table. Applications are accepted after this date on a rolling admission basis, but there is no guarantee that space in the incoming class will be available. Note that accelerated students are not able to apply to the dual or double degree programs with the La Follette School because of the rigorous schedule of the coursework.

FUNDING

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GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources to help you afford graduate study might include assistantships, fellowships, traineeships, and financial aid. Further funding information (<https://grad.wisc.edu/funding/>) is available from the Graduate School.

Be sure to check with your program for individual policies and restrictions related to funding.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

The La Follette School offers a limited number of fellowships and assistantships on a merit basis to select public affairs and international public affairs applicants who submit all application materials by **January 1**. Need is considered for some scholarships, so submitting a FAFSA in December is also recommended.

Please refer to the Funding and Financial Information (<https://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/admissions/funding-financial-information/>) section of the La Follette School website for more information.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM GRADUATE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS

Review the Graduate School minimum academic progress and degree requirements (<http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirements>), in addition to the program requirements listed below.

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

MODE OF INSTRUCTION

Face to Face	Evening/Weekend	Online	Hybrid	Accelerated
Yes	No	No	No	Yes

Mode of Instruction Definitions

Accelerated: Accelerated programs are offered at a fast pace that condenses the time to completion. Students typically take enough credits aimed at completing the program in a year or two.

Evening/Weekend: Courses meet on the UW-Madison campus only in evenings and/or on weekends to accommodate typical business schedules. Students have the advantages of face-to-face courses with the flexibility to keep work and other life commitments.

Face-to-Face: Courses typically meet during weekdays on the UW-Madison Campus.

Hybrid: These programs combine face-to-face and online learning formats. Contact the program for more specific information.

Online: These programs are offered 100% online. Some programs may require an on-campus orientation or residency experience, but the courses will be facilitated in an online format.

CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS

Requirement Detail

Minimum Credit Requirement 42 credits

Minimum Residence Credit Requirement 16 credits

Minimum Graduate Coursework Requirement	21 credits must be completed in graduate-level coursework. Refer to the Graduate School: Minimum Graduate Coursework (50%) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1244/).
Overall Graduate GPA Requirement	3.00 GPA required. Refer to the Graduate School: Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirement policy: https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203 (https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1203/).
Other Grade Requirements	Students must earn a BC or above in all core curriculum coursework. A grade of C is the minimum grade permitted in elective courses that count toward a La Follette School degree.
Assessments and Examinations	n/a
Language Requirements	No language requirement.

REQUIRED COURSES

Students must complete 42 credits, including six core courses, a one-credit professional development seminar, plus eight elective courses. An internship can count for up to three elective credits. The program generally takes two years.

Foundational MPA Courses

Seven required courses are the foundation of the MPA degree program.

Code	Title	Credits
Required Courses		19
PUB AFFR 800	Public Affairs Professional Development Workshop	
PUB AFFR 818	Introduction to Statistical Methods for Public Policy Analysis	
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI/ URB R PL 874	Policy-Making Process	
PUB AFFR 880	Microeconomic Policy Analysis	
PUB AFFR 873	Introduction to Policy Analysis	
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI/ URB R PL 878	Public Management	
PUB AFFR 869	Workshop in Public Affairs	

Recommended Electives in Public Affairs 23

Students build proficiency beyond the core requirements through elective courses that include but are not limited to:

PUB AFFR 520	Inequality, Race and Public Policy	
PUB AFFR 819	Advanced Statistical Methods for Public Policy Analysis	
PUB AFFR 827	Administrative Internship	
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI 871	Public Program Evaluation	
PUB AFFR/ A A E/ENVIR ST/ POP HLTH 881	Benefit-Cost Analysis	
PUB AFFR 974	Topics in Public Affairs	

Total Credits 42

Recommended Two-Year Plan of Study

Code	Title	Credits
Recommended progression: Courses below are those required for the degree indicated in the semester in which they are required. Students fill in with electives in consultation with their advisor.		

