# University of North Carolina at Charlotte

## Master of Public Administration

## *Program Handbook*

*Last updated*
*May 2017*

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# GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a professional degree program accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The program has been providing professional training for service in the public and nonprofit sectors since 1976.

The MPA faculty designed this handbook as a supplement to the general Graduate Catalog. **Information in the current Graduate Catalog is relevant to all graduate students at UNC Charlotte, and students should become familiar with that information.** Each student is responsible for understanding and following the rules of the Graduate School as laid out in the Graduate Catalog.

Students should take the time to read this handbook in its entirety as they begin their graduate school career, and keep it as a reference for the future.  If the handbook does not adequately answer any questions, students can see their assigned advisor or the Director of the MPA Program.

The MPA Program is housed in the Department of Political Science & Public Administration, which is within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

MPA Office: Fretwell 440-F
MPA Phone Number: (704) 687-5974

Department Office:  Fretwell 440
Department Phone: (704) 687-5930

Faculty offices are located on the fourth floor of the Fretwell Building in the Department of Political Science & Public Administration, Suite 440.

Additional information about the MPA program is available on the MPA webpage located at: www.mpa.uncc.edu.


# PROGRAM MISSION

> The mission of the Master of Public Administration Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte is to provide education and training for the public and nonprofit sectors, conduct scholarly and applied research to advance the field of public administration, and serve the community.


As befits a graduate program in public service, the MPA program has set a high priority on the attainment of knowledge by the students who seek the degree.  Program faculty are concerned that students obtain skills and knowledge enabling them to be effective managers and leaders in the public sector, nonprofit organizations, and, if they choose, in the business world.  The program is designed so that, in addition to applied skills, students come to understand the nature of public administration and the governing principles

important to public service.  The program offers courses during weekday evenings in order to serve the working professionals as well as full-time students.

As such, the objective of this degree program is to prepare individuals for positions of leadership in these sectors.  The curriculum provides a solid base in the political, managerial and analytical aspects of public and nonprofit sector operations.

# ORGANIZATION

The Master of Public Administration program at UNC Charlotte is housed within the Department of Political Science & Public Administration. The Department Chair answers to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who is in turn responsible to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The University is headed by the Chancellor who is responsible to the Board of Trustees for the University, to the President of the entire University of North Carolina system, and the system's Board of Governors.

The Master of Public Administration program is headed by the MPA Director who is also the Associate Chair of the Department of Political Science & Public Administration. Full-time faculty have primary teaching and governing responsibility for the MPA program: determining its curriculum, advising its students, teaching its courses, preparing and evaluating comprehensive examinations, and performing other work of the MPA program. In addition, adjunct and professional affiliate faculty with particular subject expertise teach courses on a part-time basis, adding additional applied professional experience to the academic curriculum.

A Practitioner Advisory Board for the MPA program assists in a variety of ways: to evaluate curricula, advise on placement of students, and suggest ways that the MPA program can interact more effectively with the profession and the community.  Professionals from the community are invited by the University to serve as members of the board for each academic year.

## *Professional Organizations*

The MPA program faculty encourages students to become members of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA), to participate at local chapter meetings, and to attend regional and national conferences.  For more information about ASPA, students can obtain a brochure available in Fretwell Room 440F or visit the ASPA website at www.aspanet.org.  Students can receive many of the benefits from membership at greatly reduced price while in student status.

Other organizations that encourage membership of students of public administration are the International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org) and the North Carolina League of Municipalities (www.nclm.org).  Each year the North Carolina City and County Management Association invites MPA Students to attend its winter conference held in Chapel Hill or Durham and provides competitive scholarships for MPA students.

The MPA Alumni Group is engaged with the program and now lists over 500 members.  The Alumni Group sponsors several activities throughout the year, including a half-day conference on a current policy issue.  It also works with the local ASPA chapter to host an

annual workshop for professionals in the community to continue their education and training on a range of issues such as how to work with the media, strategic planning, and conflict management.  The Alumni Group also co-hosts with the MPA Student Organization semi-annual socials for alumni and current students to meet and network.  The Alumni Group has established the Burkhalter-Rassel Scholarship fund in honor of David Burkhalter, the former City Manager of Charlotte from 1971 to 1981 and Faculty Emeritus and former MPA Director Dr. Gary Rassel who taught in the MPA program from 1982-2012. (see Financial Aid section below).  The faculty strongly encourages students to be active in the Alumni Group after receiving the MPA degree.

Students that are currently in the MPA program participate in the MPA Student Organization.  This is a recognized student group on campus and receives financial support from the university.  This group works with the alumni group and the ASPA chapter in hosting the semi-annual socials.  In addition, the student group provides travel support to MPA students for professional development activities throughout the region.  They also help provide support to members to attend conferences, both academic and professional, at which they can present their work.

## Honor Society

*Pi Alpha Alpha* is the national honor society for the field of public affairs and administration. All memberships are national memberships with local chapter affiliation.  Information detailing the organization is available at: http://www.naspaa.org/initiatives/honor.asp.

Annually, MPA students are selected for membership based on the following criteria:

1. GPA of at least 3.7;
2. Completion of 21 hours of MPA credits, including all core courses

Students who meet the eligibility qualifications are notified by mail.  Students who decide to accept membership pay a one-time membership fee.  New members are honored and inducted at the MPA Alumni/Student conference in the fall.

