

Master of Public Affairs, MPAff

One of the enduring grand challenges is how to collectively, creatively, and democratically respond to key challenges facing our communities, nation, and the world. Among these challenges are environmental change, including an increased incidence and intensity of disasters such as flooding, sea level rise, and wildfires attributable to climate change; health care; an aging population; addiction; inadequate infrastructure; inequality; unaffordable housing; racism; transportation; immigration; economic development; and public safety.

In response, the Master of Public Affairs program trains future leaders to systematically and creatively address these and other challenges in the coming years. With its interdisciplinary public affairs infrastructure—representing colleges, departments, and centers across campus—the University of Iowa is a leader in public affairs locally and nationally. The program educates public affairs leaders who will creatively and knowledgeably address society's most critical issues and contribute to addressing the grand challenges of the 21st century.

Learning Outcomes

Ability To Lead and Manage in Public Governance

- Understand public administration and management theories and practices.
- Apply public administration and management theories and practices to achieve the goals of public and nonprofit organizations.
- Understand budgeting, financing, and human resource management in public and nonprofit organizations.
- Develop leadership and team-building skills.

Ability To Participate In and Contribute to the Public Policy Process

- Understand the policymaking process in the institutional and market context.
- Identify key stakeholders in the policy process and understand their interactions with the public policy process.
- Conduct policy analysis and make policy recommendations.

Ability To Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems, and Make Evidence-Informed Decisions in a Complex and Dynamic Environment

- Properly frame policy problems, policy goals, and policy alternatives.
- Collect, analyze, and report data, and apply economic, statistical, and spatial analysis methods in data analysis.
- Synthesize quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform policymaking.

Ability To Articulate and Apply a Public Service Perspective

- Recognize competing values in public interest and engage the general public in decision-making.
- Understand the importance of accountability in public administration.
- Apply professional codes of ethics in policy analysis, policymaking, and administering policy.

Ability To Communicate and Interact Productively With a Diverse and Changing Workforce and Society at Large

- Understand the changing demographics and values of society and the implications of these changes for public service and public policymaking.
- Value and identify ways to engage and represent the public in the public sector.
- Develop oral, writing, and media skills for effective communication with diverse stakeholders.

Ability To Pursue Sustainable Outcomes Through Public Policy, Public Administration, and Public Management (Program-Specific Competency)

- Understand complex interactions between public, private, and nonprofit organizations and the role of these organizations within human and natural systems.
- Articulate and apply a sustainability perspective (the implementation of policies, processes, and practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs) to public administration, management, and policy.
- Analyze real-world problems through multidisciplinary perspectives and work collaboratively to solve problems.

Requirements

The graduate Master of Public Affairs (MPAff) requires a minimum of 42 s.h. of credit. Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core and concentration area courses and must maintain a Graduate College program grade-point average of at least 3.00.

The required curriculum includes eight core courses, electives (including those taken within a concentration area), a year-long capstone project, and an internship. Courses are offered by the School of Planning and Public Affairs (Graduate College), the departments of Management and Entrepreneurship (Tippie College of Business), Civil and Environmental Engineering (College of Engineering), Educational Policy and Leadership Studies (College of Education), Political Science, Sociology and Criminology, the School of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability, the MA in strategic communication program in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences), the College of Public Health, and the Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center (College of Law).

The Master of Public Affairs requires the following coursework.

Requirements	Hours
Core Courses	19
Concentration Area	9
Capstone	5
Electives	9

Core Courses

Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core courses except PBAF:6208.

Course #	Title	Hours
All of these:		
PBAF:5117	Bureaucratic Politics and Public Administration	3
PBAF:5120	Public Policy Process	3
PBAF:6200	Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Policy	3
PBAF:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3
PBAF:6208	Program Seminar	1
PBAF:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	3
PBAF:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3

Concentration Area

Students complete 9 s.h. in one of two concentration areas: public and nonprofit management or public policy. 6 s.h. must be in planning and public affairs (prefix PBAF) or urban and regional planning (prefix URP) courses numbered 5000 or above. Students further develop competencies in the concentration area by applying the concepts and skills gained in core coursework. All concentration area coursework requires a grade of B-minus or above.

