



School of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Handbook for the Master of Public Policy Program

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School of Public Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **DENVER**

Welcome to the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program at the School of Public Affairs (SPA)! If you are a prospective student, this handbook will give you a sense of our program and let you know how to apply. If you have been accepted into our program, the handbook contains our program requirements and other information designed to help you succeed.

The MPP program prepares students to become leaders in public service, working in and with government and nonprofit agencies to promote the common good.

As an MPP student, you'll learn about management and policy from leading scholars and practitioners in the field. You'll learn how to apply both theories and skills to solve the pressing problems of our day, and you'll have opportunities to work with agencies and organizations to contribute what you have learned to real-world issues.

At SPA, we are passionate about the importance of public service, and we're glad you're considering joining us!

Sincerely,

Tanya Heikkila, PhD
MPP Interim Program Director

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Handbook

Welcome to the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program at the School of Public Affairs (SPA). This handbook will acquaint you with SPA's policies and procedures and facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and earning the MPP degree. Please read this handbook carefully and consult your advisor whenever you have questions.

Be aware that the policies and procedures this handbook describes are subject to change, and changes in the University of Colorado's policies affect SPA's policies and procedures. The Director of Marketing and Communications will update the [SPA website](#) with any relevant policy and procedure revisions. The MPP Program Director will periodically update this handbook.

University-wide policies have priority over SPA policies.

The School of Public Affairs

The University of Colorado Denver's School of Public Affairs (SPA) is on the University's Auraria Downtown Campus. The School offers the following six-degree programs: Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP), Master of Criminal Justice (MCJ), Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice (BACJ), Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration (BAPA), and Doctor of Philosophy in Public Affairs (PhD).

Established in 1973, the School of Public Affairs has statewide authority to provide graduate programs in public administration. The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) accredited SPA's MPA program. It is one of the most highly ranked programs on all the CU campuses.

The MPP Degree

The Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree prepares students to design, advocate for, and evaluate public policy from positions inside or outside of government. Students will gain an understanding of public policy design and analysis techniques, as well as the role of politics and power in influencing the making and implementation of public policy. Democratic norms constitute the bedrock and lodestone of this program, emphasizing principles of political equity and human dignity for all.

The Master of Public Policy (MPP) degree prepares students to design, advocate for, and evaluate public policy from positions inside or outside of government. Students will gain an understanding of public policy design and analysis techniques, as well as the role of politics and power in influencing the making and implementation of public policy. Democratic norms constitute the bedrock and lodestone of this program, emphasizing principles of political equity and human dignity for all.

The MPP program provides students with broad exposure to the context of public policymaking and the knowledge and skills needed to develop, advocate for, and conduct analyses of all types of public policy. This is accomplished through a core curriculum that combines courses that squarely situate policymaking in the context of a democratic society with courses that concern themselves with practical analytical tools. The MPP program is also designed to provide students with practical experience relevant to their studies, including an internship for students without professional public sector experience and a capstone or thesis project focusing on real-world issues.

The competencies for MPP graduates include five domains: the ability:

- to lead and manage in the public interest
- to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process
- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment
- to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective
- to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large

Administration

The MPP Program Director is the key administrative officer for the program. The Director serves as the central contact for questions regarding MPP policies and chairs the MPP Committee, which develops and approves overall MPP policies. SPA's Recruiting and Admissions Coordinator provides information to prospective students regarding the program and its policies and procedures and assists them in applying to the program. SPA's Student Services Coordinators provide information on course registration, financial aid, and related issues and serve as advisors for students concerning basic degree planning.

2. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

Admission Calendar

The MPP Admissions Committee makes admissions to the MPP program on a rolling basis and admits applicants for each semester. Applicants should submit all application materials by these deadlines. The calendar for submission of admission materials is as follows:

Term	<u>Preferred Deadline*</u> (Domestic Students)	<u>Final Deadline*</u> (Domestic Students)	<u>Preferred Deadline*</u> (International Students)	<u>Final Deadline*</u> (International Students)
Fall	March 15	August 1	March 15	May 15
Spring	October 15	December 1	September 15	October 15
Summer	March 15	May 1	January 15	March 15

**Application deadlines are subject to change.*

Required Application Materials

Detailed requirements for applying to the School of Public Affairs (SPA) are on SPA's website in the Admissions section. In general, applicants must submit a University of Colorado Application, at least three letters of reference (at least two of which must be from academic sources), a resume, a statement of purpose, and official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended. Scores from a recent Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or an equivalent exam, such as the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), are optional.

The MPP Admissions Committee reviews applications as soon as the student's application is complete and notifies students by email as soon as the Committee makes an admissions decision. Students seeking financial aid must await formal approval for admission by the University. This process may take slightly longer than the SPA admissions process.

Admission Status

The MPP Admissions Committee normally admits applicants with regular graduate status. In exceptional cases, the MPP Admissions Committee may admit students who do not meet the minimum qualifications for admission on provisional status if elements of their application suggest they may be able to perform successfully in the program. Additionally, the MPP Program Director may direct these students to fulfill a math refresher class prior to their first semester. Those admitted on provisional status are required to take two of three core courses (Policy Process and Democracy—PUAD 5005, and Economics and Public Finance—PUAD 5004 or Policy Workshop Seminar—PUAD 5750) prior to enrolling in other classes and earn at least a B in each course.

Students admitted provisionally should take these required courses in a traditional classroom format unless the online format is the only feasible option or the student plans to take all courses online through the online MPP option. At the conclusion of their first semester, or after completing the two courses, the MPP Program Director will review the student's performance in these courses to determine if they should be admitted to the program. Provisionally admitted students may take no other SPA courses until formally admitted into the program.