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

## Admission

Students may begin the program in any semester (Fall, Spring, or Summer).  Completed applications are considered for admission up until the first day of classes for any given semester. Late applications may be considered for the following semester. Requirements for admission to full standing in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Degree Program include:

1. A complete application to the Graduate School with paid application fee. All applications must be submitted electronically via the Graduate School's website: http://graduateschool.uncc.edu/.
2. Possession of a bachelor's degree, or its equivalent, from an accredited college or university.
3. An undergraduate grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

4. An appropriate score on the Verbal, Quantitative, and Analytical sections of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). Typically, acceptable scores on each section would be above the 35th percentile.
5. Letters of recommendation (3) preferably from those familiar with your academic and work abilities (e.g., professors or employers).
6. Statement of purpose (1-2 pages in length) in which the applicant explains his/her career goals, how the MPA degree fits into achieving those goals, and any significant work experience, particularly in the public or nonprofit sectors.
7. Submission of two official transcripts from all postsecondary educational institutions in which the candidate was enrolled.

Once the Graduate School has received all the materials associated with the application, the materials are sent to the MPA admissions committee. The committee reviews the application and makes a recommendation (accept/deny) to the MPA Director. The Director reviews the application, makes a recommendation and sends the packet back to the Graduate School. The Graduate School has the final say on an application based on the recommendations from the program. Once that final decision is reached, the Dean of the Graduate School sends a letter to the applicant with the outcome of the process.

Admission recommendations are based on a complete review of the applicant's file. The following all enter into that decision: (1) undergraduate and any graduate grades; (2) scores on the GRE; (3) letters of recommendation; (4) specific previous coursework; (5) statement of purpose; and (6) applicable work history.

The MPA program has the following prerequisites. Students may complete these after admission to the program. However, they cannot take certain core courses until these prerequisites are completed. Evidence is required of having taken the following undergraduate courses or the equivalent:

1. Introduction to American Government (e.g., POLS 1110), pre- or co-requisite with MPAD 6102 and MPAD 6104;
2. Elementary Statistics for the Social Sciences (e.g., STAT 1222), pre- or co-requisite for MPAD 6125.

## General Requirements

The program requires the completion of 39 hours of graduate coursework. Students complete the program in three stages: (1) core coursework, (2) elective/concentration coursework, and (3) the research requirement. These must be completed in order for a student to be awarded the MPA degree.

Among the core issues students study are political and legal institutions and their processes, economic forces and social systems, organizational and managerial skills and practices, concepts and techniques of financial administration, and analytic techniques using computers and statistics to improve decision making.

Of the 39 credit hours of graduate work required for the degree, a maximum of six (6) hours earned prior to admission to the graduate program may be applied to the program requirements, subject to the approval of the MPA Director. Each student must also complete a professional field experience requirement. This requirement may be filled with either an approved internship or other professional involvement. In addition to course work, each student must complete a project on a topic of significance.

## Course Requirements

The MPA program is structured into three distinct phases: Core Courses, Advanced Work (electives), and the Research Requirement. The MPA Handbook includes a series of recommended course paths for full- and part-time students starting in the Fall or the Spring semesters.

### I. Core Courses

The core curriculum of 18 credit hours of courses is required of all students. Students should take the core courses at the beginning of their matriculation in order to prepare them for the materials in their elective coursework and research projects. All MPA core courses are offered at least once during an academic year and most are offered twice during the fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students earning a <u>grade of C</u> in a core course <u>must retake it</u> at their earliest possible convenience. Core courses include the following:

MPAD 6102: Foundations in Public Administration (3)
MPAD 6104: Public Organizations and Management (3)
MPAD 6125: Quantitative Research Methods in Public Administration (3)
MPAD 6126: Data Analysis in Decision Making (3)
     (MPAD 6125 is a pre-requisite for this course)
MPAD 6131: Public Budgeting and Finance (3)
MPAD 6134: Human Resources Management (3)

### II. Advanced Studies (Electives)

Each student is typically required to take five (5) advanced study courses as electives, unless the student opts for the Directed Study option (see below). The elective courses allow students to tailor the program more directly to their own career goals. This flexibility augments the standardized core set of courses. Once again, students will find their elective courses less difficult if they are taken *after* completing the core courses.

The following is a list of the current MPA Advanced Study courses. More details about each course are available in the Graduate Catalog.

MPAD 6000  Topics for Graduate Study in Public Administration (3)
MPAD 6128  Foundations of Public Policy Analysis (3)
MPAD 6142  Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
MPAD 6143  Introduction to Administrative Law (3)
MPAD 6160  Information Systems in Public Administration (3)
MPAD 6172  Administration of Health Care Systems in the U.S. (3)
MPAD 6174  Public Policy & Politics in Health Care Administration (3)
MPAD 6184  Urban Government and Politics (3)
MPAD 6185  Intergovernmental Relations (3)
MPAD 6210  Aging and Public Policy (3)
MPAD 6211  Administration of Aging Programs (3)
MPAD 6290  Emergency Management (3)
MPAD 6291  Homeland Security & Terrorism (3)
MPAD 6292  Disaster Management (3)
MPAD 6310  Foundations of the Nonprofit Sector (3)
MPAD 6311  Intro to Nonprofit Management (3)
MPAD 6312  Fundraising (3)

MPAD 6314  Marketing for Arts & Nonprofit Organizations (3)
MPAD 6316  Introduction to Arts Administrations (3)
MPAD 6318  Arts Administration II (3)
MPAD 6324  Financial Analysis for Nonprofit Organizations (3)
MPAD 6326  Applied Economics for Public Administrators (3)
MPAD 6327  Internal Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations (3)
MPAD 6328  Urban & Community Development (3)
MPAD 6329  Nonprofit Organizations and their Environment (3)
MPAD 6330  Program Evaluation for the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)
MPAD 6332  Project Management (3)
MPAD 6350  Public Sector Financial Management I (3)
MPAD 6352  Public Sector Financial Management II (3)
MPAD 6820  Independent Study (1-3)

In order to maximize the flexibility of the program to meet the career needs of students, the MPA program accepts certain courses from other departments. Students should investigate courses that interest them and fit their schedules. They should consult their assigned advisor or the MPA Director if they have questions about these or other courses and to get approval of such outside courses to be counted towards completion of the MPA degree.

