

Student Handbook

Master of Public Administration Program

UCCS School of Public Affairs

August 2016

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| Bursar (Tuition) | 719.255.3391 | bursar@uccs.edu |
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| Kraemer Family Library | 719.255.3296 | circdesk@uccs.edu |
| Parking | 719.255.3528 | parking@uccs.edu |
| Public Safety - general information | 719.255.3288 | police@uccs.edu |
| Registrar (Records & Registration) | 719.255.3361 | admrec@uccs.edu |
| Safety Escorts | 719.255.3111 | police@uccs.edu |
| Student Health Center | 719.255.4444 | hlthcntr@uccs.edu |
| University Police - Emergency | 3111 from a campus phone or 719.255.3111 | police@uccs.edu |
| Veteran & Military Student Affairs | 719.255.3253 | military@uccs.edu |

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Handbook

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS) School of Public Affairs! This handbook will acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and earning the degree of Master of Public Administration. Please read this handbook carefully, and consult your faculty advisor with any questions. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the School of Public Affairs Academic Policies. All students are bound by these requirements as stated in the University Catalog.

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

The School of Public Affairs

The UCCS School of Public Affairs (SPA) provides undergraduate criminal justice and graduate level, professional education and training for managers and policy makers in public, nonprofit, and criminal justice organizations. The School offers the Master of Public Administration (MPA), the Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ), the Master of Public Administration/Master of Criminal Justice (MPA/MCJ) dual degree, and a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Criminal Justice. SPA students can also pursue a more limited course of study, earning an undergraduate certificate in Homeland Security or graduate certificates in Public Management; Nonprofit Management; Nonprofit Fund Development; Criminal Justice; Homeland Security and Emergency Management Leadership; National Security Intelligence; Local Government Management; and Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation.

School of Public Affairs Mission Statement

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

To accomplish this mission, we strive to

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

- Support and model civil public discourse, citizenship, responsibility, and respect.

Master of Public Administration Mission Statement

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

To accomplish this mission, we strive to

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

The MPA Degree

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

Our MPA degree is distinctive in that students can acquire the degree entirely online, entirely in the classroom, or seamlessly in combination.

Accreditation

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). Graduates of the MPA program will have the following competencies, as enumerated by NASPAA.

The ability to:

- lead and manage in public governance;
- participate effectively in the policy process;

- analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions;
- articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

Administration

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

SPA's Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist provides information on applying to the program, registration and related issues, and also serves as an advisor for students concerning basic degree planning. Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon acceptance into the program for additional guidance throughout the program.

2. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

Admission Calendar

Admission to the MPA program is made on a rolling basis, and applicants are admitted each semester. Applications are accepted up until a week before the start of each semester.

Required Application Materials

Detailed requirements for applying to the School of Public Affairs may be found on SPA's website in the [Future Students](#) section, and applicants must [apply online](#).

A bachelor's degree from a college or university of accredited standing, with grades sufficiently high to indicate ability to pursue graduate work (typically a grade point average of 3.0 or better), is a prerequisite for admission into the MPA program. The applicant may have majored in any field for the undergraduate degree.

In general, applicants must submit the following:

- online Graduate School Application
- \$60 non-refundable application fee
- official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended
- statement of educational and career goals
- current resume
- three recommendations by qualified references that establish the applicant's qualifications for graduate work

English as a second language (ESL) students may apply after obtaining a minimum score of 85 on the TOEFL or 6.5 on the IELTS exams. If the applicant's scores do not meet these minimums, s/he will be asked to provide writing samples and to interview in order for the School to more accurately assess applied (rather than tested) English language abilities. The application fee for ESL students is \$75.

International students, current UCCS undergraduate students, and those who graduated from UCCS within the past four years have different general application requirements. Please see the [Graduate School website](#) for additional information for these applicants.

Applications are reviewed as soon as they are complete, and students are notified by letter as soon as an admission decision is made. Students seeking financial aid must await formal approval for admission by the University. This process may take slightly longer than the SPA admissions process.

Admission Status

When applicants are admitted, it is normally with regular graduate status.

