

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION GRADUATE HANDBOOK

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1. PROGRAM STRUCTURE

a. Standard program

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program is a course-based program. To complete the program, students are required to successfully complete 18 half credit courses. There are eight required core courses in the first year, two required core courses in the second year, and eight elective courses in the second year and/or summer. In addition, students are required to participate in the professional development (PD) program that spans over two years. Normally, two years are required to complete the MPA program in the following sequence:

YEAR 1	
<i>Term 1</i>	<i>Term 2</i>
PUAD 5130 Managerial Economics	PUAD 5131 Public Economics
PUAD 5140 Quantitative Methods	PUAD 5180 Research Methods
PUAD 5100 Organizational Design	PUAD 5170 Human Resources
PUAD 5120 Public Policy	PUAD5250 Strategic Financial Management
PUAD 5200 x Professional Development	PUAD 5200 y Professional Development
PUAD 6855 Summer Internship (Elective 1)	
YEAR 2	
<i>Term 1</i>	<i>Term 2</i>
MGMT 5000 Management w/o Borders	PUAD 6000 Ethics
PUAD 6xxx Elective 2	PUAD 6xxx Elective 6
PUAD 6xxx Elective 3	PUAD6xxx Elective 7
PUAD 6xxx Elective 4	PUAD 6xxx Elective 8
PUAD6xxx Elective 5	
PUAD 6200 x Professional Development	PUAD 6200 y Professional Development

Please note that a pre-requisite structure is built into the program, as outlined in the Graduate Calendar. Successful completion of all PUAD 5xxx core requirements is a prerequisite for registration in any PUAD6xxx or other elective courses, including the internship course. Only in rare situations can the prerequisite structure be modified with the approval of the Graduate Coordinator.

b. Professional Development Program

The professional development program is a required two year certificate program that is offered alongside the MPA program. Participation in the PD program is a requirement for all full time MPA students. In addition, the successful completion of the first year of the program is a prerequisite for eligibility for the internship course (PUAD6855). Full time students cannot be exempt from the PD program. There is some flexibility around this requirement for part time students depending on their professional experiences. This will be assessed on a case by case basis by the Graduate Coordinator and the PD Officer.

The successful completion of the PD program does not result in an academic credit, but it does result in the award of a certificate to the student. This achievement is noted on the student's transcript. The PD program prepares students for the professional requirements of a successful career in the public sector.

c. Course exemptions

Students come into the MPA program from a large variety of backgrounds. Some students have a solid background in subject areas that are a program requirement in the first year. For example, some students may have taken undergraduate courses in economics, statistics, or human resources. Students may apply for course exemptions on the basis of undergraduate courses they have taken. Student must have a minimum of an A- in the course, on the basis of which they wish to receive an exemption, and the course must have been taken no more than three years prior to the application. Applications for course exemption are made to the Graduate Coordinator. The application must be made within the first two weeks of the beginning of a new term. A course exemption does not reduce the number of courses to be taken during the MPA program; it changes the composition of courses.

Exemption – level 1

A level 1 exemption means that a student is not required to take one of the core courses in the first year, but will be required to take a different course in the same subject area. For example, a student with a solid undergraduate preparation in economics might qualify for an exemption from PUAD5130. With the level 1 exemption, the student will be required to take another graduate course in economics in its place. The Graduate Coordinator will recommend the specific substitute course.

Exemption – level 2

A level 2 exemption means that a student is not required to take one of the core courses in the first year, but will be required to take a different PUAD elective course in any subject area. Restrictions as to the choice of PUAD elective courses to be taken in this context will be communicated to the student by the Graduate Coordinator.

d. Advanced standing

An advanced standing in a course reduces the number of courses that a student is required to take in order to complete the program. Advanced standing in a course is granted on the basis of having taken a different graduate level course with the same content that has not yet been credited toward another degree. Advanced standing is not granted on the basis of undergraduate courses, nor on the basis of courses that have already been credited toward another degree. Exemptions and advanced standing are granted for core required courses, but not elective courses. In exceptional circumstances, advanced standing in elective courses might be considered. Applications are made to the Graduate Coordinator.