## III. RESEARCH REQUIREMENT

The final course(s) for the MPA student prior to graduation is designed to fulfill the research requirement of the program.  Students must complete their core courses with a grade of B or higher prior to enrolling in any of the research courses. To meet the research requirement, students have two options from which to choose.

Option A (Research Applications)

Students that are preparing to begin their career immediately upon completion of the degree are encouraged to choose Option A.  Under this option, the student takes MPAD 6187: Advanced Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving; and MPAD 6188: Research Applications in Public Administration.

Option B (Directed Study)

Students that are considering continuing their education by pursuing a doctoral degree (e.g., a Ph.D. or a DPA) are encouraged to choose Option B, sometimes referred to as the "thesis option."  In this option, students must take MPAD 6187, and complete and defend successfully a Directed Study proposal (MPAD 6800) and the final (MPAD 6801) Directed Study project.  This option is similar to a traditional Masters degree thesis and serves as good preparation for making a transition in to a doctoral program.  Students choosing this option need only take four (4) electives to fulfill the Advanced Studies phase of the program.  Specific guidelines for this option are presented in the Directed Study section below.

A student who chooses this option must receive approval from the MPA Director.  The student will have to register for the following courses in this sequence.

MPAD 6187 Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving
MPAD 6800 Directed Study proposal
MPAD 6801 Directed Study in Public Administration (MPAD 6800 to be taken first)
MPAD 7999 Graduate Residence*

*Graduate Residence is required if more than two (2) semesters are spent in completing the Directed Study project.  This Graduate Residence course will not be graded and will not earn credits toward the degree program.

The University requires that <u>all graduate students be registered in the term they graduate</u>.  This means that if a student has completed all requirements but has not received the degree, they must still be registered during the semester they graduate.  MPAD 7999 can be used to comply with this requirement.

# CONCENTRATION PROGRAMS

Students have the option of taking a concentration within the MPA degree framework.  A concentration is simply a collection of thematically-related courses pre-approved for credit towards the MPA degree.  Students that choose to do a concentration take these courses and thereby fulfill their elective course requirements. Currently, the MPA offers concentrations in Nonprofit Management, Urban Management and Policy, Public Finance, Arts Administration, and Emergency Management.  Students who elect to concentrate in one of these areas must focus their MPAD 6188 papers on an area of research relevant to that area of concentration.

## Nonprofit Management
The nonprofit management concentration consists of fifteen credit hours within the MPA curriculum. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1-Students are required to take the following two courses:

   MPAD 6311 Introduction to Nonprofit Management (3)
   MPAD 6324 Financial Analysis for Nonprofit Organizations (3)

2-Students must complete two of the following courses:

   MPAD 6142 Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
   MPAD 6310 Foundations of the Nonprofit Sector (3)
   MPAD 6312 Fundraising (3)
   MPAD 6314 Marketing for Arts & Nonprofit Organizations (3)
   MPAD 6316 Introduction to Arts Administration (3)
   MPAD 6318 Arts Administration II (3)
   MPAD 6327 Internal Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations (3)
   MPAD 6329 Nonprofit Organizations and their Environment (3)
   MPAD 6330 Program Evaluation for the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)
   MPAD 6332 Project Management (3)

3-Students must complete an additional three credit hours of MPAD electives.

Appropriate non-MPAD courses may be taken within this concentration upon approval of the student's advisor and the MPA Director.

## Urban Management and Policy

The urban management and policy concentration consists of fifteen credit hours within the MPA curriculum. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1-Students are required to take the following two courses:

    MPAD 6184 Urban Government and Politics (3)
    MPAD 6185 Intergovernmental Relations (3)

2-Students must complete two of the following courses:

    MPAD 6128 Foundations of Public Policy (3)
    MPAD 6142 Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
    MPAD 6143 Introduction to Administrative Law (3)
    MPAD 6160 Information Systems in Public Administration (3)
    MPAD 6290 Introduction to Emergency Management (3)
    MPAD 6324 Financial Analysis for Nonprofit Organizations (3)
    MPAD 6326 Applied Economics for Public Administrators (3)
    MPAD 6328 Urban and Community Development (3)
    MPAD 6330 Program Evaluation for the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)
    MPAD 6332 Project Management (3)
    MPAD 6350 Public Sector Financial Management I (3)
    MPAD 6352 Public Sector Financial Management II (3)
    GEOG 5155 Retail Location (3)
    GEOG 5190 Geographic Info Systems for Non-Majors (3) or GEOG 5120 Introduction to
        Geographic Information Systems (3)
    GEOG 5210 Urban Planning Methods (3)
    GEOG 5260 Transportation Policy Formulation (3)
    GEOG 6300 Applied Regional Analysis (3)
    GEOG 6301 Industrial Location (3)
    GEOG 6500 Urban Planning: Theory and Practice (3)

3-Students must complete an additional three credit hours of MPAD electives.

Appropriate non-MPAD courses may be taken within this concentration upon approval of the student's advisor and the MPA Director.