Public and Nonprofit Management

Course #	Title	Hours
This required course:		
PBAF:6240	Public Management: State and Local Perspectives	3
6 s.h. from these:		
JMC:5220	Foundations of Strategic Communication	3
JMC:5225	Digital Strategic Communication	3
JMC:5236	Topics in Strategic Communication	3
JMC:5270	Leadership Communication	3
LAW:8753	Nonprofit Organizations: Structure, Governance, and Strategy	3
LAW:8755	Nonprofit Organizations: Advocacy, Collaboration, and Fundraising	3
MGMT:3500	Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness I	3
MGMT:3600	Nonprofit Organizational Effectiveness II	3
MGMT:4600	Nonprofit Ethics and Governance	3
PBAF:6238	Public Human Resource Management	1

PBAF:6241	Strategic Management of Public and Nonprofit Organizations	3
PBAF:6282	Grant Writing	2
PBAF:3560	Public Policy and Persuasion	3

Public Policy

Course #	Title	Hours
One of these:		
PBAF:6201	Data Science for Urban Analytics	3
PBAF:6340	Public Policy Analysis	3
6 s.h. from these:		
CEE:3790	Resilient Infrastructure and Emergency Response	3
CEE:4107	Sustainable Systems	3
CEE:5410	Politics and Economics of the Food, Energy, Water Nexus	3
CRIM:3416	Race, Crime, and Justice	3
CRIM:3417	Community Corrections	3
CRIM:3425	Women, Crime, and Justice	3
CRIM:3600	Crime and Public Policy	3
EPLS:6222	Introduction to Educational Policy	3
EPLS:6225	Higher Education Policy	3
EPLS:6228	K-12 Education Finance and Policy	3
HMP:5610	Health Policy	3
HMP:5650	Health Policy Analysis	3
HMP:6710	Federalism and Health Policy	3
JMC:5248	Strategic Political Communication	3
LAW:8433	Environmental Law	3
LAW:8622	International Environmental Law	3
PBAF:5120	Public Policy Process	3
PBAF:6201	Data Science for Urban Analytics	3
PBAF:6340	Public Policy Analysis	3
POLI:3102	The U.S. Congress	3
POLI:3104	Immigration Politics	3
POLI:3118	Interest Groups	3
POLI:3203	Campaigns, Elections, and Voting Behavior	3
POLI:3204	Public Opinion	3
POLI:3518	Water Wars: Conflict and Cooperation	3
POLI:3519	Politics of Aging	3
SEES:3420	Sustainable and Green Building Concepts	3
SEES:4750	Environmental Impact Analysis	3
SEES:4770	Environmental Justice	3
URP:5800	Environmental Policy: Theory and Practice	3
URP:6253	Designing Sustainable and Healthy Cities	3
URP:6256	Environmental Policy	3

URP:6258	Systems and Scenario Thinking	3
URP:6260	Transportation Policy and Planning	3
URP:6263	Special Topics in Transportation Planning	3
URP:6266	Transportation, Urban Form, and Sustainability	3
URP:6271	Housing Policy	3
URP:6273	Community Development Through Creative Placemaking	3
URP:6295	Economic Development Policy	3
URP:6297	Financing Economic Development for Poverty Alleviation	3

Capstone

Students take the public affairs capstone courses, typically in their final two semesters. They work on a community, state, federal, or nonprofit project in which they focus their efforts on an analysis of a contemporary public policy problem, research, development of policy proposals, and recommended action steps. This is done in tandem with the university's Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities (IISC), which for ten years has been providing public consultation to communities in Iowa.

Course #	Title	Hours
Both of these:		
PBAF:6213	Public Affairs Capstone I	2
PBAF:6214	Public Affairs Capstone II	3

Electives

Students complete an additional 9 s.h. of elective coursework. Elective courses may be chosen from planning and public affairs (prefix PBAF) or urban and regional planning (prefix URP) courses numbered 4000 or above, with the exception of URP:6305 Readings and URP:6325 Thesis: Urban and Regional Planning; from courses outside of the School of Planning and Public Affairs listed under the preceding "Concentration Area" section; or from the following course list. With the permission of the program, additional courses not listed here may be approved as electives.

Students must complete a minimum of 3 s.h. in elective courses from planning and public affairs (prefix PBAF) or urban and regional planning (prefix URP) courses numbered 5000 or above.

Students are encouraged, but not required, to complete an approved internship with a public agency or a nonprofit organization through PBAF:6335 Internship. They engage in 80, 160, or 240 hours of internship work under the supervision of a public affairs professional. A maximum of 3 s.h. of PBAF:6335 Internship can apply toward elective requirements.

Course #	Title	Hours
CEE:3003	Project Management Skills	1
EPLS:5240	Topics in Education	arr.
EPLS:6217	Theory and Practice of Leadership	2-3

IS:3910	Approaches to Advocacy: From Theory to Practice	3
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Final Examination

An oral and written exam constitute the final examination. If the oral exam is passed, then the written exam does not need to be taken.

Combined Programs

Undergraduate Degree/MPAff

Students working on an undergraduate degree program in the Tippie College of Business or the colleges of Education, Engineering, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Public Health who are interested in earning the Master of Public Affairs degree may apply to a combined undergraduate degree/MPAff graduate degree program. The Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) program enables students to begin work on the MPAff degree as they complete their baccalaureate degree. Combined degree programs enable students to earn both degrees in less time than it would take to earn the two degrees separately.