e. Part-time studies and reduced course loads

Students may at times deviate from this two year program structure. This occurs when students have medical or other compassionate reasons for which they need to progress through the program differently, or when students fail a course and their program structure needs to be accordingly modified (see later section). For these reasons, students may take a reduced load, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

Any program modifications must be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Coordinator. Students cannot elect to modify their program without consultation. Students who, as an example, withdraw from a required course without permission can expect to face consequences, such as for example a delay in graduation.

f. Examinations

Final exams will be written during the final examination period and are typically scheduled by the Office of the Registrar.

No re-writes of final examinations are permitted, as per Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) regulations. No supplementary work can be assigned to students in order to improve a student's final grade. These are university level regulations that cannot be changed by individual instructors or the SPA.

Students have the right to review the answers they had provided on their final exam, but are not permitted to obtain a copy of such answers. Students do not automatically have the right to retain the questions of a mid-term or final examination, although individual instructors may choose to provide this opportunity.

2. EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

The SPA has arrangements with a few Universities that might enable some students to spend a semester of their MPA program abroad. This would be the fall semester of their second year, or a summer semester, if a student does not participate in the summer internship program.

The exchange program is open to students who have excelled in their first year of study. Eligibility criteria include (i) the successful completion of all first year required courses (ii) an overall average of A- or above, (iii) a demonstrated level of professionalism that is assessed as sufficient to represent the Dalhousie School of Public Administration.

In such cases, special arrangements will be made for exchange students to complete PD program requirements.

3. ACCOMODATIONS

Students who require any form of accommodation due to a disability, religious obligation, or any barrier related to any other characteristic protected under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act should contact the Advising and Access Services Centre (http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/student_services/academic-support/accessibility.html). Any arrangements must be made in advance of courses, assignments, and exams. Accommodations cannot normally be sought retroactively.

4. FAILURES

a. Failing one course

As a general rule, the failure of one course does not affect the student's standing in the program, the failure of two courses results in academic dismissal. The failure of one course can have implications of the student's progress in the program, however. Students who have failed a course must consult with the course professor to understand the nature of their failure. Students must also consult with the Graduate Coordinator to understand how their failure affects the remainder of their program.

Furthermore, students whose overall average performance is lower than a B at the end of the first term will not be eligible to enrol in the Internship course during the summer. Eligibility for the Internship will be re-evaluated after the second term grades become available.

Students with a failure may graduate later than in May after the second year of their program. The exact expected graduation date depends on the specifics of their failure, their performance for the remainder of the program, as well as the precise structuring of their academic path.

b. Failing two courses

A student who fails two courses will be academically dismissed from the program at the time when grades become available. The MPA program is one of few graduate programs at Dalhousie University that allows students to carry one failure. The failure of two courses is considered a strong signal that a student is not prepared to succeed in the MPA program at the time.

c. Academic Dismissal, Reinstatement and Readmission

Students have the right to apply for reinstatement into the program. Reinstatement is not guaranteed. In order for the application to be considered, the student must apply for reinstatement within five (5) working days of receiving official notification from the FGS, which arrives via email.

An application for reinstatement is different from an application for readmission. Application for readmission can be submitted once twelve (12) consecutive months have passed since the student's last registration. This may follow various interruptions of study and is governed by FGS regulations.

A student who applies for reinstatement may be denied reinstatement or be recommended for reinstatement or readmission after a one year lapse. A student who applies for readmission may be denied or be recommended for readmission. The decision to reinstate or readmit a student cannot be appealed, as it falls under admissions.

The process of application for reinstatement is that the student write a formal letter to the School's Graduate Coordinator explaining their poor performance, and presenting any relevant evidence that might suggest improved performance upon reinstatement. All evidence is considered by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the School's Director and some members of the admissions committee. The application for reinstatement must be submitted within five (5) working days of receiving official notification of dismissal from the FGS.