## Public Finance

The public finance concentration consists of fifteen credit hours within the MPA curriculum. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1-Students are required to take the following three courses:

    MPAD 6326 Applied Economics for Public Administrators (3)
    MPAD 6350 Public Sector Financial Management I (3)
    MPAD 6352 Public Sector Financial Management II (3)

2-Students must complete two of the following courses:

    MPAD 6142 Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
    MPAD 6184 Intergovernmental Relations (3)
    MPAD 6324 Financial Analysis for Non-Profit Organizations (3)

MPAD 6330 Program Evaluation for the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)
MPAD 6332 Project Management (3)
ECON 6112 Graduate Econometrics (3)
ECON 6218 Advanced Business and Economic Forecasting (3)
MBAD 6159 Real Estate Development (3)

Appropriate non-MPAD courses may be taken within this concentration upon approval of the student's advisor and the MPA Director.

## Arts Administration

Prerequisites: For students with an undergraduate degree not in the arts: *You are required to take no less than four 3-credit hour undergraduate arts courses (or the equivalent) in order to develop the necessary foundation of appreciation for the arts required of arts administrators.* The exact set of courses will be determined by the field of arts on which you desire to focus and in consultation with your advisor. The prerequisites vary by visual arts, dance, theater, and music. Ideally, these prerequisites will be completed prior to admission into the MPA program. However, students who opt for the arts administration concentration after being admitted to the MPA program will have to complete these prerequisites prior to admission into MPAD 6316, MPAD 6187, or MPAD 6188. Substantive professional experience in the arts field can be used as a substitute or partial substitute (e.g., students may be required to take less than 4 arts courses) for the undergraduate prerequisites at the discretion of the MPA Director.

The arts administration concentration consists of fifteen credit hours within the MPA curriculum. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1-Students are required to take the following two courses:

   MPAD 6311  Introduction to Nonprofit Management (3)
   MPAD 6316  Introduction to Arts Administration (3)

2-Students must complete at least one of the following courses:

   MPAD 6312  Fundraising (3)
   MPAD 6314  Marketing for Arts & Nonprofit Organizations (3)

3-Students must complete one of the following courses:

   MPAD 6128  Foundations of Public Policy (3)
   MPAD 6142  Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
   MPAD 6160  Information Systems in Public Administration (3)
   MPAD 6324  Financial Analysis for Non-Profit Organizations (3)
   MPAD 6327  Internal Capacity Building in Nonprofit Organizations (3)
   MPAD 6329  Nonprofit Organizations and their Environment (3)
   MPAD 6318  Arts Administration II (3)
   COMM 5102  Federal Interpretation of the First Amendment (3)
   COMM 6145  Communication Campaign Management (3)
   COMM 6146  Media Relations (3)
   HIST 6310  History Museums (3)
   ANTH 5120  Intercultural Communications (3)
   ENGL 5182  Information Design & Digital Publishing (3)

4-Students must complete an additional three credit hours of MPAD electives.

Appropriate non-MPAD courses may be taken within this concentration upon approval of the student's advisor and the MPA Director.

## Emergency Management

The Emergency Management concentration consists of fifteen credit hours within the MPA curriculum. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1-Students are required to take the following two courses:

MPAD 6290 Emergency Management (3)
MPAD 6185 Intergovernmental Relations

2-Students must complete one of the following four courses:

MPAD 6142 Grant Writing and Reporting (3)
MPAD 6291 Homeland Security & Terrorism (3)
MPAD 6292 Introduction to Disaster Management (3)
GEOG 5190 Geographic Information Systems for Non-Majors (3) or GEOG 5120
    Introduction to Geographic Information Systems (3)

3-Students must complete one of the following courses:

MPAD 6128 Foundations of Public Policy (3)
MPAD 6143 Administrative Law (3)
MPAD 6160 Information Systems in Public Organizations (3)
MPAD 6184 Urban Government and Politics (3)
MPAD 6324 Financial Analysis for Nonprofit Organizations (3)
MPAD 6330 Program Evaluation for the Public & Nonprofit Sectors (3)
MPAD 6332 Project Management (3)
GEOG 5130  Advanced Geographic Information Systems (3)
CJUS 5103  International Criminal Justice
CJUS 6120  Criminal Justice Mgmt & Decision Making (3)
CJUS 6132  Legal Issues in Law Enforcement
COMM 5102  Federal Interpretation of the First Amendment (3)
COMM 6120  Communication and the Network Society (3)
PSYC 6155  Community Psychology (3)
ITIS 5250  Computer Forensics (3)
CSLG 7680  Crisis Counseling (3)

4-Students must complete an additional three credit hours of MPAD electives.

Appropriate non-MPAD courses may be taken within this concentration upon approval of the student's advisor and the MPA Director.

# DUAL MASTER'S DEGREES

In certain instances, it may be possible for a student to obtain dual degrees in two masters programs through the development of an integrated curriculum.  It is important to remember that dual Master's degrees require a special arrangement and should be viewed

as atypical to standard practice. *No degree program is obligated to enter into such an arrangement*.

Students that are interested in investigating this dual degree opportunity should contact the MPA Director for details as early in the student's matriculation as possible in order to coordinate courses between multiple departments. Specific rule for duel degrees are outlined in the Graduate Catalogue.

# THE PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENT

Each student in the Master of Public Administration Program is required to complete a professional field experience in public administration either through an internship or full-time employment.  An approved internship is intended to give the student practical experience in the administration of a public or nonprofit organization. The field experience should broaden a student's perspective on public management through first-hand application of classroom knowledge under supervision provided by the agency. Ideally, the student will experience a variety of administrative and managerial tasks and processes. The student should make every effort to understand the relationship between assigned duties and the larger questions and issues of public management. The internship experience will also contribute to the student's understanding of issues addressed in MPAD 6187 and MPAD 6188 or MPAD 6800-6801.