Separate application to each degree program is required. Applicants must be admitted to both programs before they may be admitted to the combined degree program. For more information, visit Undergraduate to Graduate (U2G) on the Graduate College website.

Admission

Admission requires an undergraduate degree and fulfillment of the minimum requirements of the Graduate College.

The priority deadline for funding consideration is Jan. 15 for fall admission. Funding for those who submit materials after these dates is considered only as funding permits. Applications for admission are accepted until July 15; April 15 for international students. For spring admission, applications are accepted until Dec. 1.

To apply, follow the directions on the Graduate Admissions website. Applicants can apply online and upload all supporting materials. All students requesting funding also must complete and upload the Funding Application/Award Form.

Career Advancement

Graduates land positions in professional policy analytical and/or managerial service in the public and nonprofit sectors. The degree builds knowledge and skills in a mix of topics that includes policy, economics, statistics, research, and management and prepares students for professions that influence public policy through analysis, application, or management. They have a number of career choices available, many of which lead to executive positions in federal, state, and local governments, or in nonprofit agencies.

Example positions in the local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private sectors include:

- local—government specialist leading to a city manager, community health director, or public housing manager;
- state—program manager for a state housing authority or a policy analyst/program manager for a variety of state agencies;

- federal—presidential management fellow, or starting as a GS-9 position in the federal government in a variety of federal agencies;
- nonprofit—program director leading to a nonprofit organization director; and
- public, private, and nonprofit—public and government relations specialist, lobbyist, or elected official.

The School of Planning and Public Affairs provides career assistance efforts for both internship and post-graduation job seekers. It offers job information access and one-on-one advising support from the school's career services coordinator.

Academic Plans

Sample Plan of Study

Sample plans represent one way to complete a program of study. Actual course selection and sequence will vary and should be discussed with an academic advisor. For additional sample plans, see MyUI.

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Course	Title	Hours
Academic Career		
Any Semester		

42 s.h. must be graduate level coursework; graduate transfer credits allowed upon approval. More information is included in the General Catalog and on department website.^a

Graduate College program GPA of at least 3.00 is required.^{b, c}

	Hours	0
First Year		
Fall		
PBAF:5120	Public Policy Process	3
PBAF:6200	Analytical Methods for Evidence-Based Policy	3
PBAF:6205	Economics for Policy Analysis	3
PBAF:6208	Program Seminar	1
Hours		10
Spring		
PBAF:5117	Bureaucratic Politics and Public Administration	3
PBAF:6225	Applied GIS for Planning and Policy Making	3
PBAF:6233	Public Finance and Budgeting	3
Concentration area course ^d		3
Hours		12
Second Year		
Fall		
PBAF:6213	Public Affairs Capstone I	2
PBAF:6335	Internship ^{d, e}	3
Concentration area course ^f		3
Elective course ^d		3
Hours		11
Spring		
PBAF:6214	Public Affairs Capstone II ^g	3
Concentration area course ^d		3
Elective course ^d		3

Exam: Master's Final Exam^h

Hours	9
Total Hours	42

- a Students must complete specific requirements in the University of Iowa Graduate College after program admission. Refer to the Graduate College website and the Manual of Rules and Regulations for more information.
- b Students must earn a grade of B-minus or higher in all core and concentration area courses except PBAF:6208.
- c Graduate College program GPA is comprised of all courses that are approved degree requirements. If a student takes more than the minimum required number of semester hours to complete the degree, but all courses taken are eligible to count toward the degree, those courses will be included in the Graduate College program GPA.
- d Students complete an additional 9 s.h. of elective coursework. Elective courses may be chosen from planning and public affairs (prefix PBAF) or urban and regional planning (prefix URP) courses numbered 4000 or above with the exception of URP:6305 and URP:6325; from courses outside of the School of Planning and Public Affairs included in the General Catalog concentration area list; or from CEE:3003, EPLS:5240, EPLS:6217, IS:3910.
- e Students are encouraged, but not required, to complete an approved internship with a public agency or a nonprofit organization through PBAF:6335. They engage in 80, 160, or 240 hours of internship work under the supervision of a public affairs professional. A maximum of 3 s.h. of PBAF:6335 can apply toward elective requirements.
- f Students complete 9 s.h. in one of two concentration areas: public and nonprofit management or public policy. 6 s.h. must be in planning and public affairs (prefix PBAF) or urban and regional planning (prefix URP) courses numbered 5000 or above. See the General Catalog for list of approved courses.
- g Typically taken in final semester.
- h Consists of both oral and written components.