If reinstatement is granted, the student can expect to face increased program requirements. These are most likely in the form of additional supplementary courses they will be asked to complete in order to gain a better understanding of subjects, in which they have failed courses. Supplementary courses will never be considered as grounds for course exemptions or advanced standing.

A student who has been academically dismissed should remember that the University or any of its employees are no longer obligated to provide services to them. Meetings with faculty members, the Graduate Coordinator, the School's Director, or any other employee of the university might be granted as a courtesy.

d. Failing PD program requirements

The PD program is designed to ensure MPA graduates have the professional competencies and qualities expected by public sector employers. The PD program courses result in a pass/fail determination based on the student's demonstrated ability to learn and appropriately apply these competencies as a graduate student.

The PD program is sequential. Students who fail PUAD5200x will not be permitted to register in the Internship course. With permission from the Graduate Coordinator and the PD Officer, students may be able to take PUAD5200y while completing the necessary make-up work from PUAD5200x. A student cannot pass PUAD5200y without having passed PUAD5200x. Students cannot register in PUAD6200x or y without having passed both PUAD5200x and y. Students must pass PUAD6200x and y in order to graduate from the MPA program.

5. GRADE REASSESSMENTS

A student who believes that their work was graded in error should at the first instance speak with the course instructor. The goal of such a meeting is for the student to clarify misunderstandings about their grade.

If clarification is not achieved, a student can apply for a reassessment of their course work. Any component of the course can be subjected to a re-grade, but only after the final grade for the course has become available. The re-grade is a process that begins at the Registrar's office, where the student fills out an application form and pays a fee. Specifics about the process can be found at <http://dalgrad.dal.ca/regulations/vii/>, including deadlines for the application for grade reassessments.

The Registrar's office forwards the re-grade request to the School. The School selects an expert in the field to which the course belongs, who is not the original course instructor. The course instructor provides the new assessor with a copy of the exam questions, an answer guide, a copy of the appealing student's answers, as well as anonymized copies of answers of a top performing and a bottom performing student. The re-grader reassesses the grade on the basis of these pieces of information, and no other information. Meetings with the appealing student are not granted, and written statements from the appealing student are not considered. The new grade may be higher or lower than the original, or it may remain unchanged. The average of the new grade and the old grade becomes the binding grade; there is no opportunity for a second grade reassessment.

6. APPEALS

A student has the right to appeal decisions made by the SPA and/or by the University about the student's academic standing, performance, or progress. Admission, reinstatement, and/or readmission decisions cannot be appealed as per FGS regulations. Appeals are different from grade reassessments, and are not related to course content. Appeals are related to matters of process. Appeals will not be heard, if they are based solely on the student's perception that the student deserves a higher grade than they received. This would be a matter of course content and might fall under the category of a grade reassessment.

Students should be reminded that the SPA operates within the regulations of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the University, and is obligated to uphold such regulations. The SPA appeals process cannot be used to challenge higher level regulations. If a student would like to appeal an FGS regulation (e.g. the last day to withdraw from a course), they should inquire into the FGS appeals process.

On a similar note, students should keep in mind that individual instructors operate within the regulations set by the University and supplemented with SPA level regulations, as laid out in this handbook, the website, or other official documentation produced at the SPA. Individual instructors are obligated to uphold these regulations. Students cannot expect that instructors will act contrary to regulation.

Appeals can be based on three grounds (none of which relates to course content):

- Bias;
- Irregularity in procedure;
- Procedural unfairness.

These are grounds for appeal of any SPA level decision, except where this decision is clearly based on a higher level regulation, to which the SPA is obligated to adhere. For FGS regulation on appeals please consult <http://dalgrad.dal.ca/regulations/xii/>. SPA level appeals must first be taken to the SPA appeals process.

Students who are claiming discrimination of any kind should contact the Office of Human Rights, Equity and Harassment Prevention.