Students who do not meet the minimum qualifications for admission may be admitted on provisional status if elements of their application suggest they may be able to perform successfully in the program. Those admitted on provisional status are required to complete three core courses (PAD 5001, PAD 5002, and either PAD 5004 or PAD 5005) with a grade of B or better within four semesters of admission. These courses may not be repeated.

Taking Classes as a Non-degree Seeking Student

Students need not be admitted to the MPA program in order to take courses offered by the School. Students pursuing a graduate certificate rather than an MPA degree should apply as non-degree seeking students. Other non-degree seeking students include those who are interested in exploring the courses and either have a degree program application in process or may apply in the future. If a non-degree seeking student later applies and is admitted to the program, no more than twelve credit hours of coursework taken at SPA as a non-degree seeking student may be applied to the MPA degree.

Non-degree seeking students must complete an [Application for Admission](#) to the University of Colorado Colorado Springs and submit a \$50 non-refundable application fee. Students pursuing a graduate certificate must also submit a [one-page certificate application](#) and official transcripts to the School of Public Affairs.

Taking courses as a non-degree seeking student contains some element of risk because admission to the program is not a certainty. Therefore, students are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The non-degree status is most useful when students want to explore the field and/or when their application is not complete (e.g., test scores and/or reference letters have not been received), or when they wish to pursue a certificate only.

Readmission of Inactive, Withdrawn, and Suspended Students

Students who have been admitted to SPA must complete their coursework and degree requirements within six years of registration in their first course. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the Dean of the School of Public Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Occasionally, students find it necessary to interrupt their coursework for one or more semesters. An extended interruption, however, may result in the student being placed on inactive or withdrawn status. Students who do not enroll in any classes during the semester for which they were admitted, and students who have not registered for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer), are placed on inactive or discontinued status. In order to register for courses again, a discontinued student must resubmit a tuition classification form to Admissions. Students needing a leave of absence of one year or more should fill out a Leave of Absence form (available in the SPA Student Services office). If more than one year has passed since the student's original application, and a Leave of Absence form is not on file, a new full application form must be submitted. The student will also need to obtain approval from SPA for re-entry into the program. Contact the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist at 719-255-4993 for more information.

A dismissed student is eligible to reapply for admission after one year. Approval or rejection of this application rests with the MPA program director.

Advising

Upon admission to the MPA program, students are assigned a faculty advisor, whose responsibilities include helping the student successfully navigate the program. Newly admitted students should meet initially with the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist to discuss registration, program requirements, and preliminary degree planning.

Students may request that they be assigned a faculty advisor with particular expertise in a field in which they are interested, so that the faculty advisor may provide advice on appropriate electives and career planning.

3. MPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Degree Requirements

To earn an MPA degree, a student must:

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

Time Requirements for MPA Degree

Students must complete their degree no later than six years after the starting date of their first MPA class, even when that course is taken as a non-degree seeking student. Although the MPA program requires intensive commitment, it does not require full-time study, and many SPA students take classes on a part-time basis. All core courses are offered in the classroom and online, alternating delivery modes so that each course is offered in both formats every year. Electives may be offered in the classroom, online, or in intensive or hybrid formats. Students in the MPA program should expect to complete the degree in no less than two and no more than six years; the average completion time is about three years.

Required Courses

All MPA students must complete the following required courses:

| | | |
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| PAD 5001 | Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5002 | Organizational Management and Behavior | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5003 | Research and Analytic Methods | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5004 | Economics and Public Finance | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5005 | The Policy Process and Democracy | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5006 | Ethics and Leadership | 3 credit hours |
| PAD 5361 | Capstone Seminar* | <u>3 credit hours</u> |
| | Total: | 21 credit hours |

*Student may take PAD 6950 Master's Thesis (6 hours) in lieu of PAD 5361, Capstone Seminar

Course descriptions may be found in the Academic Catalog.

Acceptable Grades

Students must receive a grade of B- or better in all courses applied toward the degree.

In order to remain in good academic standing and to receive his/her degree, a student is required to maintain at least a B (3.0) grade point average, which includes all work required for

the MPA degree while taken at UCCS (classified and unclassified) and may differ from the University grade point average.