Taking Classes as a Non-Degree Seeking Student

Students need not be admitted to the MPP program to take SPA courses. Students can take up to three classes as "non-degree" students by completing an Application for Non-Degree Admission. The CU Denver Graduate School office processes Non-Degree applications, which are available online.

Other non-degree students include students who are interested in exploring the courses and

either have an application in process or may apply in the future. If a non-degree student later applies and is admitted to the program, up to nine credit hours of coursework taken as a non-degree student may be applied to the MPP degree.

Taking courses as a non-degree student contains some risk because admission to the program is not a certainty. Therefore, we encourage students to apply as soon as possible. The non-degree status is most useful when students want to explore the field and/or when their application is not complete (e.g., test scores and/or reference letters have not been received).

Readmission of Inactive, Withdrawn, and Suspended Students

Students admitted to SPA must complete their coursework within six years from the date of their first course. Occasionally, however, students find it necessary to interrupt their coursework for one or more semesters. An extended interruption, however, may result in the student being placed on inactive or withdrawn status.

Students who do not enroll in any classes during the semester for which they were admitted, and students who have not registered for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer), are placed on inactive status. Inactive students who want to continue their coursework will be required to submit readmission paperwork. Contact your Student Services Coordinator for more information.

Students who have not enrolled in classes for more than twelve consecutive semesters (including summer semesters) will be considered to have withdrawn from the program. Readmission for these students will require repeating the full application process.

Course Revalidation

University policy requires the revalidation process for any course that a student took more than seven years ago. The university will only consider course revalidation for core courses in which the student earned at least a "B-" and elective courses in which the student earned at least a "C." To request revalidation of expired courses, students must submit for each course a one-page review of what they learned in the class, how the coursework applies to the student's profession, and what has changed in the field since the student took the course. Students should dedicate equal space to those three parts.

Students must submit all necessary course reviews to their Student Services Coordinator. The MPP Director will review them, schedule a conversation with the student, and then determine whether to revalidate the courses. SPA's objective is to ensure that students' knowledge of the course material is current. Students might consider reviewing relevant top public affairs journals, such as *Policy Studies Journal*, *Journal of Public Policy and Management*, and *Policy Sciences*, for information about public policy issues that have surfaced since the student took the courses. For an elective course, students should also consider reviewing journals of that course's specialization.

Advising

Upon admission to the MPP program, students should set up a meeting with their Student Services Coordinator. The Student Services Coordinators will assist with registration, understanding program requirements, preliminary degree planning, and selecting a faculty advisor.

Students may request the assignment of a faculty advisor with expertise that aligns with the student's interests; this will allow the faculty advisor to advise on appropriate electives and career planning. The Student Services Coordinators will assign students who have declared concentrations or enrolled in dual degree programs the director of the concentration or dual degree program as their faculty advisor.

3. MPP PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Degree Requirements

To earn an MPP degree, the student must:

- Students must successfully complete at least 36 credit hours of approved coursework (or 39 credit hours if the internship is required)
- Students must maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA in this program
- Students must earn at least a B- in all core coursework and at least a C in all elective coursework to be accepted for graduate credit toward the degree
- Six credit hours of Independent Study may be applied toward the degree
- Students who have yet to have at least one year of professional work experience in the public or nonprofit sectors must complete an internship through an additional 3-semester-hour course, bringing their total semester-hour requirements to 39
- This program must be completed within six years

Time Requirements for MPP Degree

Students must complete their degree six years after their first MPP class starts, even when that course is taken as a non-degree student. Although the MPP program requires intensive commitment, it does not require full-time study, and many SPA students take classes on a part-time basis. SPA offers most courses during evening hours and/or online. Students in the MPP program should expect to complete the degree in at least one and one-half years and at most six years. (The average is about two and one-half years.)

Required Courses

All MPP students must complete the following required courses:

PUAD 5003	Research and Analytic Methods	3 credit hours
PUAD 5004	Economics and Public Finance	3 credit hours
PUAD 5005	Policy Process and Democracy	3 credit hours
PUAD 5310	Principles of Policy Design	3 credit hours
PUAD 5320	Public Policy Analysis	3 credit hours
PUAD 5380	Public Participation, Political Equity and Government	3 credit hours
PUAD 5750	Policy Workshop Seminar	1 credit hour
PUAD 5750	Policy Workshop Seminar	1 credit hour
PUAD 5750	Policy Workshop Seminar	1 credit hour
PUAD 6910	Internship ¹	3 credit hours
PUAD 5361	Capstone Seminar OR	3 credit hours
PUAD 6950	Master's Thesis ²	3-6 credit hours
TOTAL		24-31 credit hours

1

Internship: Students with limited experience (generally defined as less than one year of experience) in public, nonprofit, or relevant private-sector service must enroll in PUAD 6910 Internship. The decision to require PUAD 6910 Internship for a particular student is made by the faculty admissions committee or the student's faculty advisor upon the student's acceptance to the MPP program. A minimum of 300 hours of supervised work and study is required to earn the 3.00 credit hours for this course. The internship requirement raises the total credit hours needed to earn the MPP degree from 36 to 39.

2

Students completing a thesis must enroll in the 3-credit PUAD 6950 course twice, for a total of 6 credits, with approval by and in consultation with the program director prior to enrolling in the course. The thesis option increases the total number of credits to complete the program from 36 to 39.

Course descriptions can be found online in the course catalog. Students must receive a B- or better in all core courses and maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 or better. Students who receive a lower grade may retake the class once; students who fail to receive a B- or better the second time will be dropped from the program.

Internship Requirement

Pre-service students (those without at least one year of paid full-time work experience in a government or nonprofit setting) must complete a three-credit internship course, bringing their total required course hours to 27 hours and the total hours required for the degree to 39. More detailed internship guidelines are set forth later in this handbook.