SPA Appeals process

The first step to an appeals process is for the student to seek informal resolution by meeting with the relevant individuals to discuss the student's concerns. If the appeal is related to a course, the student should first meet with the instructor, second with the Graduate Coordinator, and third with the Director.

If informal resolution cannot be found, the student can launch a formal appeal by writing a formal statement to the Director of the school. The formal appeal must be received by the Director within 21 calendar days of the student being able to access their course grade, where the appeal relates to the outcome of a course.

The statement must include (i) the grounds for appeal (one of the three as indicated above); (ii) a description of the details of the situation and how it constitutes one of the grounds for appeal, and (iii) what resolution is sought. The petition can also include relevant supporting documentation (e.g. official note from a health care provider). The Director will then review the formal appeal and decide on one of two courses of action, namely (a) that there is no basis for an appeal related to the three criteria of bias, irregularity in procedure, or procedural unfairness, and therefore the formal appeal is denied, or (b) that the situation should be reviewed in more detail. Choosing option (b) then sets the following process in motion:

- Upon confirmation that all informal resolution channels have been exhausted, and upon review of the petition to assess grounds for appeal, the Director strikes an appeals committee, or calls on an existing appeals committee;

- The committee meets to assess whether the appeal is warranted for further review;
- If rejected, the student is informed by the Committee that the appeal will not be heard;
- It is at this stage at the latest, that petitions relating to course content must be referred to the grade reassessment process;
- If accepted, the case is reviewed by the appeals committee;
- The appeals committee may meet with the students, course professor, and any other individual relevant to the case, and may ask for additional documentation from all relevant parties;
- The appeals committee deliberates on the case with the goal of recommending a resolution that upholds the goals of achieving fairness and justice for all parties involved in the context of the program and student body as a whole;
- The appeals committee makes a recommendation to the SPA Director;
- The Director makes a ruling based on the recommendation of the committee, but is not bound to follow the recommendation;
- The resolution of an appeal achieved via this process cannot result in a change of grade for the student based on content, nor a grade reassessment.

It is the responsibility of all parties (student, faculty, Graduate Coordinator, Director, committee members, and other witnesses) to conduct this process giving a fair balance to due diligence and expediency, such that a fair and thorough review is conducted within the shortest time possible, given the circumstances peculiar to the case at hand.

A resolution achieved through the SPA appeals process, if not satisfactory, can be appealed at the FGS level by the appealing student, and/or by other parties directly implicated in the appeal (e.g. the course instructor).

REQUEST FOR A WAIVER OF AN ACADEMIC REGULATION

This kind of a request originates in the Registrar's Office and is subject to a fee. University level regulations will not be reviewed by the SPA. SPA level regulations may be waived at the SPA unit level, if there are extenuating circumstances. Please keep in mind that SPA level regulations have been introduced to support the integrity of our program, and the fairness across students and across years. Waivers will not be granted on the basis of inconvenience to a student.

A waiver of a regulation is an administrative decision and need not go through a committee process. It is in the Director's discretion to grant a waiver, or to decline the request. It is also in the Director's discretion to consult with the Graduate Coordinator, or to strike a committee and seek recommendation, should (s)he deem this process as necessary.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND ACADEMIC OFFENSE

An academic offence is a violation of rules that could result in the student gaining an unfair or unearned advantage. The definition does not necessitate that the violation did result in an advantage for the student.

The types of academic offences are listed in the calendar. They include plagiarism, irregularities in data presentation (falsification of data), other irregularities, aiding in the commission of an academic offence, and misrepresentation. Other types of offences include unauthorized collaboration, cheating, attempted cheating, possession of unauthorized materials during tests or exams, impersonation or allowing oneself to be impersonated, and self-plagiarism. Please consult the graduate calendar for details regarding academic integrity and offences.

Instructors are under the obligation to bring forward suspicion of academic offense to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO) of the Faculty of Management. It is the role of the AIO to determine, whether a situation constitutes an academic offense that requires further action. It is not the responsibility of individual instructors to make this judgement. AI officers are available for informal consultation with instructors in advance on any official action being taken.