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

Internship Requirements

Pre-service students (those without at least one year of professional work experience in a public or nonprofit setting) are also required to complete a three-credit internship course, bringing their total required course hours to 24 and the total hours required for the degree to 39. Internship guidelines are set forth in Section 5.

The director of the MPA program examines each student's application to the program and determines whether an internship is appropriate or should be waived, and students are notified of this decision in their admission letter. Students who believe vital experiences have been overlooked may ask the MPA program director to reconsider the decision by submitting a written request.

Some students, who are initially required to complete an internship, later obtain employment that would merit a waiver while still a student in the MPA program. In such circumstances, the student may submit a written request for waiver of the internship requirement from the MPA program director.

Electives

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if additionally required), students must complete three to five elective courses (9-15 credit hours), depending upon internship requirements and choice of capstone or thesis. SPA offers a wide variety of electives. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

Students may choose to focus electives so as to earn one or more graduate certificates concurrently with the MPA degree. Graduate certificates available through the Colorado Springs campus include: Nonprofit Management; Nonprofit Fund Development; Public Management; Criminal Justice; National Security Intelligence; Homeland Security and Emergency Management Leadership; Local Government Management; and Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation. Students should consult with their faculty advisor if unsure about how to focus their electives.

Some courses taken at other colleges and universities or in other schools and colleges within UCCS may be applied to the MPA degree, with approval. Up to nine semester credit hours may

be transferred into SPA from other institutions or departments within UCCS. Not all courses offered in the CU System, nor other colleges and universities, are transferrable to the UCCS MPA program, therefore pre-approval from the MPA program director is required.

Typical Course Load

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

Independent Study

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take an independent study course (PAD 9500) with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. Students must submit the Petition for Independent Study form, found under MPA Program Resources at <http://www.uccs.edu/spa/programs/graduate/mpa.html>. With faculty assistance, interested students then develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs. No more than six hours of independent study credit may apply toward MPA degree requirements.

Capstone Seminar

All MPA students, except those pursuing the thesis option, are required to complete PAD 5361: Capstone Seminar. The Capstone Seminar is taken during the last semester of the student's degree program. **All core courses must be completed before the Capstone Seminar is taken.** Additionally, it is recommended that students take PAD 5003: Research and Analytic Methods the semester prior to taking the Capstone Seminar. Capstone Seminar cannot be taken during the summer semester or transferred in from another school or university.

For capstone projects, students work with a client in a public or nonprofit agency to identify a problem and then, using the knowledge and skills gained in the program, carry out a project then write and present a paper to address the problem. Projects take many different forms including program evaluations, surveys and interviews, business or marketing plans, etc. The principle of the course is that it provides students with an opportunity to integrate what they have learned and apply their knowledge and skills to a real-world problem. Further, it provides the faculty with an opportunity to assess the student's achievement of MPA core competencies. The Capstone Guidelines are set forth in Section 5. The School of Public Affairs offers a Capstone Seminar/Thesis Orientation each semester to offer information and guidance. The video recording of this session, as well as additional information, can be found on our website under [Capstone Seminar](#).

Thesis Option

The thesis option is available in lieu of the Capstone Seminar for MPA students who are interested in pursuing a topic in-depth or who are planning to pursue a career in research or academe. The thesis requires six semester hours of credit that normally spans two semesters. Students must select a thesis advisor from the faculty to oversee their work.

Thesis students typically conduct a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collect original data or analyze existing data in new ways.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

1. Successful completion of all core courses;
2. Overall grade point average of 3.5 and permission of faculty advisor;
3. Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest; and
4. Agreement of two SPA faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one as Thesis Advisor).

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through her/his faculty academic advisor, first, to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria, and second, to identify appropriate faculty members to serve on the student's thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of three people: a major advisor who is a full-time SPA faculty member, a second faculty member, and a third person who is an expert in the subject area of the thesis. This person may be either from the community or another school or department. The School of Public Affairs offers a Capstone Seminar/Thesis Orientation each semester to offer information and guidance.

