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# *Planning on Applying for Admission to the MPA Program?*

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## **Admission Requirements**

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- Undergraduate Degree (BA/BS) (JD accepted as well)
- Minimum 2.75 overall GPA (BA/BS) or a 3.0 GPA for last two years of BA/BS
- 1000 minimum combined verbal and quantitative GRE (or GMAT, LSAT equivalent)
- 450 Verbal GRE (or GMAT, LSAT equivalent)
- 18 credit hours (6 courses) in Political Science (PSC)/Social Science

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE ARE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS; MEETING MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DOES NOT GUARANTEE ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM. STUDENTS ARE ADMITTED ON AN INCREASINGLY COMPETITIVE BASIS. WE TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION A STUDENT'S OVERALL RECORD, AS WELL AS FIT WITH DEPARTMENTAL FACULTY AREAS OF EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH/TEACHING INTERESTS.

*Application materials need to be mailed to the Graduate School—postmarked no later than October 31 (for Spring admission) or March 31 (for Fall admission):*

- Application
- Undergraduate transcripts
- GRE/GMAT/LSAT scores
- 3 Letters of recommendation of which a minimum of 2 are from professors with whom you have taken and completed coursework.

NOTE: You may apply for Graduate Special status and register for classes. Only up to nine graduate credit hours taken as a Graduate Special can apply toward the MPA degree.

*Application materials need to be mailed to the Political Science Department—postmarked no later than October 31 (for Spring admission) or March 31 (for Fall admission):*

- You must submit a Statement of Purpose. This statement should be 500 words, double spaced, and printed in a standard font (Courier, Times New Roman). This Statement should discuss your career and educational goals. Please make sure that the Statement has your name at the top of the each page.

Mail the Statement of Purpose directly to: Director of Graduate Studies; Department of Political Science, Mail Stop/302; University of Nevada, Reno; Reno, NV 89557-0302.

## MPA Coursework

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Core Courses		Credit Hours
*PSC 604b	Public Personnel Administration	3
*PSC 741	Seminar: Public Administration Theory	3
*PSC 744	Seminar: Public Budgeting	3
*PSC 750	Seminar: Public Policy	3
*PSC 785	Seminar: Leadership	3
PSC 780	Seminar: Research Methods	3

**\*You must take and pass core competency exams in three of the classes.** You can choose which three courses in which you wish to take exams.

If you enroll in any core course for which you plan to take a competency exam, then YOU MUST simultaneously enroll in PSC 791 (2 credits) and PSC 795 (1 credit).

If you are enrolled in two of these classes (\*) in a single semester, then enroll in the appropriate PSC 791 (4 credits) and PSC 795 (2 credits). It is very important that you follow these instructions as your end-of-the-semester exam in this (these) course(s) will be counted towards your competency exam requirement for the MPA degree.

The PSC 791 Special Topics credits are designed to give you college credit toward your degree as you study for the exams using course readings and the subject area reading lists available on the departmental webpage.