The MPP Program Director examines each student's application to the program and determines whether an internship is appropriate or will be waived; students receive notification of this decision at their first academic advising appointment. Students who believe vital experiences have been overlooked may ask the MPP Program Director to reconsider the decision by submitting a Request to Waive the Internship Requirement form, available from the SPA office or the MPP section of the SPA website.

Some may ask the MPP Director to reconsider the decision by submitting a Request to Waive the Internship Requirement form, available from the SPA office.

Some students who are initially required to take an internship later obtain employment that would merit a waiver while still a student in the MPP program. In such circumstances, the student can apply for a waiver of the internship requirement. The MPP Program Director considers waivers only when the student's public or nonprofit experience reaches or exceeds 2,000 hours.

Electives

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if required), students must complete four elective courses (12 credit hours). Students should select electives with the approval of their faculty advisor. SPA offers a wide variety of electives in management and policy areas. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

Students may choose to focus their electives in a concentration area. Currently, concentrations are available through the Denver campus in Environmental Policy; Education Policy; Policy Analysis Methods; and Policy Entrepreneurship and Advocacy. Concentrations typically require a combination of four required and elective courses related to the field of the concentration.

Students can find more information on the concentrations [online](#).

Students may take courses at other colleges and universities or other schools and colleges within CU Denver. Students may transfer up to nine semester credit hours into SPA from other institutions or departments within CU Denver. Pre-approval from the student's faculty advisor or the MPP Program Director is required.

Typical Course Load

Most students at SPA enroll in at least six credit hours (two classes) each fall and spring semester. To qualify for financial aid, a student must take at least three hours each fall, spring, and summer semester.

SPA recommends that students who work full-time outside of SPA limit their enrollment to six credit hours each semester.

Independent Study

Students interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take an independent study course (PUAD 6840) with a faculty member. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member with expertise. With faculty assistance, such students will develop a course of study that meets the requirements of the University and SPA and student needs. At most, six hours of independent student credit may apply toward MPP degree requirements.

Capstone Seminar

All MPP students, except those pursuing the thesis option, are required to complete PUAD 5361, Capstone Seminar. Students take the Capstone Seminar during the last semester of their degree programs. Students should complete all core courses before they take the

Capstone Seminar. Students cannot take the seminar during the summer semester.

For their capstone projects, students work with a client in a public or nonprofit agency to identify a problem and then, using the knowledge and skills they have gained in the program, carry out a project and write a paper to address the problem. The course allows students to integrate what they have learned and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world problems. Further, it allows the faculty to judge the student's ability to perform such work. The Capstone Guidelines are set forth later in this handbook.

Thesis Option

The thesis option is available for MPP students interested in undertaking a research project, pursuing careers in research, or entering the Ph.D. program. Students must select a thesis advisor from the faculty to oversee their work. Students may complete a thesis in one semester, but it often requires a two-semester, six-credit hour time frame. The student conducts a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collects original data or analyzes existing data in new ways.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include the following:

1. Successful completion of all core courses
2. Overall GPA of 3.50 and permission of faculty advisor
3. Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest
4. Agreement of two SPA faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one as Thesis Advisor)

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through their faculty academic advisor, first, to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria and to receive a copy of the "Master of Public Policy Thesis Option Guidelines," and second, to identify appropriate faculty members to serve on the student's thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of three people: a major advisor who is a full-time SPA faculty member, a second faculty member, and a third person who is an expert in the subject area of the thesis. This person may be either from the community or another school or department. Students conduct a thesis of six credits over two semesters and must submit their research proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval.

4. DEGREE OPTIONS AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

SPA offers MPP students a variety of options for obtaining the degree that best meets their needs and interests. In addition to the traditional MPP program, SPA offers an on-campus online program and dual degrees and concentrations. Students can also combine traditional face-to-face courses with online courses if that is more convenient for their schedules.

The Online MPP Option

Students may complete the MPP degree entirely through online classes. This option may attract students outside the Denver metro area or those requiring more course flexibility. SPA faculty and lecturers offer online courses, which are similar in rigor and content to courses offered in the traditional classroom format.

Dual Degrees

TBD

MPP Program Concentrations

Although many students earn a general MP degree, others pursue a concentration. Students choosing a concentration use their elective hours to take courses in their concentration. Concentrations are available in the following areas:

- Environmental Policy
- Policy Analysis Methods
- Education Policy
- Policy Entrepreneurship and Advocacy

Concentrations typically require a combination of four or five required and elective courses related to the field of the concentration. For more information on the concentrations, click [here](#).

If you select a concentration, your Student Services Coordinator will assign the concentration director as your faculty advisor. The concentration director will work with you to select your electives and approve your degree plan in the first year of study.

Please note that not all concentrations are available in all program options.

5. INTERNSHIP AND CAPSTONE GUIDELINES

Internship Overview

Students who do not have at least one year of professional experience in public administration, policy, or nonprofit management, or the equivalent, must enroll in Field Study in Public Administration (PUAD 6910). Concentration Directors may recommend internships for students in concentrations who do not have experience in that concentration area. Other students may complete an internship to obtain additional experience that differs from or is more specialized than their experience. These internships may be completed locally or in another city or state.

In the internship, students work part-time or full-time as interns for government agencies, legislatures, government-related organizations, and nonprofit groups. At a minimum, students must complete 300 work hours for the internship. This includes a minimum of 240 hours on the job and 60 hours of internship coursework, including a paper reflecting the internship experience. The internships may be paid or unpaid. Students gain useful experience in public management, policy research, and the policy process through their work.