The requirement of a professional field experience may be satisfied in one of three ways: (1) through a full-time position in a public or nonprofit organization; (2) through a full-time position in a business where the work experience is approved for internship; or (3) through an approved internship in a public, nonprofit, or arts-related organization.

## *Internships*

The internship experience is intended to provide exposure to the workings of government or nonprofit organizations. A paid position is ideal but many non-paid internships are available and provide valuable experience.

The internship must be coterminous with enrollment in the MPA program. That is, an experience completed prior to admission to the program or to enrollment in MPA courses will not usually be approved.  It can, however, involve an experience begun at the time a student begins to take classes.  The internship must be approved by the Director of the MPA Program.  A great deal of flexibility is allowed for the internship. However, the following are some general standards and criteria.

Length – The equivalent of a semester of half-time work.  A shorter experience may qualify depending on the number of hours worked and the duties performed.  A longer time is preferred as it usually provides for more time to be exposed to the business of the organization.

Supervision and evaluation - Someone at the place of employment (the organization offering the internship) must serve as a supervisor and provide an evaluation of the student's work at the end of the internship. Standard forms are available in the MPA office for this use. The student also provides an evaluation of the experience at the completion of the internship.

Fulfillment of the professional field experience requirement is mandatory prior to enrollment in Research Applications (MPAD 6188) or any of the Directed Study courses (MPAD 6800, MPAD 6801).

Students with limited or no professional working experience must obtain and complete an "MPA Internship Information" form and submit it to the MPA office.  These forms are used by the MPA Director to judge the appropriateness of a proposed internship.

Periodically, information about internships will be available in the MPA office, announced in classes, and/or included in periodic email updates to the MPA student body.  Students are also encouraged to pursue internship information by contacting the University Career Center (http://www.career.uncc.edu/).

Although students may complete the internship any time after admission to the program, students are strongly encouraged to fulfill the internship requirement upon completion of their second semester.

## *Academic Credit for the Internship*

The internship is a programmatic requirement for graduation with the MPA degree. However, no academic credit is awarded for completion of the internship. The program is designed this way in order to save the student the money that would otherwise be spent on three credit hours of graduate tuition. The absence of academic credit, however, should in no way undermine the value student's ascribe to the internship experience. The internship is valuable applied work experience in a professional setting where students see the interaction of materials in the classroom with the exigencies of real world constraints facing public and nonprofit administrators as they work towards agency goals. Furthermore, many students receive permanent employment offers following a successful internship experience with that agency. The internship is a tool for building am experiential base in preparation for a career in public service as well as a networking device with potential future employers.

## *Finding an Internship*

The program does not automatically furnish internship placements.  The onus is placed on the student to identify such opportunities (as part of the practical experience).  Students should consult the list of recent employers of MPA interns, be sure to read the periodic email updates sent to all MPA students by the MPA Director that frequently include internship opportunities, and pursue other sources of information about intern positions independently. The student's assigned advisor may know of internship opportunities as well. Assistance may include contacting area agencies, talking to in-service MPA students, working with MPA alumni, and providing academic references to prospective employers.  In addition, students are encouraged to contact the University Career Center for further information on internships (http://www.career.uncc.edu/).

## *Evaluating the Internship*

When the internship is nearing completion, both the student and the agency supervisor will be asked to submit separate "MPA Internship Evaluation" forms to the MPA office (available from the MPA Program Assistant). These evaluation forms are included in the student's file for determining eligibility for graduation. They are not "graded" since these are not for

academic credit. The forms are also used in order to determine good internship opportunities from bad ones for future students looking to fulfill their professional experience requirement.

## *Procedure for Completing Internship Requirement*

1.    Near the beginning of the student's second semester in the MPA program, he/she should identify internship opportunities. Once identified, the student should complete an "MPA Internship Information" form and submit it to the MPA office.

2.    The MPA Director will "approve" or "deny" the form.  If approved, then the agency and student may move forward with the arrangement. This may be on a paid basis or on a volunteer basis. There is no requirement that the internship position be paid. If the form is denied, the student needs to find another opportunity that better meets the goals of the professional experience requirement.

3.    Once approved, the student works with the agency directly and under the agency's supervision. Students are expected to comport themselves with the agencies' professional expectations. The student represents the University and the MPA program while working with the agency.

4.    Students are expected to work for the equivalent of half-time over a 15 week period.  This can be met with any number of permutations that generate approximately 300 hours of work with the agency.

5.    Near the end of the internship period, two forms must be completed, both available from the MPA Program Assistant:

    a.    The student must have the agency supervisor complete an "MPA Internship Evaluation By Employer" form and submit it to the MPA office; and
    b.    The student must complete an "MPA Internship Evaluation By Intern" form and submit it to the MPA office.

6.    When all the forms have been returned to the MPA office, the student's record will be updated to indicate satisfactory completion of the internship requirement.

## *Professional Involvement*

Working professional students may be able to substitute their professional employment experience to fulfill this requirement. Such students must obtain and fill out a copy of the "MPA Professional Involvement Form." Copies are available from the MPA Program Assistant. Upon receipt of the form and a copy of the student's resume, the MPA Director reviews the information and determines if the professional involvement fulfills the program goals of the internship requirement. The student will be notified if the employment does not fulfill the professional experience requirement.

Professional involvement is primarily for in-service students who have begun or established a career in the public or nonprofit sector. Historically, a large number of MPA students have been working professionals with several years of experience.  It is not practical to require an

internship of such students. However, if students in this category wish to do an internship the program will facilitate it.