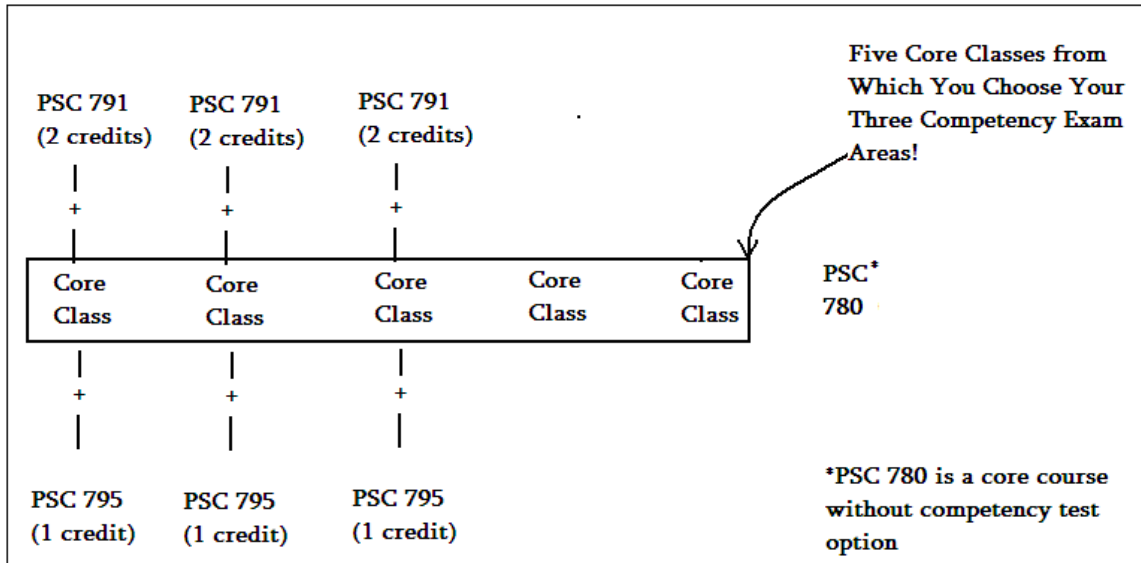
When signing up for PSC 791 credits, be sure to sign up using your academic advisor's section number. If you are a Grad Special, then you will use the DGS's section number.

When signing up for PSC 795 credit(s), be sure to sign up using the Graduate Director's section number.

Please obtain the section and call numbers for PSC 791 and PSC 795 from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) ([casimon@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:casimon@unr.nevada.edu))

**\*\*\*Grad Special students: you CANNOT enroll in PSC 795 credits. Please discuss this issue with the DGS ([casimon@unr.nevada.edu](mailto:casimon@unr.nevada.edu)).**

## Core Competency Exam Approach—An Explanatory Chart



Core Classes	18
Specialization Track	
PSC 791 Special Topics (6 credits) (see above)	6
Elective Courses (3 credits)	3
Additional Methods Credits	
PSC 781 Political Science as a Discipline	3
Or	
PSC 782 Advanced Research Methods	
Exam and Paper Courses	
PSC 795 Exam (3 credits) (see above)	3
PSC 796 Professional Paper (3 credits)	3
Total Program Credit Hours	36 credits

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# Accepted MPA Students:

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Welcome to the MPA program! If you follow the course of study, then it is likely that you could complete your degree in as little as 18 months as a full time student—approximately 24 months for students taking a less intense approach.

We strongly encourage you to follow the path outlined as not following the assigned path will seriously impact your ability to effectively and efficiently complete the degree program.

## Advising

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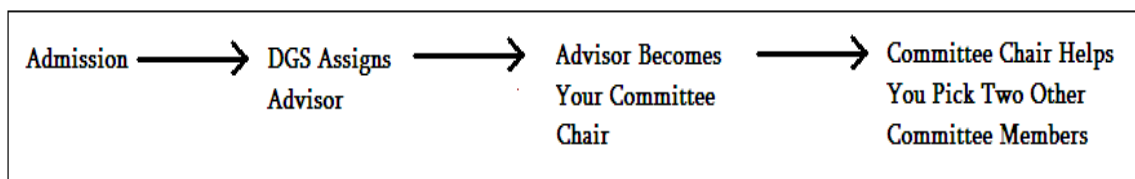
Initially, the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) serves in advising role for new students. The DGS will advise you on courses to take and will answer any degree-related questions that arise.

The DGS assigns all accepted MPA students to an advisor. The department strongly recommends that you maintain the assigned initial advisor as your permanent MPA advisor and make him/her your committee chair. Please consult the DGS if you feel that another advisor is better suited to your needs.

Beyond your first semester, your advisor should ensure that you enroll in MPA courses for each semester. Your advisor will also serve as your committee chair. As your committee chair, your advisor will help you choose your other committee members of which you need two.