The objectives of the internship are as follows:

1. To expose MPP students to challenging career opportunities in public service
2. To enable public and nonprofit organizations to attract good students to government, thereby improving the overall quality of the public service
3. To provide pre-service students with “real world” work experiences to allow them to link classroom training with the actual practice of public policy
4. To offer students an experience that will allow them to make better-informed career decisions

Internship Requirements

In their internships, students must meet the requirements of both SPA and their employing agency. The work period can be for an academic semester or during the summer, and the student’s employing agency arranges work schedules. In addition, both the employer and the student will complete an evaluation of the internship experience upon completion of the hours. The internship instructor is the MPP Program Director for domestic students and the Coordinator of International Student Programs for international students.

In addition to performing work for the employer, students also complete the requirements of the internship course, PUAD 6910. The internship instructor directs the course, guides students on issues related to the internship, and provides a final grade.

Internship Application and Administration Procedures

Students should contact their Student Services Coordinator to obtain more detailed information on internships, including completing the requirements of the university’s Experiential Learning Center (which administers all internships).

The next step is for the student to find an internship. Internship opportunities are listed on the university’s Handshake portal, and SPA students can search for internships that request or are relevant to SPA students. SPA’s Alumni and Career Services Specialist is available to help, or students may also initiate contact with agencies on their own to seek internships.

Students may also contact their advisors and other faculty who may have expertise and contacts in their specific area of interest for suggestions concerning internships. Students are responsible for identifying potential internships, applying for open positions, and completing the organization's interview process.

When the student has initially established an internship relationship with an agency or organization, the Experiential Learning Center will circulate forms describing the anticipated subject of the internship and expected hours and conditions of work. This form must be approved by the intern's supervisor at the agency, the internship instructor, and the Experiential Learning Center prior to the start of the internship.

During their internships, students should meet both the requirements of the internship and the requirements of the internship course. The Experiential Learning Center may conduct a site visit if time permits.

After completing the internship program, the Experiential Learning Center will solicit evaluations from the intern and the supervisor. Final grades for the course will be based on the requirements of the course and the evaluation.

Capstone Purpose

SPA faculty have designed the capstone seminar (PUAD 5361) to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize what they have learned during the entire MPP course of study. It also provides a process and structure for SPA faculty to determine whether MPP graduates have attained the following competencies expected from the MPP program:

- The ability to lead and manage in the public interest
- The ability to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process
- The ability to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment
- The ability to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective
- The ability to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large

The capstone requires students to demonstrate knowledge of the concepts and principles conveyed in the MPP curriculum and to apply that knowledge to study a problem confronted by a public or nonprofit sector agency. The following written and oral products of this seminar provide tangible evidence of a degree candidate's qualifications and expertise.

A capstone project must meet the following criteria:

- Be undertaken for a client who is affiliated with a public or non-profit agency or organization
- Be of significance and practical use to the client organization
- Be based on scholarly literature in public policy.

Capstone Prerequisites

Students should take the capstone course in their last semester of classes before completing the MPP. However, SPA faculty will orient students to the capstone course and students will identify their client and topic before the beginning of the semester. Students should have completed all core courses before taking the capstone course. Under

exceptional circumstances, a student may request that the instructor allow the student to take one final core course concurrently with the capstone. Since the capstone project generally includes a research component, the course may be something other than Research and Analytic Methods (PUAD 5003). If students take a core course concurrently with the Capstone Seminar (PUAD 5361), the capstone project must not concern an issue addressed in the concurrent core course. Although a student may take another elective simultaneously, as PUAD 5361, SPA faculty strongly discourage students from taking more than one additional course because of the work required in the capstone.

Selecting a Capstone Project

Many clients submit potential capstone projects to the School of Public Affairs. You can find these in the SPA Student Resources Canvas course or by contacting the External Programs and Alumni Relations Senior Professional. Students may also approach an agency or contact person, meet with them and describe the capstone course, and determine if the agency and/or contact person has a project or problem they would like the student to address.

Students may **NOT** conduct client-based projects as part of their ongoing work responsibilities, and the client for the capstone cannot have supervisory authority over the student if the client organization employs the student. However, students may conduct a project for an organization that employs them if that project is outside of their official responsibilities.

Students completing a concentration must pursue a project related to their concentration area.

Capstone Course Committee

A primary course instructor (who serves as *the first reader*) guides the capstone course. That instructor's role is to guide the student in selecting a project and specifying its scope, to assist the student as needed in conducting the project, and to provide extensive feedback to the student on various drafts of the project. In order to provide students with the individual attention needed, SPA faculty restrict capstone courses to no more than 20 students per class. SPA faculty may move students to different sections to accommodate this class size requirement.

A committee comprised of the following three persons guides student capstone work: the first reader (the course instructor), a second reader (a SPA faculty member), and a third reader (client or substantive expert). All three readers must ultimately approve the project prospectus. All will help the student with the project and will evaluate the final report and presentation, although the first reader serves as the student's primary guide.

The Second Reader

The second reader should be a rostered SPA faculty member or SPA Institute staff member who is not listed as an instructor of record for the Capstone Seminar (PUAD 5361) for that term. If a student has declared a concentration, the first or second reader must be a faculty member from that concentration area.

If a full-time faculty member with subject-matter expertise is not available, students may select a SPA lecturer with subject-matter expertise in the project area with the approval of

the primary instructor and the MPP Program Director.

Students should select second readers for their expertise in the content area of the project. Students should consult with them early to get recommendations for references to form the foundation of the client-based project and/or suggestions concerning target journals and references for research projects.

The Third Reader

The third reader is the client, i.e., the representative of the organization for which the student is conducting the project.

