Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration

The Ph.D. program in Public Administration (with various specialization areas) at Penn State Harrisburg offers a vibrant learning environment to provide enriching scholarship, cultivating research, and advancement in professional careers. Established in 1989, the program has a long tradition of providing advanced education in public administration and policy, as well as related fields.

Specialization areas

In consultation with the student’s adviser and doctoral committee, each doctoral student will develop a public administration specialization that consists of five 3-credit courses. A student may select one of the specialization areas in the following list, or, together with his/her committee, tailor a specialization based on the student’s interests and the availability of the courses in the School of Public Affairs and other graduate programs at Penn State.

- Public and nonprofit management
- Organizations and human resource management
- Public budgeting and finance
- Public policy analysis
- State and local government administration
- Criminal justice
- Health administration
- Homeland security

Contact

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Curriculum
A Ph.D. student must first successfully complete the prerequisite courses specified by the program to make up for deficiencies, if any exist. After these are completed, a student must take a minimum of 42 credits:
- five 3-credit foundation courses
- four 3-credit research methods courses
- five 3-credit specialization area courses

All doctoral students must pass a candidacy examination, a comprehensive written and oral examination, and a final oral examination (the dissertation defense).

To earn the Ph.D. degree, doctoral students must also write a dissertation that is accepted by the doctoral committee and the Graduate School.

Courses
Prerequisite Courses (may be waived)
PADM 500 Public Organization and Management (or equivalent)
Development of basic concepts and issues in public administration; administrative theory and public policy processes

PADM 507 Introduction to Public Policy Analysis (or equivalent)
Introduction to the analysis of public policy within its organizational and political contexts, including an emphasis on an economic perspective.

Required Doctoral Courses
PADM 503 Research Methods
Introduction to research methods relevant to public administration and public policy

PADM 570 Scope and Methods of Public Administration
Seminar on the history of public administration and its theories

PADM 571 Seminar in Organizational Theory
Seminar on selected theories of organizations and their applications to the study of public organizations

PADM 572 Research and Theory in Public Budgeting and Finance
Seminar on the seminal theories and literature on budgeting and financial administration

PADM 573 Research and Theory in Public Policy and Governance
Seminar on the seminal theories of public policy processes and policy analysis

PADM 574 Research and Theory in Public Management
Seminar on public management theories

PADM 575 Advanced Research Design
Seminar on research design issues in preparing doctoral dissertations

Program Requirements for Admission

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<td>Education</td>
<td>Admission to the PhD program is based on the applicant’s academic performance in the past and the compatibility of his/her background and interests with those of the program faculty members. All applicants must have completed a master’s degree in a relevant field: master of public administration, master of public policy, or a master’s degree in criminal justice, homeland security, health administration, political science, economics, sociology, anthropology, social work, or business management. Juris Doctorate degrees (law) will also be considered.</td>
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<td>Supporting Materials</td>
<td>✓ Official scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) — verbal, quantitative, and analytical — taken within the five years prior to the date of application. ✓ A résumé that includes work experience, volunteer activities, academic and professional honors, honorary societies, extracurricular activities, offices held, any publications, and other significant activities. ✓ A statement of goals and research interests, including evidence of research aptitude and interest as well as “fit” with the faculty interests in the PhD program at the Pennsylvania State University. The candidate should make the case why this Ph.D. program would be a good fit for him/her. There is no page or word limit for this statement, but it should be written clearly, coherently, and succinctly. ✓ A writing sample that reflects the applicant’s background in conducting academic research and his/her potential to conduct academic research in the future. ✓ At least three letters of recommendation, preferably from faculty members who can comment on the applicant’s potential as a doctoral student. ✓ Two official transcripts from each undergraduate degree-granting college or university and post-graduate college or university the applicant attended.</td>
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Application Deadline
There are two deadlines for applications for the fall semester of the following academic year: January 15 and March 15. For those applicants seeking research or teaching assistantships, the deadline to submit all application materials is January 15. Late applications may be considered if assistantships are still available. Applicants who wish to finance their education with their own funds or other sources (foreign governments that fund international students for PhD studies in the United States and other funding agencies, such as Fulbright commissions) are encouraged to submit their applications by January 15, but they may apply any time before March 15.