The minimum experience necessary to meet the internship requirement through professional involvement is 12 months of full-time, continuous employment in a government agency, nonprofit organization, or appropriate business organization. Exceptions to this will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Employment to fill the internship requirement as professional involvement must be approved by the Director of the MPA Program.

# THE DIRECTED STUDY OPTION (THESIS)

The Directed Study Option (also referred to as the "thesis option") is available to all MPA students, but is specifically offered for those students considering continuing their education beyond the MPA degree and seeking a doctoral degree (e.g., a Ph.D. or DPA).  The Directed Study helps prepare the student for the transition to doctoral studies through an applied research project following the university rules for a thesis.

## *Formal Considerations*

In this option, six (6) hours of Directed Study credit will be required toward the completion of the MPA degree.  The Directed Study involves a major project, usually an original research project.  The Directed Study will be coordinated with the student's interests and practical experience to allow the development of an area of specialization.  Directed Study projects must conform to University Guidelines for Masters Theses (see the Graduate Catalogue).

The Directed Study project is accomplished in stages.  These stages typically include the following:

1. Receive permission to complete a Directed Study
2. Form a Directed Study Committee and obtain agreement from a faculty member to be Committee Chair
3. Register for MPAD 6800 Directed Study in Public Administration (proposal stage)
4. Submit a Directed Study Committee form to the MPA Office
5. Develop and defend a Directed Study proposal
6. Register for MPAD 6801 Directed Study in Public Administration (project stage)
7. Carry out the proposed project
8. Acquire the University Guidelines for Theses for the Master's Programs from the Graduate School
9. Publicly present and defend the formal written Directed Study project
10. Obtain committee's signatures on three copies
11. Submit three copies to the Graduate School.

## *The Directed Study Committee*

Choosing a Directed Study Committee is a very important process that should be based upon a careful consideration of the student's interests and the research expertise of the faculty members.  Students desiring to choose the Directed Study should begin developing a topic area about the time they finish the core courses.  Students should begin preliminary

work on a topic and begin discussions with faculty concerning the topic as soon as possible after completing the core courses.

The following is a list of general policies about Directed Study committees in the MPA Program:

1. The Directed Study Committee chairperson will be a full-time MPA faculty member. He/She does not need to be the student's assigned advisor.
2. The committee will be composed of at least three members of the graduate faculty, of which at least two members (including the chair) will be from the MPA faculty. Only one person outside the graduate faculty, known as a professional affiliate, will be allowed to serve on a thesis committee. The Committee chairperson must be a full-time member of the MPA faculty, and the composition of the Directed Study Committee must be approved by the MPA Director.
3. Once a Directed Study Committee has been formed, any change in committee membership must be discussed with all involved parties and approved by the MPA Director.
4. File an "MPA Directed Study Committee Record" form with the MPA Office. The composition of the Directed Study Committee will be approved by the MPA Director only after successful completion of all core courses.
5. Faculty have the right to refuse to serve on Directed Study Committees. In the event a student has difficulty finding faculty to serve or must replace a committee member, the MPA Director will provide assistance. Alternatively, the student may be advised to choose the non-thesis option.
6. Expectations for Directed Study project proposal defenses and Directed Study defenses include:

   a. Reasonable standards with regard to analysis, theory, and grammar;
   b. An evaluated of the proposal on a pass/fail vote by the Directed Study Committee members;
   c. A public defense of the project scheduled with the Directed Study Committee at least 3 weeks prior to the final exam period; and
   d. A project grade of "P," "IP," or "U" (Pass, In Progress, or Unsatisfactory).

Specific guidelines on the typing, layout, and deadlines for presenting the final copies of the Directed Study project to the Graduate School are published by and available in the Graduate School Office or on-line at (http://www.uncc.edu/gradmiss/manual.pdf). These are the same as those required for a master's thesis.

The Graduate School's policy is that the guidelines in effect at the time of Directed Study completion will be used for purposes of adjudicating compliance. This means that if a student has a copy of the guidelines from 2010 when he/she started working on the Directed Study, but he/she successfully defend in 2013, the guidelines which are in effect in 2013 are the ones to which the student must adhere.

## Directed Study: Practical Considerations

After completing all core courses successfully, students should gain formal approval of the Directed Study proposal. Formal approval of the proposal by the entire committee should be obtained before data are collected. Students also need to submit appropriate paperwork to the MPA Director: a Directed Study Committee Record Form (available in the MPA office).

Students should keep committee members informed of progress.  Some chairs and committee members expect to follow the progress of the Directed Study very closely.  Others, particularly non-chair members, do not expect intermediate reports. Clarify expectations and tailor the frequency of meetings with individuals or the whole committee to meet the student and faculty needs.

*Directed Study: Continuous Registration*

MPA students are strongly advised to complete MPAD 6800 and then register for MPAD 6801.  Students should not register for both at the same time.  If the student does not complete MPAD 6801 during the semester for which he/she registered for it, the student risks being charged for continuous registration (MPAD 7999).  The University requires a student be enrolled during the semester in which they graduate.

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As stated in the UNCC Undergraduate & Graduate Catalogs:

The UNCC Code of Student Academic Integrity governs the responsibility of students to maintain integrity in academic work, defines violations of the standards, describes procedures for handling alleged violations of the standards, and lists applicable penalties.