Role of Readers

While the first reader will have the primary responsibility for supervising the student's project, the second and third readers have responsibility for the following (1) approving the student's project prospectus, (2) commenting on project drafts, and approving the final project report, (3) attending and participating in the oral presentation of the project, and (4) evaluating the student's work. Additionally, the third reader links the student with the client organization and reports on the utility and professionalism of the student's work for and with the organization.

The first reader determines the student's grade but will seek input from other readers to determine the final grade.

Capstone Course Format

No incompletes

The student must be able to complete the selected project by the end of the semester. An incomplete grade will be issued only under very exceptional circumstances.

Orientation and Preparing for the Beginning of the Capstone

All students are required to participate in the orientation session for the Capstone Seminar (PUAD 5361) the semester before they plan to enroll. These sessions normally occur about one month before the end of the previous semester. Student services staff contact all students who are eligible for taking the capstone to attend or participate in this orientation. A capstone orientation video is available on the SPA Student Resources Canvas course site for students who are unable to attend the orientation in person.

The orientation provides students with information about how to begin their projects. Before the beginning of the semester, students must identify a client and define their topic for the client. SPA faculty encourage students to contact the person likely to be their professor for the capstone seminar to let them know of their topic and receive assistance in focusing on the topic. Faculty also encourage students to contact potential second and/or third readers to get advice on a focus and references to explore. The prospectus for the project is generally due the second week of the semester, so students must undertake some work before the semester begins to be able to complete the prospectus and begin the project.

Prospectus: Week Two

Students will submit a prospectus that describes the goals of their project and the specific questions they hope to answer, identifies the client for whom the project will be conducted, and identifies some preliminary references from the literature relevant to the topic. Finally, the prospectus names the faculty member(s) and client who have agreed to serve as second

and third readers. Individual instructors in the capstone may have additional or slight variations on their requirements for the prospectus.

Instructors may advise students who still need to submit an acceptable proposal to drop the course. Students must take this action before the official add-drop date to drop the course without penalty. Primary instructors who tell students to drop the course and to re-enroll the next semester will provide specific feedback and instructions to allow students to begin the capstone more productively the following semester.

Drafts

The capstone product is unlike a traditional term paper in many ways. One way in which it differs is that students submit several drafts and revise those drafts, often extensively, based on feedback from their primary instructor and other readers. The primary instructor will provide students with their expectations and due dates for drafts in their section. Typically, however, students submit at least two drafts.

Students should check with their second and third readers at each draft to learn whether they prefer to receive the draft after the primary instructor has made suggestions and the student has revised the draft, or to receive it at the same time as the primary instructor. Some faculty members prefer to receive the paper after the primary instructor has provided feedback concerning the organization and substance of the paper. However, this delay can require them to read the paper quickly and get feedback to the student. On final drafts, the timeline can become particularly tight, so the student should work closely with the primary faculty member and communicate with second and third readers to establish a time frame for this stage.

Papers should be at most 25 double-spaced pages, excluding references, attachments, and figures. Instructors may provide more specific guidelines.

Final Report

Having received feedback from all readers, students should revise their final draft and distribute it to all readers at least one week before the oral presentation. In some cases, instructors may choose to have reports completed after the oral presentation based on feedback from the oral conference. Students will learn the specific details of responsibilities and due dates from their individual instructor's syllabus.

Oral Presentation

SPA faculty expect students to make a professional oral presentation, which may include supportive visual materials such as PowerPoint or handouts. Oral presentation sessions typically last around one hour, though the actual presentation is limited to 15 minutes. Since readers have read the paper, the student may choose to focus on particular issues of interest or to summarize key points. The remainder of the hour is used for questions and discussion. SPA faculty encourage students to practice the presentation to ensure they are organized and can convey all the information they desire within the 15-minute time limit. Oral presentations are a part of the student's final grade.

Students should work with their instructor, second reader, and third reader (client) to find a time and date when all can participate in the final presentation. Second and third readers must be in attendance but may participate electronically if circumstances prohibit their

physical presence. Once students identify a date and time, they should submit a Presentation Scheduling Form online, as provided by their Capstone Instructor. Students who live outside the Denver metro area will arrange an oral presentation via Zoom. Online students may, and occasionally do, choose to come to Denver for the final presentation, but that is optional.

Other Key Capstone Issues

Grounding the Project in the Scholarly Public Policy Literature

All capstone projects include a review of the scholarly literature relevant to the project. Students should ground their actions undertaken in the project in the scholarly literature. SPA faculty expect that the student will have reviewed prominent refereed journals in the field and relevant to the chosen project, such as *Policy Studies Journal*, *Policy Sciences*, *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *Public Performance & Management Review*, *Public Integrity*, *Administration & Society*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Public Budgeting and Finance*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Academy of Management Review*, and *International Journal of Public Policy*.

Collecting and Analyzing Information

SPA faculty expect the student to support project conclusions with evidence from qualitative or quantitative data. Students may use secondary data or generate primary data.

Currently, the CU Denver Human Subjects Research Committee Institutional Review Board (HSRC/IRB) has concluded that projects intended for use within an organization do not require their review. However, if a student is collecting original data from a group typically considered a protected class by IRBs (such as children or prisoners), the faculty member will review the project to ensure that students are considering human subject protections.

Writing and Format

The capstone report demonstrates a student's ability to communicate information, including scholarly information, professionally. As noted above, students will complete several drafts and should anticipate substantive work on revisions at each stage. Students are required to use a standard writing format such as APA or Chicago styles.

Supplemental Documentation

All projects, regardless of the type, must draw upon at least three courses the student has completed in the MPP program. In addition to the project report, students will submit a brief document (1-2 pages) that describes how they used the knowledge and skills they gained from the designated MPP courses to complete the project. At least one of these three courses must be a core course, and, if the student is completing a concentration, at least one must be a concentration course.

