

Ph.D. in Public Administration and Policy

Our Mission and Program Overview

The Ph.D. Program in the Department of Public Administration and Policy is a full-time, cohort-based degree that prepares students for careers in research and teaching in the fields of public administration and public policy. Our mission is to produce the next generation of leading scholars in public administration and public policy. We aim for our graduates to produce original research that is methodologically sound, socially relevant, and makes important contributions to knowledge and theory. From the first day of orientation to the final dissertation defense, each student works one-on-one with a faculty mentor to develop the skills needed for a career in academia. By the time they graduate, virtually all of our students have presented their research at key conferences and published their work in peer-reviewed academic journals. Our program provides a comprehensive, multifaceted introduction to the research enterprise and what it means to be a scholar in public administration and public policy.

DOES THE PROGRAM HAVE A SPECIFIC FOCUS WITHIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY?

Our PhD program aims to produce graduates in the tradition of the AU scholar-teacher model, focusing on preparing students for careers as tenure-track faculty members in research universities. Our faculty work extensively with students on a one-on-one basis to give them the research and teaching skills necessary for a career in academia.

CAN I WORK WHILE I AM ENROLLED IN THE PROGRAM?

We typically do not admit students who wish to engage in outside employment. Between classes, the graduate assistantship, and other events on campus, it is rare that students have the time to put into another job. If you are looking for a program that can accommodate your current employment, this probably is not the best fit for you. We are also unable to admit part-time students at this time.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE PROGRAM?

The program is designed to be completed in 4 years, and most students do so. Occasionally, a fifth year is needed.

WHAT DO STUDENTS DO WHEN THEY FINISH THE PROGRAM?

As noted above, we focus on preparing students for careers in tenure-track, academic positions. Recent graduates are working in top universities, including Syracuse University, University of Georgia, New Mexico State University, North Carolina State University, Ohio State University, Rutgers University, State University of New York at Albany, University of North Carolina - Charlotte, University of Southern California, and Florida Atlantic University, among others.

WHAT ARE THE ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS?

We evaluate each candidate's application holistically; there are no minimum thresholds. The most important factor is the substantive fit with faculty in the department. We also rarely admit students whose career goals do not match our program's mission of producing tenure-track, research-active faculty. We aim for an entering class of 5-7 students each year, and the acceptance rate is typically about 10%.

Frequently Asked Questions

DOES THE PROGRAM REQUIRE A MASTER'S DEGREE FOR ADMISSION?

While not required, roughly 90% of our students enter with an MPA, MPP, or similar degree.

DO YOU PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE?

We typically provide funding to all students who are admitted to the program. Our funding package currently includes a full tuition waiver and an annual stipend of about \$25,000. Students also receive \$1,000/year in travel support, and once they reach the dissertation stage, they are eligible for university-wide dissertation completion funding (up to \$5,000). In exchange for financial support, students work as a graduate assistant with a faculty member in the department on a part-time basis during the academic year. Students receive funding for four years, as long as they are making good progress in the program.

HOW IS THE PROGRAM STRUCTURED?

We require students to complete three fields: a major field in public administration and a minor field in public policy (or vice versa), and a field in research methods. Each of the fields requires four courses. Students take three courses per semester, so the coursework typically takes two years. Once coursework is complete, students take a comprehensive exam in their major field, and then begin working on their dissertation.

WHAT DO I NEED TO SUBMIT IN ORDER TO APPLY?

We require all applicants to submit a personal statement, resume, writing sample, transcripts of previous coursework, three letters of recommendation, and official GRE scores (taken within the past five years). *We cannot waive the GRE or substitute another test in its place.*

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION DEADLINE?

All materials must be received by the admissions office by December 15th. We admit students for the fall semester only. For questions on admission, email: spagrad@american.edu.