4. DEGREE OPTIONS AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

Our MPA program is distinctive in that it may be acquired entirely online, entirely in the classroom, or in combination.

The Online MPA

Students may complete the MPA degree entirely through online classes, an option that may be attractive for students living outside of the Colorado Springs area, or for those who require more flexibility in taking courses. Online courses are offered by SPA faculty and lecturers, and are equal in rigor to courses offered in the traditional classroom format. As with all degree programs, students need to plan carefully to ensure that they are able to finish their degree in a timely fashion; this is particularly true of online programs. Please work diligently with your faculty advisor to plan your online coursework options. In addition, online education requires the use of technology to connect with students, faculty, and other campus experiences. Please check the <http://www.uccs.edu/connect/resources.html> for the latest technical requirements as well as links to online student services.

Dual Degrees

A dual degree program allows a student to complete two degrees in less time and with less expense than it would take to earn each degree separately. The School of Public Affairs offers a dual Master of Public Administration/Master of Criminal Justice degree, which allows a student to earn both MPA and MCJ degrees concurrently. Visit the SPA website for more information about this [dual degree option](#).

Graduate Certificates

Students who are interested in further developing their knowledge and skills may earn a certificate as part of the MPA program, or as a non-degree seeking student. Students that are not currently in the MPA program may apply as a non-degree seeking student and select the certificate(s) to pursue by submitting official transcripts and completing the [online application](#). Current MPA students wishing to earn a certificate concurrently with a MPA degree need to complete the certificate application form and email it to spa@uccs.edu.

Each certificate requires completion of four required courses. Students must earn a grade of B- or better in each course required in the certificate. Those who wish to use courses taken for a certificate toward a subsequent MPA degree must complete the degree program within six years of registering for the first course applied to the degree. Certificates may also be earned concurrently with a MPA degree, as discussed in the Electives section. Graduate certificates include the following:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nonprofit Management• Nonprofit Fund Development• Public Management• Criminal Justice• National Security Intelligence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homeland Security and Emergency Management Leadership• Local Government Management• Grant Writing, Management, and Program Evaluation |
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5. INTERNSHIP AND CAPSTONE GUIDELINES

Internship Overview

Students who do not have at least one year of professional experience in the field of public administration or nonprofit management, or the equivalent, must enroll in Field Study in Public Administration (PAD 6910). Other students may choose to complete an internship to obtain additional experience that differs from or is more specialized than their past experience. These internships may be completed locally or in another city or state.

In the internship, students may work part-time or full-time as interns for government agencies, legislatures, government-related organizations, or nonprofit entities. At a minimum, students are required to complete a total of 240 work hours for the internship. The internships may be paid or unpaid. Students gain useful experience in public and/or nonprofit management, research, and evaluation through their work. The objectives of the internship are to:

1. expose MPA students to the challenging career opportunities in the public service
2. enable public and nonprofit organizations to attract good students to the workforce, thereby improving the overall quality of the public service
3. provide pre-service students with “real world” work experiences to allow them to link classroom training with actual practice of public administration
4. offer students experience that will allow them to make better informed career decisions

Internship Requirements

Internships are designed to meet the needs of the student, host agency, and the MPA program. The work period may be for an academic semester or during the summer, and specific work schedules and student responsibilities are arranged with the internship agency prior to the start of the internship. Internships may be either process or project based. The MPA internship coordinator facilitates internships.

Internship information for students and potential host agencies are provided online. In addition to performing 240 hours of work for the internship agency, students write midterm and final papers to describe the nature of the field experience, how they used the knowledge and skills they gained through their coursework during the internship, and how the internship addressed the core competencies of the MPA program. The field study instructor will advise students on the papers, read and provide feedback, and give a final grade for the papers and the internship. Internships are graded as Pass/Fail.

Internship Application and Administrative Procedures

Students should contact the MPA internship coordinator to obtain more information on internships. Interns will not be placed until at least 9 hours have been completed in the MPA program.

Students are responsible for identifying potential internships. The SPA office is able to facilitate this process, but final responsibility for securing an internship lies with the student. Students may initiate contact with organizations and may also contact their advisors and other faculty who may have expertise and contacts in the specific area of interest for suggestions concerning internships. However, students should not commit to placement before coordinating with the MPA program director.