Fall Year One: 10-13 credits

PUB AFFR 800	Public Affairs Professional Development Workshop	1
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI/ URB R PL 874	Policy-Making Process	3
PUB AFFR 880	Microeconomic Policy Analysis	3

Elective/s

Spring Year One: 12 credits

PUB AFFR 818	Introduction to Statistical Methods for Public Policy Analysis	3
PUB AFFR 873	Introduction to Policy Analysis	3
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI/ URB R PL 878	Public Management	3

Elective

Summer: optional 1-3 credits

PUB AFFR 827	Administrative Internship	1-3
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Fall Year Two: No specific courses required; students select electives in consultation with their advisor. Common options are shown.

PUB AFFR 819	Advanced Statistical Methods for Public Policy Analysis	3
PUB AFFR/ POLI SCI 871	Public Program Evaluation	3
PUB AFFR/ A A E/ENVIR ST/ POP HLTH 881	Benefit-Cost Analysis	3
PUB AFFR 974	Topics in Public Affairs	3

Spring Year Two: 9 credits

PUB AFFR 869	Workshop in Public Affairs	3
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Electives

Public Affairs And Urban and Regional Planning (MPA/MS URPL)

The La Follette School of Public Affairs and the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture offer a double degree Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning and a Master of Public Affairs. Students completing the double degree must follow the double degree plan. The Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture requires 46 credits for the Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning. The La Follette School requires 42 credits for the Master of Public Affairs. Per UW-Madison Graduate School policy, an overlap of 25% of credits is permitted (11 credits can count toward both degrees). Students can graduate with both degrees by completing 77 credits in three years.

Graduate coordinators for both programs have sample curricular plans that they will share with prospective or current students to assist with successful completion of all degree requirements.

POLICIES

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICIES

The Graduate School's Academic Policies and Procedures (<https://grad.wisc.edu/acadpolicy/>) provide essential information regarding general university policies. Program authority to set degree policies beyond the minimum required by the Graduate School lies with the degree program faculty. Policies set by the academic degree program can be found below.

MAJOR-SPECIFIC POLICIES

PRIOR COURSEWORK

Graduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 12 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements. The credits from this work will appear on a UW-Madison transcript as transfer credits into the Graduate career but does not count toward graduate career GPA.

Undergraduate Credits Earned at Other Institutions or UW-Madison

Students in the MPA program may transfer up to 18 credits from their undergraduate career at UW-Madison toward the MPA 42 degree credit total.

Credits Earned as a Professional Student at UW-Madison (Law, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Veterinary careers)

Refer to the Graduate School: Transfer Credits for Prior Coursework (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1216/>) policy.

Credits Earned as a University Special Student at UW-Madison

With program approval, students are allowed to transfer no more than 9 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above taken as a UW-Madison University Special student. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a master's degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PROBATION

Refer to the Graduate School: Probation (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1217/>) policy.

ADVISOR / COMMITTEE

Every graduate student will have one faculty advisor in addition to the Admissions and Advising coordinator to support their academic progress.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

Two-Year MPA: Credit load by term varies. Students typically take 10 credits in their first semester in the program, increasing to 12 credits for the next two semesters so that they can plan a lighter load of 9 credits when in their final spring semester due to demands from their workshop course. Students need advisor approval to take 15 credits.

TIME LIMITS

Refer to the Graduate School: Time Limits (<https://policy.wisc.edu/library/UW-1221/>) policy.

GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS

These resources may be helpful in addressing your concerns:

- Bias or Hate Reporting (<https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>)
- Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/policies/gapp/#grievance-procedure>)
- Hostile and Intimidating Behavior Policies and Procedures (<https://hr.wisc.edu/hib/>)
 - Office of the Provost for Faculty and Staff Affairs (<https://facstaff.provost.wisc.edu/>)
- Employee Assistance (<http://www.eao.wisc.edu/>) (for personal counseling and workplace consultation around communication and conflict involving graduate assistants and other employees, post-doctoral students, faculty and staff)
- Employee Disability Resource Office (<https://employee disabilities.wisc.edu/>) (for qualified employees or applicants with disabilities to have equal employment opportunities)
- Graduate School (<https://grad.wisc.edu/>) (for informal advice at any level of review and for official appeals of program/departmental or school/college grievance decisions)
- Office of Compliance (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/>) (for class harassment and discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Office Student Assistance and Support (OSAS) (<https://osas.wisc.edu/>) (for all students to seek grievance assistance and support)
- Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/>) (for conflicts involving students)
- Ombuds Office for Faculty and Staff (<http://www.ombuds.wisc.edu/>) (for employed graduate students and post-docs, as well as faculty and staff)
- Title IX (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/titleix/>) (for concerns about discrimination)

Students should contact the department chair or program director with questions about grievances. They may also contact the L&S Academic Divisional Associate Deans, the L&S Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning Administration, or the L&S Director of Human Resources.

OTHER

n/a

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRADUATE SCHOOL RESOURCES

Take advantage of the Graduate School's professional development resources (<https://grad.wisc.edu/pd/>) to build skills, thrive academically, and launch your career.

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Public Affairs Careers

Career development is an integral part of the La Follette School experience, and data show extremely high percentages of employment three to six months post-graduation. The La Follette School offers:

- Visits with local employers, as well as trips focused on local, regional, and federal careers;
- Networking opportunities;
- Career development seminars with public affairs professionals; and
- Connections with alumni mentors.

The Director of Career and Employer Services works with students one-on-one to develop essential skills, such as interviewing, writing strong cover letters and resumes, and researching internships and permanent employment. During the first-semester course Professional Development Workshop (<https://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/degree-programs/courses/pa-800-professional-development-workshop/>), students also create an individual plan and portfolio that help them proactively move toward their academic and career goals.

La Follette School alumni work in all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. Popular positions include policy analyst, consultant, executive director, research analyst, project manager, and government liaison. MPA alumni have held positions with these agencies, organizations, and businesses:

- Congressional Research Service
- Deloitte
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Guidehouse
- Invenenergy LLC
- Kids Forward
- Mathematica Policy Research
- National Council on Crime and Delinquency
- U.S. Government Accountability Office
- U.S. Department of Transportation
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau

Please refer to the Career Development (<https://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/career-development/>) section of the La Follette School website for more information.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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1. (Knowledge) Demonstrate understanding of major current and past policy debates, research findings, and analytical methodologies in each of the following core areas: microeconomic policy analysis, quantitative tools for policy analysis, policy analysis, the policymaking process, and public management.
2. (Knowledge) Demonstrate critical thinking skills. They will retrieve and examine the policy literature and evaluate evidence for and against hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses in existing literature, synthesize knowledge, and develop conclusions.
3. (Applied Research Skills) Read, comprehend, and effectively summarize policy research and policy-relevant academic research.
4. (Applied Research Skills) Effectively summarize data for a general (non-academic) or policy audience.
5. (Applied Research Skills) Demonstrate competency in methods of inferential statistics including those associated with multivariate regression models.

6. (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Identify and appropriately respond to scenarios involving the ethical and professional responsibilities of public administration.
7. (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Demonstrate the ability to maintain human subjects protections when designing studies, collecting data and reporting results.
8. (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Know and adhere to high levels of professional conduct, ethical decision-making and legal and regulatory compliance.
9. (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods.
10. (Communication) Communicate in clear written language: a real-world policy problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.
11. (Communication) Communicate substance of point 1 highly concisely and in language understandable to a non-specialist.
12. (Communication) Communicate substance of point 2 orally.
13. (Professional Skills and Career Preparation) Develop effective job-seeking tools and utilize job-seeking techniques.
14. (Professional Skills and Career Preparation) Complete high quality group projects, including demonstration of effective project management and teamwork.

PEOPLE

PEOPLE

See a complete list of faculty and staff (<https://lafollette.wisc.edu/about/faculty-and-staff/>).