



Department of Public Administration & Policy

PhD Program FAQs

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.

Do you admit part-time students?

We are unable to admit part-time students at this time.

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.*

How long does it take to complete the program?

Students entering with a master's degree should be able to finish in 4 years. Those entering without a master's degree should be able to finish in 5-6 years.

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 universities around the world, including City College of New York, Indiana University, Ohio State University, Rutgers, San Diego State University, Seoul National University, University of Baltimore, and Virginia Commonwealth 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 rarely admit students whose research interests are not well-aligned to existing faculty, nor do we 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%. For the 2012 entering class, the average undergraduate GPA was 3.63; the average graduate GPA was 3.90; and the average combined GRE was 1357.

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. In exchange for financial support, students work as a research assistant with a faculty member in the department on a part-time basis during the academic year. A student entering with a master's degree currently receives funding for four years, as long as he or she is making progress toward the degree. A student entering with a bachelor's degree is eligible for up to five years of funding.

Our funding package currently includes a full tuition waiver and an annual stipend of \$20,000-\$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).

How is the program structured?

We require students to complete three fields: a field in public administration, a substantive field of the student's choosing (e.g., public policy, global health policy, nonprofit management), 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. Those who enter without a master's degree take additional courses, chosen in conjunction with the faculty advisor. Once coursework is complete, students take comprehensive exams in their two substantive fields, after which they begin working on their dissertation.

What are the students like?

The average entering student in our program is about 28 years old. Our student body is 60% female and 40% male. Approximately 20% are from countries other than the U.S. and 26% are students of color.

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 January 1. We admit students for the fall semester only.