Project Assessment

The SPA faculty have developed a rubric to describe expectations for capstone projects. Faculty based this rubric on the competencies established for the MPP program. Readers will use a rubric to report on their judgment of the student's performance in each relevant area. The primary instructor will then determine the grade based on readers' feedback. See the SPA Student Resources Canvas course site page for additional resources.

6. STUDENT SUPPORT

Advising

Advising at SPA is a joint responsibility of the faculty and the Student Services Coordinators. Each admitted student will meet with their Student Services Coordinator to review program requirements and complete a Degree Plan. In general, the Student Services Coordinators can best address questions about program logistics.

The Senior Coordinator of International Student Programs advises international students and assists students with other issues specific to international students such as visa requirements.

Student Services Coordinators assign the concentration director as the faculty advisor for students who declare concentrations. Students who do not declare concentrations may request any faculty member as their advisor by speaking to their Student Services Coordinator. Faculty advisors are experts in their fields and can assist students with advice on appropriate electives, professional networking within the field, and ideas for career plans.

Academic Support

SPA students who believe they need academic support should first contact their instructors. Some classes have teaching assistants who are available to tutor students. SPA also provides general tutoring, online writing tutorials, and periodic workshops for students needing general assistance with writing and statistics. Visit the SPA Student Resources Canvas course site or contact the Academic Support Coordinator for additional information on accessing these resources. In addition, additional support is available through the University's Writing Center.

Career Resources

SPA is committed to helping students find meaningful work upon graduation. The Alumni and Career Services Specialist is available to provide both general information about careers and individualized career counseling and career search assistance. All career opportunities shared with the School are posted on Handshake, and weekly newsletters to SPA students provide helpful information and highlight available positions. SPA offers many events each year designed to provide networking opportunities with professionals in various fields, and students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities.

7. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is available to support those students who would not be able to attend SPA without aid. The primary source of information about student financial assistance is the University's Financial Aid Office. Students interested in learning about available scholarships should contact the CU Denver Office of Financial Aid and Scholarship Office.

SPA offers several types of financial assistance to students. This includes graduate assistantships that are paid out at an hourly rate for students to work with faculty and staff as well as a limited number of scholarships. To apply for a graduate assistantship or a scholarship, visit the SPA website. To apply for a graduate scholarship, visit the Financial Aid and Scholarships page of the SPA website. Applications open on October 1 and close

March 31. To apply for a graduate assistantship, visit Handshake. More information on financial assistance, scholarships, and assistantships can be found [online](#).

SPA has entered into agreements for reduced tuition for a limited number of entering students who have served in the Peace Corps, City Year, and AmeriCorps. For information about these programs, visit the SPA website.

8. MPP GRADUATION PROCEDURES

Students who have completed all the requirements for the MPP degree can apply for graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. (Students who graduate in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. SPA holds no ceremonies in the summer.) There are, however, deadlines for the submission of graduation materials. Should students not be able to meet the deadlines, or if they are unable to complete all the degree requirements by the end of the term in which they seek to graduate, they can reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

To graduate, students must apply for graduation in the UCDAccess portal by the add/drop deadline of the semester in which they plan to graduate.

Students who have applied for graduation but will only be able to complete the program requirements after graduation should notify the SPA office as soon as possible.

9. SPA ACADEMIC POLICIES

Transfer Credits

Students who have taken graduate coursework related to public policy at other institutions may be able to transfer some portion of that work into the SPA MPP program if the student has not already applied the coursework toward a degree. Students may transfer a maximum of nine graduate-level semester hours from an accredited university. For a course to substitute for a core or required class, students must have completed the course at a NASPAA-accredited school of public affairs. Students should have received at least a B in courses they request to transfer.

Students should request a transfer of credits immediately after admission. To request a transfer of credit, students need to complete the Transfer of Credit form available from the SPA Student Services Coordinators and attach official transcripts to the form (if SPA does not have a copy of the official transcripts). The student's faculty advisor and the MPP Program Director then review the request. Upon review, the MPP Program Director will notify the student of the acceptance or rejection of their request.

Grading Policies

Grades offered in SPA courses (except internship and thesis) are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

A = Work beyond the level of a typical graduate student; exemplary work. (An A equals 4 grade points, an A- equals 3.7 points; there is no A+ grade.)

B = Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0., and a B- equals 2.7 points.)

C = Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).

D = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade point).

F = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

Please note that students must receive at least a B- in a core course to receive credit for the course.

The calculation of a student's overall GPA shall be based on all coursework applied to the degree, including any courses taken as a "non-degree" student. (NOTE: CU Denver does not include courses taken in non-degree status in the overall calculation of GPA on the official transcripts, but staff do include them in the overall calculation of GPA for graduation purposes.)

Probation and Suspension

A student who fails to maintain an overall "B" (3.0) grade-point average will be placed on probation.

Students may only extend probationary status up to two semesters (including summer sessions) during which the student is enrolled. Failure on the part of the student to remove themselves from probation (i.e., by achieving an overall GPA of at least 3.0) during this time interval will result in automatic suspension from SPA.

A suspended student is eligible to apply for readmission after one year. Approval or rejection of this application rests jointly with the student's faculty advisor, the MPP Program Director, and the Dean.

Incompletes, Withdrawals, and Retaking Courses

Retaking Courses. A student may retake up to two courses during the degree program, regardless of whether the need for retake results from a low grade, an incomplete, or a course withdrawal. The MPP Program Director exercises discretion for exceptional, documented circumstances (i.e., military deployment, major medical emergency).

A student who receives a letter grade for a course that is too low to qualify for credit may retake the course once. SPA staff will use both grades to calculate the student's overall GPA. To retake a course, the student must re-enroll and pay tuition and fees for the course again.