When the student has established an internship relationship with an agency or organization, the student and his/her supervisor at the agency work together to complete a short form outlining the internship agreement and the tasks with which the intern will be involved. The agreement must be approved by the MPA internship coordinator before the student begins work.

Capstone Purpose

The capstone course (PAD 5361) is designed to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize what they have learned during the entire MPA course of study. It also provides a process and structure for SPA faculty to determine whether MPA graduates have attained the competencies expected from the MPA program, as follows.

The ability to:

- lead and manage in public governance;
- participate effectively in the policy process;
- analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions;
- articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

For capstone projects, students work with a client in a public or nonprofit agency to identify a problem and then, using the knowledge and skills gained in the program, carry out a project then write and present a paper to address the problem. Projects take many different forms including program evaluations, surveys and interviews, business or marketing plans, etc. Students will write a report detailing their project outcomes and recommendations for the client agency based upon the specific needs of the project and complete an oral presentation reviewing project results.

All students are strongly encouraged to participate in the orientation session for PAD 5361 no later than the semester before they plan to enroll. These sessions normally occur about one month before the end of the previous semester. All students are contacted by the student services staff to attend this orientation. Additional capstone information, including a series of orientation videos, is [available on the SPA website](#) for students who are unable to attend the orientation in person.

Capstone Prerequisites

The capstone course should be taken in the student's last semester of classes before completing the MPA. It is the student's responsibility to identify their client and topic prior to the beginning of the semester.

All core courses must be completed before taking the capstone course. Ideally, PAD 5003, Research and Analytic Methods should be taken the semester immediately preceding the capstone course. Although a student may take another elective at the same time as PAD 5361, taking more than one additional course is strongly discouraged because of the work required in the capstone.

Capstone Course Committee

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

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

The Second Reader

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

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

The Third Reader

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

Role of Readers

While the first reader will have the primary responsibility for supervising the student's project, the second and third readers have responsibility for 1) approving the student's project prospectus, 2) commenting on project drafts and approving the final project report, 3)

attending and participating in the oral presentation of the project, and 4) evaluating the student's work. Additionally, the third reader serves to link the student with the client organization and reports on the utility and professionalism of the student's work for and with the organization.

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

6. STUDENT SUPPORT

Advising

Advising at the School of Public Affairs is a primary responsibility of faculty, with support from the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist. In general, questions about program logistics are best addressed by the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist. Faculty advisors are experts in their fields and can assist students with advice on appropriate electives, professional networking within the field, capstone/thesis planning, and career planning. International students are additionally supported by the [Global Engagement Office](#), which assists them with other issues such as visa requirements.

Student Success

The School of Public Affairs values student success. Resources exist at both School and campus levels to assist students in many areas. SPA faculty and staff are available to help match resources to needs. SPA students who believe they need academic support are encouraged to reach out to their instructors and/or faculty advisor. All SPA students are invited and encouraged to attend professional development opportunities provided by the School of Public Affairs.

Many campus-level student resources exist. SPA works regularly with many of these resources, including:

- [The Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs](#)
- [Global Engagement Office](#)
- [Academic Centers for Excellence, including the Writing and Communications Centers](#)
- [Disability Services](#)
- [Multicultural Office for Student Access, Inclusiveness and Community \(MOSAIC\)](#)
- [Mental Health Services](#) in the Recreation and Wellness Center

The MPA program is language intensive, and effective communication – written and verbal – is key. Fostering effective communication is part of our mission. The [UCCS Writing Center](#) is a valuable partner in assisting students of all skill levels to become aware of personal idiosyncrasies and to improve writing ability. The [Excel Communication Center](#) offers presentation practice and feedback, tutoring for creating presentations, and facilitation for small groups. Students for whom English is a second language have additional communication resources available through the Global Engagement Office, and UCCS has an excellent English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Finally, MPA students typically work closely with the [SPA liaison in the Kraemer Family Library](#), who offers invaluable online or in person information sessions, tailored to individual research or other associated needs.

