

Master of Public Affairs Curriculum - Common Core Courses

P A 384C - Public Management

3 credit hours

This course provides substantive instruction in administrative policymaking and implementation. It is usually taken during the first year. Students are introduced to the role and method of administration in meeting policy expectations, resolving issues, responding to new requirements, and evaluating performance. The course covers the following topics: organization structure and bureaucracy, management issues and processes, managerial psychology, managing diversity, leadership, strategic planning, interorganizational relations, administrative law, human resource management, labor relations, personnel administration, performance measurement, program evaluation, information management, and ethics of public service. Each section of the course uses a different aspect of public administration or public management to emphasize these topics. The objectives of the course are achieved by using case studies, simulation exercises, class visitors, and practical exercises which complement the assigned readings and class discussions.

P A 391 - Public Financial Management

3 credit hours

This course provides a basic understanding of the financial activities of governments at all levels in the United States. It is usually taken during the first year. The course acquaints students with the purposes, characteristics, processes, and operations of financial management systems and develops their capabilities to analyze financial operations, coordinate such operations with relevant public policies and programs, and effectively manage the financial resources of public entities. Topics in the course include: the economic, political, and administrative environment of financial management systems and operations; budgeting theory and practice—including program and performance budgets; accounting and internal control; financial reporting; auditing—financial and performance; debt management; capital budgeting; treasury and cash management; and revenue/tax administration.

P A 393K - Applied Microeconomics for Policy Analysis

3 credit hours

This course covers microeconomic policy analysis and is usually taken during the first year. It acquaints students with the ways in which economic analysis bears on public policy issues. Students learn to identify the relevant economic analyses for their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the economic principles involved, and to comprehend and assess what professional economists can contribute to the public sector. The first portion of the course covers microeconomic theory with particular emphasis on determining price and output under perfect competition and other forms of market structure; general equilibrium and welfare theory; and the concept of market failure, including public goods, externalities, and imperfect market structure. The second portion of the course provides a rigorous coverage of the methodology of cost-benefit analysis and demonstrates its application through examination of specific case studies.

P A 397 - Introduction to Empirical Methods for Policy Analysis

3 credit hours

This course helps students develop an understanding of how basic quantitative tools are used in policy analysis. The major concepts discussed include modeling, optimization, sensitivity analysis, statistical inference, estimation, and prediction. These concepts are covered in the context of applications such as constrained decisionmaking based on calculus and on linear programming; policy choices with probabilistic information; evaluating and updating information with Bayesian techniques; estimating the impact of policy factors using regression models; and practical methods for forecasting. As the first course in the quantitative sequence, the emphasis is on broad exposure of techniques and appreciation of their contributions as well as their limitations in policymaking. Students must have fulfilled [prerequisites](#) in college-level algebra, calculus, and statistics before enrolling in this course. It is usually taken during the fall semester of the first year.

Master of Public Affairs Curriculum - Flexible Core Courses

P A 383C - Policy Development (Politics and Process)

3 credit hours

This course acquaints students with how public policy develops and is adopted in the American governmental system. It is normally taken during the first year. The course helps students understand the different settings in which policy develops and the factors that influence its development. Each section of the course uses different substantive policy concerns such as international affairs, social policy, community engagement, and resource and environmental regulation to explore how individuals and institutions initiate and/or give legitimacy to public policy, including the executive and legislative branches, the courts, interest groups, and individual citizens. The course also covers the dynamics of the policy process by focusing on the roles of and relationships among various levels of government and the concepts and models used to describe these aspects of policy development. The roles of ideas, concepts, and formal methods of analysis in policy development are discussed. Reading assignments and class discussion focus on case studies, legislative hearings, policy-issue briefs, court decisions, and theoretical works which highlight and explain the development of particular public policies.

P A 393L - Advanced Policy Economics

3 credit hours

Students are required to take an additional three-hour course in policy economics, selected from among a set of courses focusing on the application of economic theory and techniques to a specific area of public policy. Course options include macroeconomics, public finance, regulation, international trade and finance, natural resources and environmental policy, health policy, transportation policy, human resource development, urban and regional economic development, international development, education policy, social policy, and labor economics. Not all options are offered every year. This course is usually taken in the second year.

P A 397C - Advanced Empirical Methods for Policy Analysis

3 credit hours

In addition to the Introduction to Quantitative Analysis course in the common core, students are required to take another three-hour course in quantitative analysis, selected from among a set of courses focusing on the application of quantitative theory and techniques to policy analysis. Topics offered vary from year to year but include econometrics, demographic techniques, systems analysis, simulation modeling, and quantitative indicator methods. As the second course in the [two-course quantitative sequence](#), this course is intended to provide students with an in-depth understanding and hands-on experience with a specific quantitative method useful in policy analysis. This course is usually taken during the second semester of the first year.

P A 680PA - Policy Research Project

3 credit hours each semester

A unique component of the School's two-year program is the policy research project, a two-semester, six credit-hour course devoted to organized group research on a policy issue of concern to a public sector client. Students are required to participate in a policy research project during their first year.

The format for a policy research project is a research team of one or two professors and from ten to twenty students. An attempt is made to involve faculty from different disciplines and, within the constraints of student preferences, to select students with a diversity of academic backgrounds and experience.