The following conduct is prohibited in the Code as violating those standards:

- A. Cheating: Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices in any academic exercise. This definition includes unauthorized communication of information during an academic exercise.
- B. Fabrication and Falsification: Intentional and unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.  Falsification is a matter of altering information, while fabrication is a matter of inventing or counterfeiting information for use in any academic exercise.
- C. Multiple Submission: The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization.
- D. Plagiarism: Intentionally or knowingly presenting work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgement of the source).  The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the ideas, information, etc. are common knowledge.
- E. Abuse of Academic Materials: Intentionally or knowingly destroying, stealing or making inaccessible library or other academic resource material.
- F. Complicity in Academic Dishonesty: Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

# PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

## Admission

Any student who satisfies published admission criteria is fully admitted to the MPA program. Conditional admission to the Graduate School is not utilized. The Graduate School issues a letter with the formal decision of all admissions decisions.

## Post Baccalaureate Status

If an applicant does not meet the criteria established by the Graduate School for admission to full standing in the MPA Program, the MPA Admissions Committee may recommend that the applicant take two (2) Post Baccalaureate courses and reapply upon completion. Students often take one or two courses in post baccalaureate status prior to entering the MPA Program.  Students should note, however, that normally only two courses taken as a post baccalaureate student will count toward the MPA degree.  Furthermore, students must perform well in the course in order to demonstrate to the admissions committee their ability to perform at the graduate level.  Simply taking the courses and performing at the B-level will in no way insure acceptance to the program upon re-application.

## Advisor

Each student is assigned a faculty member to serve as an academic advisor.  The advisor assists the student in the development of a program of study.  In addition, the advisor will evaluate requests for transfer credit and determine if other courses should be required.

## Course Load

The usual course load for a student in the MPA program who is working full-time or near full-time is two courses per semester.  Depending on the course and work duties, students working full-time often elect to take only one course during some semesters.  The University defines nine credit hours as a full load for graduate students.  Graduate Assistants (GA) are required to be enrolled in nine hours as part of their GA contract (see below).

The University allows graduate students to take as many as 12 credit hours without special permission.  However, only students devoting full time to their studies should attempt to take four graduate courses in one semester.  Students should use the following as a guide in planning their course schedule and when registering: if working full time, one or two courses is appropriate; working 20 to 30 hours per week, two or three courses; and less than one-half time, three courses.

Taking too many courses in one semester puts the student at risk for one or more of the following: (1) receiving a grade of C or U, or (2) dropping one or more courses after the refund date.  Students should consult with their assigned advisor concerning the number of courses to take each semester.

## Time Limit for Degree Completion: The Six Year Rule

All coursework taken for credit towards the MPA degree, including accepted transfer credit, must be completed within a six-year period. The six-year period begins with enrollment in the first course to be applied towards the degree.

The Graduate School states the following: "University policy requires that no course listed on a graduate student's candidacy form be older than six years at the time of graduation for Masters students and eight years for Doctoral students. This policy is in place because of the University's interest in a degree being current when it is awarded. Courses that exceed this time limit must be revalidated or retaken, whichever the graduate program decides necessary, if they are to count in a degree program."

Students may not revalidate courses with a grade of C or lower or courses taken at other institutions. A student who does not anticipate finishing within the allotted time, must meet with the MPA Director to determine whether out-of-date courses must be retaken or revalidated.

## Transfer & Elective Credit

A total of six (6) credit hours may be transferred from other universities toward the 39-hour program requirement. This requires written approval from the MPA Director. The decision to count these hours towards the MPA degree is based on several conditions:

1. The MPA Director must agree that the transferred credit is appropriate to the MPA degree and student's program of study; and

2. Transfer credit from other universities will be accepted in accordance with university regulations. Generally, the Graduate School will accept up to six (6) credit hours of graduate work from other accredited institutions.

In addition to transfer credit from other universities, students may opt to take courses in other graduate programs at UNC Charlotte. With the approval of the MPA Director, the student may be permitted to count courses eligible for graduate credit from other UNC Charlotte disciplines (see Advanced Courses above).

## Successful Progress

In order to be eligible to graduate, a student must have completed the degree requirements within six years from date of first course taken. In addition, **a student must earn an overall graduate GPA of 3.0**. If the student falls below a 3.0, he/she has one semester to bring the GPA above the 3.0 mark. If the student fails to do so, the Graduate School dismisses the student from the university.

A student may have no more than six (6) credit hours with a grade of C that can be counted toward the MPA degree. Furthermore, if a student earns a grade of U (Unsatisfactory) in an MPA course, or a third C, they will be suspended and potentially terminated from the program.

*Graduation*

Once a student is nearing completion of the program requirements, he/she must begin the steps in the graduation process.  The process begins several months prior to graduation.

Initially, the student must file an "**Application for Degree**" form, available from the Graduate School. The deadline date for this form to be turned in to the Graduate School will coincide with the last day to drop/add a course for a semester and must accompany the Graduation Fee.

Second, the student must check their DegreeWorks audit to make sure it is showing 100% complete (after the application to graduate is turned in).  This audit is taking the place of the candidacy form.  The Graduate School clears students to graduate based on DegreeWorks and if a student's audit is incorrect they need to contact the department.

For a student that has taken the Directed Study route in fulfillment of the Research Requirement, the final (post-defense) thesis must be turned into the Graduate School approximately two weeks before the targeted graduation date. These due dates change each year, so students should check with the Graduate School for the current thesis due dates.

# PROGRAM SUPPORT

*Scholarships*

The MPA program has three scholarships dedicated for fully admitted students in the degree:  the Burkhalter-Rassel Scholarship, the Brown-Dorton Scholarship, and the Burgess Scholarship. These are competitive scholarships based on student merit.