Pi Alpha Alpha

Pi Alpha Alpha is the Global Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. Each spring, MPA students are invited to join Pi Alpha Alpha if they have met the following criteria:

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

The purpose of Pi Alpha Alpha membership is to formally honor current MPA students who demonstrate their commitment to public service through their personal persistence and outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration. Pi Alpha Alpha recognizes its members' commitment to fostering integrity, professionalism, and effective performance and in promoting the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. Members are able to denote membership on their resume, which signals not only the completion of an MPA but degree completion with distinction. As with other academic honoraria, there is a national induction fee.

Career Resources

The School maintains employment opportunities on its website, and all students are welcome to contact the [UCCS Career Center](#) with questions about careers and future employment. Students are also encouraged to connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

7. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

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

Qualified students may receive assistance with various types of VA benefits through the [Office of Veteran and Military Student Affairs](#).

The School of Public Affairs offers scholarships and a limited number of graduate teaching or research assistantships to students. Scholarship opportunities specific to MPA students are announced to all School of Public Affairs students. Graduate assistantships, when available, are advertised through the Office of Financial Aid, Student Employment and Scholarships.

8. MPA GRADUATION PROCEDURES

All students graduating from the MPA program [must apply for graduation](#) by completing the steps outlined on the Graduate School website. Do not procrastinate, as deadlines are early in the semester. Students who have completed all the requirements for the MPA degree can apply for candidacy and graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. Students who complete their degree requirements in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. No graduation ceremony is held in the summer.

Students who are on the graduation list but find they are not able to complete the program requirements before graduation should notify the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist as soon as possible. They may then reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

9. MPA ACADEMIC POLICIES

Time Limit

Master's degree students must complete all coursework and degree requirements within six years of registration in their first course. Exceptions must be approved in writing by the Dean of the School of Public Affairs and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Application of Graduate Credit Earned at Another School or University

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

Credit Earned at UCCS SPA before Admission into MPA program

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

Revalidation Process

The Graduate School does not allow any course older than six years to be applied to a degree unless it has been revalidated by program faculty. The objective of course revalidation is to assure that the student's knowledge of course material is current. The School of Public Affairs MPA faculty will consider (but not guarantee) revalidation of a course older than six years through the following process.

1. Course revalidation will only be considered for courses in which at least a B- was earned. Courses older than eight years will not be considered for revalidation.
2. Students will submit a Course Validation form (available from the SPA Student Services office) for each course in question to the MPA program director.
3. The MPA program director will schedule a meeting to include the student and a second faculty member with content expertise related to the course in question. After that meeting, the MPA program director will notify the student if s/he is approved to continue the revalidation process.

4. If the student is approved to continue the process, s/he will submit to the MPA program director written review of what was learned in class, how the course applies to his/her profession, and what has changed in the field since the course was taken.¹ Guidance for the paper format can be found under “Revalidation Guidelines” in this handbook.
5. The MPA program director and/or a faculty content expert will conduct a second discussion with the student to discuss the paper and ask any additional questions needed to assess the currency of the student’s knowledge.
6. The MPA program director will inform the student and the Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist of the decision on revalidating the course.

Grading Policies

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

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

B = Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0, and a B- equals 2.7 points.)

C = Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).

D = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade point).

F = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

Please note that students must receive at least a B- in all courses applied to the MPA degree to receive credit for the course.

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

¹ Consider reviewing public affairs journals such as *Public Administration Review*, *Journal of Public Policy and Management*, *Policy Sciences*, etc. for information about public management, the policy process, and leadership issues that have surfaced since you took the courses. For elective courses, consider also reviewing journals of your course’s specialization.

Standards of Performance

In order to be in good standing, students must have an overall GPA of 3.0 or better in all coursework. A grade of B- or better is required in all classes. The academic performance of each student will be reviewed at the end of each semester. A student who has a GPA of less than 3.0 will be placed on probation for a period of one year; additionally, any student receiving a grade of F in any course is automatically placed on probation. Any student on probation must meet with the MPA program director prior to registration.