Incompletes. SPA faculty may grant an Incomplete when the student has successfully completed 75 percent or more of the course and is prevented from completing the class by

circumstances beyond their control. The course instructor has discretion regarding whether to grant an Incomplete, and students should be aware that not all faculty will grant Incompletes. In addition, students in online courses should be aware that they will not have access to the course Canvas site after the ending date of the course, and so Incompletes are not available for work that must be completed using that site.

If the instructor agrees to grant an Incomplete, the student must make arrangements to complete the remaining coursework with the original instructor within one year by completing an "Incomplete Contract." The student may not "sit in" on the class in subsequent semesters.

Once the student completes the coursework, the instructor will change the grade to a letter grade. The Incomplete notation will appear along with the final grade on the student's transcript. If the student does not complete the coursework within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F unless the student and the instructor have agreed in writing to an extension.

A student may be granted up to two Incompletes during the degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program. No Incompletes may be granted in capstone courses.

Drops and Withdrawals. The Office of the Registrar sets deadlines for dropping a course and posts these deadlines on the Academic Calendar each semester. Students are responsible for knowing these deadlines. Students can drop a course during the first week of the semester without being assessed full tuition and without having the course appear on their transcript. Students who drop a course after the first week but before census date may drop the course in the UCDAccess portal, but a drop charge will apply. Students in intensive format classes must drop before the third class meeting to be eligible for a tuition adjustment.

After census date (typically two weeks after the start of classes), the student may withdraw from the course by submitting a Schedule Adjustment Form with the signature of the instructor. A "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

If the student makes a request to withdraw after the 10th week of classes, the student must file a late drop petition, in addition to a completed Schedule Adjustment Form, in order to obtain special approval from the MPP Program Director and the Dean's office. SPA faculty will not allow students to drop after the 10th week of classes simply because they are failing the course; it is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to determine if they should drop the course due to failing grades prior to the 10th week of classes. If SPA faculty permit the student to withdraw, a "W" will appear on the student's transcript.

No tuition reimbursements are available for withdrawals made after census date, and students may be required to repay financial aid received. Students who believe their circumstances and justify an exception to financial obligations may appeal to the university's tuition appeals committee.

Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of "F" for the course.

A student may withdraw from up to two courses during the degree program absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program.

Retroactive Grade Changes. Students may not request grade changes for courses in which they have received a final letter grade (other than an incomplete) except because of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not agree with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

SPA Procedures for Resolving Academic Grievances¹

This section describes the procedures by which a student may seek to resolve a dispute about an academic issue, such as a grade in a SPA course or a decision about academic standing in a SPA program.

Please note that faculty members have wide discretion in assigning grades, and this discretion will not be disturbed absent evidence that the faculty member has made a clear mistake, has failed to adhere to stated standards, or has otherwise engaged in arbitrary behavior. It is the student's responsibility to provide evidence that the faculty member acted outside of their traditional discretion.

Disputes about grades in non-SPA courses or relating to non-SPA programs should be handled according to the grievance resolution process of the unit involved.

Informal Resolution of Academic Grievances

Absent unusual circumstances, students must first discuss the situation with the faculty member involved to see whether an informal resolution is possible.

Filing a Grievance

If the student and the faculty member are unable to reach resolution, the student may file a grievance with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. All grievances should be filed as quickly as possible, preferably within the same or following semester but in no case to exceed six months after the decision that is the subject of the grievance.

¹ Last revised September 2017.

The grievance may be filed via email or in paper format and should contain all the following information:

- The student's name, degree program, and student ID number
- The name of the faculty member involved, if any
- The course name and semester, if the dispute involves a course
- A brief statement of the nature of the grievance (not to exceed two pages)
- Any evidence that the student wishes to be considered in support of the grievance, such as a course syllabus, assignments, and communications with the faculty member
- The remedy requested by the student

The Associate Dean will acknowledge receipt of the grievance and forward a copy to the faculty member involved and to the faculty program director. The faculty program director may seek an informal resolution by mediating between the student and the faculty member. If the faculty program director does not seek or obtain an informal resolution, the Associate Dean will begin investigating the grievance. Investigation of the grievance will include speaking to the student and to the faculty member involved, and the Associate Dean may request additional information from the student or the faculty member. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs may also seek input or support on the investigation from the Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs as needed.

In the event that the Associate Dean for Student Affairs is involved in the circumstances leading to the grievance, the grievance will be investigated by the Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs.

The Associate Dean will conclude the investigation and prepare a written report. The Associate Dean will strive to complete this report within 30 days of the filing of the grievance; however, please note that additional time may be required due to breaks between semesters or over the summer or efforts by the faculty program director to resolve the dispute informally.

Decision by the Dean

The Associate Dean's report shall be submitted to the Dean and shall include a recommendation about the disposition of the grievance. Within ten business days, the Dean will decide whether to follow the recommendation and will forward a copy of the report together with the Dean's decision on the disposition of the grievance to the student, the faculty member, and the faculty program director.

Appealing the Dean's Decision

If the student is not satisfied with the Dean's decision, he or she may make a written request to the Dean that a faculty panel be appointed to review the grievance and consider the appeal. This request should be submitted within ten business days after receipt of the Dean's decision and may be submitted via email. The Dean shall appoint a panel consisting of three faculty members who were not involved in the original circumstances of the grievance. The faculty panel will consider the evidence and make a written report with recommendations to the Dean within 30 days unless additional time is required due to breaks between semesters or over the summer. The Dean will decide whether to uphold or deny the appeal and notify the student and faculty member of that decision in writing within ten business days.

The decision of the Dean is final with respect to students in the BACJ, BAPS, MPA, and MPP programs. Students in the MCJ and PhD programs may be permitted to appeal the Dean's decision to the Graduate School according to its procedures.