The MPA Alumni Group established a scholarship to honor the late David Burkhalter who passed away in 1996.  Mr. Burkhalter was City Manager of Charlotte from 1971 until 1981 when he retired.  He actively supports UNC Charlotte and the MPA Program.  As a member of the adjunct faculty, Mr. Burkhalter often team-taught MPA courses with MPA professors.  In 2012, the MPA Alumni Group decided to establish a scholarship to honor Faculty Emeritus and former MPA Director Dr. Gary Rassel who taught in the MPA program from 1982-2012.  The scholarship is awarded annually to a first-year MPA student who demonstrates the potential to make a significant contribution to local government during a career as a public administrator.

The Brown-Dorton Scholarship is an endowed scholarship created in memory of Alfred Brown (former mayor and council member of Concord) and James Dorton (former alderman and mayor-pro-tem of Concord).  This scholarship is awarded to a second-year student dedicated to beginning (or continuing) a career in public service at the local level of government).

The Burgess Scholarship was established in honor of the memory of Susan M. Burgess who served the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Region for over 20 years. Ms. Burgess worked with nonprofits through her church for many years to provide assistance to the poor. She began public life in 1990 with her election to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Board of education, a position she held until 1997. She later won election to the Charlotte City

Council and served for nine years, seven as Mayor Pro Tem. In addition to carrying out her responsibilities as an elected official, Ms. Burgess served as President of the North Carolina League of Municipalities and as President of the National League of Cities' Women in Municipal Government group. Additionally, Ms. Burgess served on numerous boards including the Arts and Science Council, the Council for Children, the Drug Education Center, and the Girl Scouts Hornets Nest Council.

MPA students in the past have also proved very competitive for scholarships not directly affiliated with the University. For instance, the North Carolina City/County Managers Association makes scholarship awards to MPA students throughout the state.

The National Forum for Black Public Administrators also hosts the Marks of Excellence Scholarship.

## *Graduate Assistantships On-Campus*

A number of opportunities for employment are available on and off campus.  The MPA program and the Department of Political Science & Public Administration offer four (4) graduate assistantships (GA) each academic year.

To apply for a Graduate Assistantship, a student must complete the "Application for Graduate Assistant" form, which can be obtained in the MPA office or the Graduate School (http://www.uncc.edu/gradmiss/gs_assistantships.html).  Students should include their resume with this form.

GAs in the MPA program must enroll in nine (9) credit hours of classes each term and work in the department for 20 hours per week.  Work duties include assisting professors in the department with their research (sometimes publishing with them as a co-author), serving as teaching assistants in selected undergraduate courses, and assisting the department with the end of term course evaluations.

Although the Department makes decisions concerning appointment of graduate assistants by late spring, interested students are encouraged to have an application for assistantship on file. Openings may become available during the academic year in the department and elsewhere on campus.

In addition to the GA positions housed in the MPA program, other offices on campus have used full-time MPA graduate students in the past in GA positions. See the Graduate School's website for these opportunities.

## *Graduate Assistantships Off-Campus*

The MPA program and the Department are home to over 20 active faculty researchers. They often work with local public, private, and nonprofit agencies on projects through contractual arrangements.  These contracts frequently include support for a Graduate Assistantship. Again, students interested in working on applied research and in having such a Graduate Assistantship should be sure to have an application on file with the MPA program office for the occasions when such opportunities arise and a student is needed on short notice.

Related, the program itself sometimes enters into contractual arrangements with local governments and nonprofit agencies for a Graduate Assistant. The same rules govern students in these positions in terms of credit hours required and weekly hours with the agency, but they operate slightly differently in that the student works on site with the agency under their supervision while technically an employee of the university. Students in these contractual GA positions are paid just as the GAs working in the department on campus.

*Tuition Awards*

Another program support tool available to students is a small amount of annual funding to award to students in the form of tuition support. These discretionary awards of usually several hundred dollars and paid against student tuition costs for in-state students. These tuition awards are made on a competitive basis.

# CHECKLIST FOR MPA GRADUATE STUDENTS

Each student is responsible for meeting all requirements and filing all papers within the appropriate timeframe.

**Prerequisites:**

☐      POLS 1110 Introduction to American Government (or equivalent)

☐      STAT 1222 Elementary Statistics for the Social Science (or equivalent)

**Core Coursework**:

☐      MPAD 6102: Foundations in Public Administration (3)

☐      MPAD 6104: Public Organizations and Management (3)

☐      MPAD 6125: Quantitative Research Methods in Public Administration (3)

☐      MPAD 6126: Data Analysis in Decision Making (3)

☐      MPAD 6131: Public Budgeting and Finance (3)

☐      MPAD 6134: Human Resources Management (3)

**Advanced Coursework:**

☐      1st Elective:  _____

☐      2nd Elective:  _____

☐      3rd Elective:  _____

☐      4th Elective:  _____

☐     5<sup>th</sup> Elective: _____

**Professional Experience Requirement:**

☐     File "MPA Internship Information" form with the MPA office

☐     File "MPA Internship Evaluation By Employer" form with the MPA office

☐     File "MPA Internship Evaluation By Intern" form with the MPA office

☐     Internship Completed (or waived through professional involvement)

**Research Requirement:**

☐     MPAD 6187 Advanced Seminar in Public Management Problem Solving

*Option 1: Research Applications*

☐     MPAD 6188 Research Applications in Public Administration

***OR***

*Option 2: Directed Study*

☐     MPAD 6800 Directed Study (Proposal)

☐     MPAD 6801 Directed Study (Project)

☐     MPAD 7999 Graduate Residence (if necessary)

**Other Responsibilities:**

☐     Furnish MPA office with current (up-to-date) mailing address & phone number

☐     File "Admission to Candidacy" form

☐     File "Application for a Degree" form