Ten or more projects are conducted each year on a range of topics selected according to the knowledge needs of clients, the fields of competence of the School's faculty, and the policy interests of both faculty and students. Policy research projects are thus client- and product-oriented and serve as instruments for both learning and public service.

Students participate in all phases of the research project, including helping to define its objectives and methodology. During the course of the project, students share responsibility for organizing the available talent and resources to accomplish the research, for making day-to-day decisions affecting the progress of the research, and for developing the final research product. Through its emphasis on interdisciplinary research on real policy problems, the policy research project enables students to develop and integrate their analytical and quantitative research skills, experience the realities of the administrative and legislative processes, feel the impact of political pressures and conflicts, and learn the requirements for effective oral and written communication with nonacademic practitioners.

P A 680PB - Policy Research Project

3 credit hours

Master of Public Affairs Curriculum - Elective Courses

P A 188S - Advanced Topics in Public Policy

1 credit hour

Three hour a week for five weeks, or as required by the topic. Topics for these policy seminars have included environmental and natural resources policy, health-service delivery policy, transportation policy, science policy, regulatory policy, international affairs, national security, labor and human relations policy, social welfare policy, urban and regional growth policy, intergovernmental relations, and public sector ethics and values.

P A 195C - Supervised Policy Research

1 credit hour

P A 196C - Supervised Public Service

1 credit hour

P A 388D - Advanced Topics in Public Policy

3 credit hours

Topics for these policy seminars have included environmental and natural resources policy, health-service delivery policy, transportation policy, science policy, regulatory policy, international affairs, national security, labor and human relations policy, social welfare policy, urban and regional growth policy, intergovernmental relations, and public sector ethics and values.

P A 388K - Advanced Topics in Public Policy

3 credit hours

Topics for these policy seminars have included environmental and natural resources policy, health-service delivery policy, social welfare policy, transportation policy, science and technology policy, international affairs, national security, urban and regional growth policy, and political campaigns.

P A 388L - Advanced Topics in Management

3 credit hours

Students desiring additional exposure to public management issues may select from seminars on such topics as managing diversity, principles and practices of effective leadership, and social entrepreneurship.

P A 389 - Conference Course in Policy Analysis

3 credit hours

A student may arrange for individual instruction, with permission from a faculty member and the approval of the Graduate Adviser, by enrolling in this course. It provides an opportunity to do supervised reading and research on a specific aspect of professional theory or practice related to public service. The student must submit a written proposal for the conference course outlining the topic(s) to be studied, resources to be used, and academic product to be submitted for evaluation. The student/instructor contact hours in a conference course must equal or exceed the contact hours required in a graduate-level, three-hour organized course. This course may substitute for an elective seminar or, with approval of the Graduate Adviser, for a core course under certain circumstances.

P A 396K - Internship in Public Policy

3 credit hours

All students must satisfy the LBJ School's experiential requirement in order to graduate. That requirement can be met by taking a 12-week summer internship for no credit, enrolling in the internship course for credit (as an elective), or providing written documentation of prior public service or administrative work experience equivalent to the internship experience.

The internship, usually taken in the summer, provides a student with the opportunity to participate in and observe, as a full-time working member of the staff, the daily policy-related activities of a local, state, or federal government agency, or a nongovernmental agency which is concerned with the public sector. Internships are also available in a variety of international settings, including U.S. embassies abroad, United Nations organizations, and agencies of foreign governments.

The internship is a structured learning situation involving the intern, the agency supervisor, and the LBJ School faculty supervisor. It provides (1) an opportunity for a student to use the skills and experience gained during the first year of his or her academic program in a way that is mutually beneficial to the student and the agency, and (2) a learning experience for the student which will enhance his or her academic work during the second year of the program. Adequate supervision, educational assignments, and practical benefit to the agency and student are the ingredients of a successful internship.

P A 398R - Professional Report

3 credit hours

The [Professional Report](#) course is an elective for students who follow a general course of study rather than pursuing a specialization. Those in a specialization are required to enroll in the course and complete the report.

Students enroll in the Professional Report course in the second year of the program. Graduate School rules stipulate students must enroll in the Professional Report in the semester in which they graduate. Completing the requirement provides students with the opportunity to do supervised individual research on a policy issue and to prepare a formal report. The Professional Report should contribute to understanding a policy issue and include more substantial research and analysis than a term paper in a graduate seminar course. Each report is supervised by a first reader--an LBJ School faculty member who advises the student in all stages of the research and evaluates the final product, assigning the grade for the course. Students must also work with a second reader on the report, who may be from the LBJ School or another University department.

Students participating in the Engineering dual program generally write a thesis for their Engineering department, which fulfills the Professional Report requirement. Students in the Law and Business dual programs register for the Professional Report in the LBJ School. Students in the dual program in Communication or in Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American Studies, or Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies must register for the Professional Report in those programs and must have one reader from each program. Generally the first reader is from the program in which the student is registered.

Each student must receive prior written approval from his or her first reader before formally beginning work on the Professional Report. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss with the first and second readers and have approved the proposed topic, methodology, and work schedule for the report. While students may develop their topics and collect data for their reports in internships and other classes, the report must be completed independently, under supervision of faculty readers. A student may not receive credit for the Professional Report unless he or she has received faculty approval for and supervision of the work.