Resolution of Other Types of Disputes

This policy only relates to academic grievances at SPA. Other types of disputes are handled in different offices and/or with different procedures, as follows:

- Disputes relating to academic integrity are handled according to SPA's Academic Integrity Policy. Contact your advisor or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for more information
- Disputes related to protected category discrimination (such as race, sex, or disability discrimination) are handled by the Office of Equity
- The Office of Student Conduct handles disputes related to the conduct of other students
- The Ombuds' Office is available to discuss or mediate other types of interpersonal disputes if needed.

Academic Integrity Policy²

This policy sets forth the definitions and procedures to be used in the School of Public Affairs for identifying and responding to instances of alleged academic misconduct by students. This policy should be read in connection with Campus Administrative Policy 7050, Academic Integrity.

- 1) **Definition of academic misconduct.** According to Campus Administrative Policy 7050, academic misconduct is defined as (1) a student's use of unauthorized assistance in an attempt to deceive an instructor or other person who is assigned to evaluate the student's work in meeting course and degree requirements, or (2) actions that interfere with the ability of the instructor to fairly judge the work of the student or other students. Academic misconduct includes any of the following behaviors:
 - a) Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use of another person's distinctive ideas or words without acknowledgment. The incorporation of another person's work into one's own requires appropriate identification, regardless of the means of appropriation. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following, when the source is not disclosed:

² Adopted by SPA Faculty Council on November 19, 2020.

- i) Word-for-word copying of another person's ideas or words;
 - ii) The mosaic (the interspersing of one's own words here and there while, in essence, copying another's work);
 - iii) The paraphrase (the rewriting of another's work, yet still using their fundamental idea or theory);
 - iv) Fabrication of references (inventing or counterfeiting sources);
 - v) Submission of another's work as one's own; or
 - vi) Neglecting quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged.
- b) Cheating. Cheating involves the possession, communication, or use of information, materials, notes, study aids, or other devices not authorized by the instructor in an academic exercise or communication with another person during such exercise to obtain or provide unauthorized information or materials. "Authorization" is legitimate only if given by the faculty member responsible for evaluating the student's work. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:
- i) Copying from another's work or receiving unauthorized assistance from another person during an academic exercise or in the submission of academic assignments
 - ii) Using an electronic device when not permitted
 - iii) Collaborating with another student during an academic exercise without the prior consent of the instructor
- c) Fabrication or falsification:
- i) Fabrication: inventing or counterfeiting information, such as creating results not obtained in a study or laboratory experiment.
 - ii) Falsification: deliberately altering or changing results to suit one's needs in an experiment, creative work, or other academic or creative exercise.
- d) Multiple submissions: The submission of academic work for which academic credit has already been earned, when such submission is made without instructor authorization.
- e) Misuse of academic materials: The misuse of academic material includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- i) Stealing or destroying library or reference materials or computer programs;
 - ii) Stealing or destroying another student's notes or materials, or having such materials in one's possession without the owner's permission;
 - iii) Receiving assistance in locating or using sources of information in an assignment when such assistance has not been authorized by the instructor;
 - iv) Possessing or using prior examinations or answer keys, unless authorized by the instructor;
 - v) Altering, forging, copying and pasting, or falsifying academic materials;
 - vi) Selling or purchasing prior examinations, digital media, quantitative formulae, papers, or assignments.
- f) Complicity in academic misconduct: Complicity involves knowingly allowing or contributing to another's academic misconduct.

2) Procedures

- a) Discovery of alleged misconduct. When a faculty member suspects that a student may have engaged in academic misconduct, the faculty member shall notify the student in writing and give the student an opportunity to respond. If the faculty member is satisfied that no academic misconduct has occurred, whether intentional or unintentional, the matter is ended.
- b) Reporting alleged misconduct to the university. If the faculty member concludes that academic misconduct may well have occurred, whether intentional or unintentional, the faculty member shall submit the allegation via an online form to the university Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and notify the Associate Dean for Student Affairs via email. When submitting the online form, the faculty member should request that the Office of Student Conduct email a copy of the report to the faculty member and forward that copy to the Associate Dean (and to the Associate Dean of the Graduate School if the Graduate School oversees the student's program).
- c) Determination of responsibility and assignment of sanctions. The faculty member and the student may meet informally to discuss the misconduct and an appropriate sanction prior to the submission of the allegations to the Office of Student Conduct. If that meeting results in an agreement as to the sanction, the faculty member's report shall include the date of the informal meeting and a description of the sanctions. If the faculty member and the student have not met before the submission of the allegations, the Office of Student Conduct will assist in setting up a meeting. The faculty member will determine responsibility and appropriate sanctions after that meeting and will notify the student in writing (and copy the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and the Associate Dean of the Graduate School if appropriate).
- d) Appropriate sanctions. The faculty member is entitled to determine and impose appropriate academic sanctions for misconduct occurring in his or her course. For misconduct that appears to have been unintentional or careless, faculty are encouraged to provide an opportunity to help the student learn and grow so as not to repeat the misconduct in the future. This educational sanction may be in addition to or as a substitute for academic sanctions such as a lowered or failing grade. Faculty members may consider whether a student has previously been found to have engaged in academic misconduct in imposing sanctions. Faculty members who would like support in determining appropriate sanctions are encouraged to contact the SPA Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
- e) Opportunity for appeal. The student should be notified in writing of his or her right to appeal the faculty member's determination to the campus Academic Integrity Committee, pursuant to Campus Administrative Policy 7050.
- f) Program or school-level sanctions. In cases of particularly egregious misconduct, or repeated misconduct, the faculty member, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and/or the Academic Integrity Committee may recommend to the Dean that the student be suspended or expelled from the program or the School.