Program Description

Degree Awarded: PHD Public Administration and Policy

The PhD in public administration and policy is a theoretically grounded research degree program designed to prepare students for an academic career. The degree is also appropriate for individuals who want to conduct high-level research and policy development in public and nonprofit agencies, foundations and research institutes. It is designed for students who seek full-time study.

This program is designed to develop well-rounded, independent scholars who are grounded in the classic and current literatures of public administration and public policy, are skilled in research methods, and are ready to make a positive and important contribution to the field through teaching and research. As a result, graduates are poised for success as productive and active scholars, researchers and teachers.

At a Glance

- College/School: College of Public Service and Community Solutions
- Location: Downtown Phoenix campus

Degree Requirements

90 credit hours, a written comprehensive exam, an oral comprehensive exam, a prospectus and a dissertation

The doctoral program is designed to promote the mastery of the core knowledge of public administration and public policy and to develop more specialized expertise in chosen areas of study and research. Accordingly, in the first year, doctoral students take four core courses as a cohort. These courses focus on the foundations of the field, the philosophy of science, and theories and issues in governance, public policy, systems, organizations and human behavior. In the second year, students hone their quantitative and qualitative research skills, enroll in additional electives, and develop a plan of study for their areas of specialization. In the third year, students take an advanced seminar in research and teaching, complete their work in their selected areas of specialization, and move forward to a proposal for completing their dissertation.
The program consists of a minimum of 60 credit hours of graduate work beyond the master's degree. Of the 60 credit hours, at least 24 must be research and dissertation credit (of which no more than 12 hours may be dissertation credit). A minimum of 30 credit hours of approved coursework, exclusive of dissertation and research, must be taken at ASU after admission to the program. In addition to the core courses above, doctoral students are required to complete coursework in two areas of specialization. Specializations are developed in consultation with the student's plan of study committee and can focus on a variety of topics related to public administration and public policy. Doctoral students may work with faculty from other departments, if appropriate, to complete their specializations. As an alternative, students may opt for the urbanism concentration.

Admission Requirements

Applicants must fulfill the requirements of both the Graduate College and the College of Public Service and Community Solutions.

Applicants are eligible to apply to the program if they have earned a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution.

ASU's School of Public Affairs expects doctoral student applicants to have demonstrated competency in the following subject areas at the time of application: organizational theory, public policy analysis, economics and quantitative analysis.

Applicants who have obtained a master's degree accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration in public affairs, public administration or public policy will not be required to complete prerequisites for admission to ASU's School of Public Affairs. In some cases, applicants from allied fields (e.g., political science, economics, sociology, business) will not be required to complete prerequisites, depending upon the extent to which previous training aligns with the competencies described above.

As is the case with all applicants, the doctoral program director or advisors may require or recommend completion of courses when there is a perceived deficit, especially if the deficit relates to graduate-level quantitative analysis and economics (PAF 502 and PAF 504, respectively, or equivalent courses). However, these requirements or recommendations, if any, are not a barrier to admission.

In cases where the doctoral student applicant has graduated from a public affairs, public administration or public policy program from another nation, or from a program not accredited by NASPAA, the applicant may be admitted and required to meet prerequisites after a review by the doctoral committee and doctoral program director.

Students applying with master's degrees from programs not closely related to public affairs (e.g., engineering, modern languages, chemistry) will be required to meet prerequisites equivalent to the courses required for
either ASU's Master of Public Administration or Master of Public Policy:
https://spa.asu.edu/content/graduate-programs.

Prior to enrolling in any of the school's core classes, all students are expected to be familiar with the foundational competency readings related to organizational theory, public policy analysis, economics, and quantitative analysis.

Applicants must have a minimum of a 3.00 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in the last 60 hours of a student's first bachelor's degree program and have a minimum of a 3.00 cumulative GPA (scale is 4.00 = "A") in an applicable master's degree program.

All applicants must submit:

1. Graduate admission application and application fee
2. Official transcripts of all undergraduate and graduate coursework
3. Completed checklist
4. Written statement
5. Current resume or curriculum vitae
6. Three letters of recommendation
7. Samples of research reports or papers
8. GRE scores (verbal, quantitative, analytical)
9. Proof of English proficiency

Additional Application Information

An applicant whose native language is not English (regardless of current residency) must submit Test of English as a Foreign Language scores to be considered for admission; institution code: 4007. This is true even for those who have a master's degree from a U.S. University. To be considered for admission to the doctorate in public administration and policy program, the minimum score on a traditional TOEFL test is 600, the minimum score for a TOEFL iBT is 100. Applicants with scores below the minimum will not be considered. More on the English proficiency requirement is available at https://students.asu.edu/graduate/proficiency.

The written statement of educational and career goals must include a discussion of research interests.

The letters of recommendation should be primarily from faculty members. All letters should address the candidate's capacity to successfully complete the doctoral program. They should assess the student's capacity for critical and analytic thought, their ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, and their commitment to completion of the program.

Only GRE test scores from within the past five years will be accepted, and analytical scores will be considered in admissions decisions.

Students should see the program website for application deadlines and admission terms.
Admission is competitive; a limited number of well-qualified applicants will be admitted each year.

Contact Information

School of Public Affairs | UCENT 400
spa@asu.edu | 602-496-0450