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

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

Incompletes, Withdrawals, and Repeating Courses

Incompletes

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

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

Drops and Withdrawals

Deadlines for dropping a course are set by the Office of the Registrar and posted on the Academic Calendar each semester. Students are responsible for knowing these deadlines.

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

After census date, the instructor's and Assistant Dean's or Dean's signatures (of the college offering the course) are required for adds. For drops, the instructor's signature is required. If the instructor chooses to sign the Course Change Form because the situation warrants a drop under the instructor's course policy on dropping courses, the drop will be processed. If the instructor judges the situation does not meet the course policy for drops, he/she will not sign the form and the student will not be dropped from the course. (Course Change Forms will not be accepted without required signatures and drop is effective the date forms are received by the Records Office.)

After the 10th week of the regular semester or the 5th week of the summer term, courses may not be dropped unless there are circumstances clearly beyond the student's control (accident, illness, etc.). In addition to the instructor's certification (as described above), the Assistant Dean or Dean of the college offering the course must approve the drop.

Students receiving financial aid or veterans benefits must also obtain the signature of the appropriate certifying official.

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

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

Retroactive Grade Changes

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

Repeating Courses

A student who receives a grade below B in a course may repeat that course once, with the approval of the MPA program director, provided the course has not been previously applied toward a degree. The grade received in a repeated course may substitute for the original grade and only the latter grade will be used in calculating the graduate program GPA required for graduation. However, all grades received during the student's graduate school experience will appear on the student's transcript and will be used in calculating the student's University GPA. These and other [UCCS Graduate School policies](#) may apply.

Student Academic Ethics Code

All students enrolled in credit or non-credit courses at UCCS are bound by the [UCCS Student Academic Ethics Code Policy](#). The following information in italics is taken directly from the policy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step One: Filing the Appeal

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

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

Step Two: Investigating the Appeal

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

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

Step Three: Decision by the MPA Program Director

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

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

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

Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean

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

Campus-Level Appeals

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

Student Academic Complaints and Appeals

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

Step One: Informal Resolution

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

Step Two: Filing the Grievance

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

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

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

Step Three: Investigating the Grievance

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

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

In the event that the MPA program director is involved in the grievance, s/he shall refer the investigation of the grievance to the Assistant Dean of the School of Public Affairs for investigation pursuant to the rules of the Graduate School.

Step Four: Decision by the MPA Program Director

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

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

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

Appealing the Decision of the Assistant Dean to the Dean

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

Campus-Level Appeals

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

Student Conduct and Response to Significant Situations or Events

UCCS has a number of response mechanisms in place to respond to student crisis situations, or to incidents or behaviors involving students that threaten the quality of campus life. Crisis situations may be accidental, occur without warning, or be intentional and meant to cause harm to students or the campus community.

The [Student Response Team](#) (SRT) assesses and coordinates responses to significant campus situations and events involving UCCS students. These events may include: death or significant trauma, problematic student situations involving medical or psychological concerns, and campus emergency situations that directly affect the well-being of students.

The SRT has the authority to respond and coordinate intervention to all student crisis incidents with the concurrence of the Chancellor. Issues of inappropriate student conduct [are referred](#) to the Office of Judicial Affairs within the Dean of Student's Office. Allegations of criminal wrongdoing will be referred to the campus police. Allegations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination shall be referred to the Office of Sexual Harassment and Discrimination in accordance with university policy. The SRT will confer and/or convene to respond to patterns or instances of dysfunctional behavior, and questions, concerns, and inquires concerning student behavior.

Standards for student conduct, including the UCCS Student Classroom/Course-Related Behavior Policy may be found under the [Dean of Students - Student Conduct](#).

Faculty members are authorized to exclude disruptive students from the classroom or other academic sites. Upon exclusion, it is incumbent on the student to make every reasonable effort to resolve the matter with the faculty member involved. If the student and faculty member cannot resolve the matter, either may request mediation by the MPA program director. If the excluded student cannot resolve the matter satisfactorily per the procedures outlined here and enumerated in the [UCCS Student Classroom/Course-Related Behavior Policy](#), the student may request that the Dean of Students review the matter and may continue with the appeal process as put forth in that policy.