## Advisor-to-Committee Chair: A Chart

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## Committees

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Each graduate student should fairly quickly decide which professors will be most helpful to them in completing their degree program. The chair of your committee (very likely, your assigned initial advisor) is your most regular contact for class advisement, exam study, and for professional paper completion. Your other committee members (2)—i.e., secondary committee members—serve in advisory capacities—they are not your primary advisor, but they are there to offer specific advice about topics related to your professional paper. All committee members must be designated graduate faculty (professors viewed as qualified to work with graduate students). One of the two secondary committee members must be a graduate faculty member from a department other than political science. It is possible that your elective course will be with a professor from another department—in which case, it would be good to ask them if they are willing to serve on your committee.

## Program of Study (POS)

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Probably every time you interact with the DGS, you will likely hear the following question, “Have you filled out your POS yet? Has it been signed and submitted to the Graduate School?”

Essentially, your POS is a form of contract with both the department and university—you list out all courses required to complete your degree. This would include any graduate credits completed at UNR prior to admission to the MPA program (Graduate Special credits) as well as any credits you intend to transfer from another institution. Grades, as well as the semester a course is completed may be entered for already completed MPA courses. Courses yet to be taken may indicate the approximate semester or year in which you intend to take the course. It is strongly recommended that you begin the POS submission process within one semester of entering the program—definitely within the first year of entering the program.

In order to complete the POS, you will have to consult with your advisor regarding course availability in the upcoming semesters—usually, the department has scheduled out the future courses 6-12 months in advance of any current semester.

You will also have to have received confirmation from other potential committee members in terms of their willingness to sign the POS and become recognized members of your committee. Finally, you will need the DGS to sign the POS.

Following the process of obtaining all necessary signatures, you will need to take the signed original POS document to the Graduate School (in Room 225 of the Student Services Building on the south end of the Whalen Parking Garage). The Graduate School will be the ultimate arbiter in the process and will either approve or reject the POS.

If your POS is rejected, there will likely be some explanation and you will need to consult with either your assigned advisor/committee chair to determine the deficiency. The DGS might also need to be consulted.

## Professional Paper

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The professional paper is coordinated with your assigned advisor. Generally speaking, your professional paper will usually involve expanding your best paper produced in a core seminar (i.e., PSC 741, PSC 744, PSC 750, or PSC 785) into a more developed professional paper project. If you wish not to use one these seminar papers as the basis of your professional paper, then please consult with your assigned academic advisor regarding an alternative paper topic for a professional paper.

When your paper is completed, you will then share this paper with your assigned advisor (your committee chair) and your other committee members. If your committee chair and other members feel that it is acceptable they have the option of: a) requiring you to orally defend the paper in a scheduled meeting or b) simply signing off on the professional paper’s acceptability.

A common question is, “How long is a professional paper?” Your advisor will be better able to answer that question as every topic is different and every approach to addressing a topic requires a different time and writing commitment. In my experience (DGS), I have seen professional papers that range between 30-60 pages in length. Again, the real answer to the question will come from your assigned advisor/committee chair.

## Graduate Special Students

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Students enrolling in MPA courses as a Graduate Special student with the intent of pursuing regular admission to the program should follow the same basic coursework approach, realizing that up to 9 credits of graduate special course work may be applied to your degree and that you cannot enroll in PSC 795 Exam credits. If, as a Graduate Special you wish to take the core competency in a class, you should enroll in the two PSC 791 credits—later when/if you gain admission to the program as a regular Graduate Student, discuss PSC 795 credits with the DGS.

In terms of advising, a Graduate Special student will consult with the DGS until that time when they are admitted as regular graduate students—at that point, the student will be assigned an advisor.

The program consists of six core courses each of which is offered for three credits. You will select three out of five of these courses (PSC 604b, PSC 741, PSC 744, PSC 750, PSC 785) in which to complete a core competency examination. When you enroll in a core course in which you will be taking a core competency exam, you will concurrently enroll in PSC 791, Special Topics, for two credits and PSC 795, comprehensive examination, for 1 credit. The two credit enrollment in PSC 791 is designed to give you credit for the extensive reading and exam preparation required for the competency exam. The one credit enrollment in PSC 795 is designed to reflect the effort involved in the exam itself.

## The First Weeks of Class in a Core Course with Exam Component

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In the first weeks of a core course with exam component, the course instructor, your assigned advisor, or the DGS (optimum scenario: ALL THREE) will reinforce the department's exam credit and special topics credit enrollment strategy. It is a decentralized approach to examination that will speed your completion of the degree program requirements.

It is imperative that this process is followed or your degree completion will become bogged down in a multitude of inefficiencies. If you are a part-time student and you think, "I just want to take two classes this semester" and one of them turns out to be core competency class with an exam component option, then still take the additional exam and special topics credits—yes, it will be a nine credit load, but let me assure you that it will very likely NOT be the equivalent workload of three classes!

## Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Is graduate school just an extension of undergraduate training (with more reading and bigger course numbers)?

Graduate school is a form of professional training. MPA students learn practical skills and theories associated with public administration. Unlike undergraduate training, graduate school involves analytical thinking and active learning. Classes are smaller. Professors expect that you have done the reading before coming class and will ask you about the reading and your critical interpretation of its meaning (note: saying, "It's boring!" or "There was too much reading!" or "He/she could have said it differently!" does not count as critical interpretation or analysis).

2. Since I can't get below a "B" to pass a graduate class, a "B" is the lowest grade the professors assign, right?

A popular myth is that a "B" is the lowest passing grade in graduate school—actually, a "C" is the lowest passing grade. HOWEVER, you must maintain a 3.0 in order to graduate. Also, the full range of grades (A through F) can be assigned. At the graduate level, the "bar has been raised"—classes are more intensive than at the undergraduate level.

3. I'm just getting my MPA, so I don't really need to consider doing a conference paper or submitting a manuscript for publication, right?

Writing and presenting conference papers or submitting and publishing article manuscripts is an added bonus that will serve you well in your current employment and/or future employment. The conference paper or publication can be listed on your resume and it shows prospective or current employers that you have earned an MPA and used your professional training to contribute to the discipline. Speak to your advisor and/or the Director of Graduate Studies about this issue. Graduate students who are more senior in their program of study are also excellent sources of information about this topic.

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# *Advised Program of Study for Fall 2009/Spring 2010*

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## *LOWER COURSE-LOAD APPROACH (Academic Year: 18 credits)*

While your program may regard these students as part-time, the university definition of a full-time graduate student is any student enrolled in 9 or more credits.

<b>Fall, 2009</b>		<b>Spring, 2010</b>	
PSC 744	3 credits	PSC 604b	3 credits
PSC 780	3 credits	PSC 782@	3 credits
PSC 791*	2 credits	PSC 791*	2 credits
PSC 795†	1 credit	PSC 795†	1 credit
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 credits</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 credits</b>

## *HIGHER COURSE LOAD APPROACH (Academic Year: 24 credits)*

<b>Fall, 2009</b>		<b>Spring, 2010</b>	
PSC 744	3 credits	PSC 604b	3 credits
PSC 780	3 credits	PSC 782@	3 credits
PSC 791*	2 credits	PSC 791*	2 credits
PSC 795†	1 credit	PSC 795†	1 credit
PSC 601M	3 credits	PSC 750	3 credits
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12 credits</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12 credits</b>

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@ PSC 781 may be taken in lieu of PSC 782 in years in which the course is offered.

\* Be sure to use your assigned advisor's call number (contact your assigned advisor)

† Be sure to use the Director of Graduate Studies' call number (contact DGS via email)