Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration
California State University, Long Beach

# MPA Student Handbook

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**Faculty and Staff**

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## Lecturers and Part-time Faculty

Visit our website for a current list of the Center's lecturers and adjunct faculty.

## Master of Public Administration Program (MPA)

The general MPA program is designed with a professional emphasis and provides graduate students with a broad knowledge of specific competencies. The program also develops the student's ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills to the solution of public problems. In addition to the general MPA degree, the GCPPA offers the MPA degree with options in Urban Affairs and Public Works Management. Students may also earn certificates in Employer-Employee Relations and Personnel Management, Public Management Analysis, and Public Sector Financial Management. More information can be found online at https://www.csulb.edu/college-of-health-human-services/public-policy-and-administration

## Application Process

The application process consists of two separate applications forms: One for the University and the other for the MPA program. Both applications should be submitted at the same time.

**CSULB Application**

You must apply to the University online at CalStateApply and pay a $70 fee. You need to submit one official transcript from all colleges and universities attended to Enrollment Services for your application to be reviewed. Requirements for admission as a graduate student are listed in the CSULB Catalog http://catalog.csulb.edu/preview_entity.php?catoid=3&ent_oid=266

**MPA Program Application**

You must apply to the MPA program. The requirements for admission to the MPA program are more stringent than those of the University. The MPA program application is on the GCPPA website and you can upload your application material to Cal State Apply.

For admission to the MPA program, you must have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and have maintained a cumulative undergraduate grade point average (GPA) of not less than 3.0, or 3.0 in the last 60 semester units. Your application will be evaluated in terms of your previous academic and employment performance, promise as a graduate student, leadership in some field of public administration, and commitment to develop, pursue, and perform effectively in a career in public service.

To apply to the Department, visit our website to download the application. https://www.csulb.edu/college-of-health-human-services/public-policy-and-administration/about/our-department You can upload your department application documents to Cal State Apply. The Department application documents are the following:

- MPA application
- Personal statement stating your reasons for wanting to obtain the MPA degree and for pursuing a career in the public sector. (one- or two-pages).
- Two letters of recommendation from former professors and/or job supervisors

Cal State Apply has two options for letters of recommendation.

- You can upload letters in Cal State Apply.
- Send a request to your recommenders through Cal State Apply.

## Components of the MPA Degree

The following table shows the components for the MPA degree, the MPA with an option in Public Works, and the MPA with an option in Urban Affairs.

| | MPA | Public Works | Urban Affairs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Core Courses | 18 units | 21 units | 21 units |
| Electives | 15 units | 12 units | 12 units |
| Directed Research/Portfolio | 6 units | 6 units | 6 units |
| Internship Optional | 3 units | 3 units | 3 units |
| **Total Units** | **39 units/42 units** | **39 units/42 units** | **39 units/42 units** |

**Core Courses in the MPA Program**

You must complete these courses to earn an MPA degree. You must complete all core courses before you can enroll in PPA 697. You should take PPA 500 in your first semester. You can take courses in any sequence. Be sure to note PPA 555 has a prerequisite microeconomics course and PPA 696 has a prerequisite statistics course.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PPA 500 | Foundation of Public Policy and Administration | 3 units |
| PPA 555 | Government Budgeting and Finance | 3 units |
| PPA 577 | Public Sector Human Resources Management | 3 units |
| PPA 660 | Seminar in Organization Theory and Behavior | 3 units |
| PPA 670 | Policy Issue Analysis | 3 units |
| PPA 696 | Research Methods in Public Administration | 3 units |

**MPA Options**

The Public Works Option has one more core course-PPA 554 Public Works Facilities and one less elective course. All other requirements for the MPA degree are the same.

The Urban Affairs Option has one more core course-PPA 610 Seminar Urban Affairs and one less elective course. All other requirements for the MPA degree are the same.

**Elective Fields**

You may select your elective courses from among those offered by the GCPPA, as well as from graduate level courses (numbered 500 or 600) offered by other departments of the University.

**PPA 697 Directed Research (6 units)**

You must complete all the required core courses before you can enroll in PPA 697. While students may complete the six unit requirement over the course of two semesters, it is recommended that students register for all six units in one semester. The Student Learning Portfolio (SLP) is completed during PPA 697. You must be advanced to candidacy and have completed all core courses prior to enrolling in PPA 697.

**Internships**

The GCPPA offers pre-career students a first-hand opportunity for observation of and participation in policy-making and administration in the public sector through an internship. Enrollment in PPA 585 Internship Seminar is required for all students who do not have at least one year of significant experience in the public sector. Students who are employed currently, or who have previous work experience in the public sector, may request a waiver of the internship when they advance to candidacy.

You may benefit from an internship if you are entering the MPA program directly after completing your undergraduate degree, changing careers, have no public or nonprofit experience, or want to gain experience, which will help you in obtaining a job

Students may enroll in the internship course under the "Credit/No Credit" grade reporting option. The hours required are determined in consultation with the Internship Coordinator. The normal expectation is 300 hours of internship work. To complete the internship in one semester, 20 hours per week on-site would be required.

Please note—PPA 585 does **not** count toward the 39 units required for the MPA degree.

**Certificates**

The GCPPA offers three certificates: Employer-Employee Relations and Personnel Management, Public Management Analysis, and Public Sector Financial Management. Up to 15 units (5 courses) may be transferred from a certificate program into the MPA degree with approval of a faculty advisor.

**Unit Requirements**

A minimum of 39 units are required for the MPA degree. At least 24 units must be in graduate level courses offered by the MPA program (courses with a PPA prefix). The remaining 15 units may be selected from graduate level courses offered by the MPA program or from graduate courses (classes at the 500 or 600 level) offered by other departments and schools of the University. Consult the CSULB Catalog and your faculty advisor for information on graduate level course listings in other departments.

When formulating your plans for the MPA program with your faculty advisor, consider your work schedule and your course load. Students employed full-time should not exceed six units (two courses) per semester, which is considered appropriate for part-time students. A normal academic load for a full-time student is 9-15 units per semester (three to five courses). A maximum load of 18 units is permitted by the University, with permission of the GCPPA.

**Transfer of Credit**

Subject to the approval of the GCPPA's Director and the Associate Dean of the College of Health and Human Services, up to nine units of credit for graduate courses taken through Open University may be applied to the 39-unit requirement of the MPA program. Open University is run through the College of Continuing and Professional Education (CCPE). Graduate courses also may be transferred for credit from any of the GCPPA's certificate programs.

For graduate courses taken at other colleges or universities, a maximum of nine units (three courses) may be applied to the MPA degree. Acceptance of graduate courses to be transferred from other universities normally depends upon sufficient information being provided to permit evaluation of the course, such as the course syllabus and course description. Courses taken at another institution are not accepted as substitutes for any of the required core courses.

## Requirements

### Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement (GWAR)

As of June 2022, GWAR is no longer required for graduate students.

### Advancement to Candidacy

Advancement to candidacy signifies approval of a plan of study by the student's major department and college. You should advance to candidacy as soon as you are eligible. In most instances, advancement to candidacy should occur no later than the end of the second semester of matriculation and must occur no later than one semester prior to the semester in which the student expects to graduate. It must occur prior to a student filing a request to graduate with Enrollment Services. Advancement to Candidacy forms can be found at https://www.csulb.edu/college-of-health-human-services/public-policy-and-administration/student-handbooks-forms

Advancement to candidacy requirements:

1. Completion of at least six units of required MPA program courses with a minimum GPA of 3.0.
2. Earned a minimum GPA of 3.0 in all graduate work attempted at CSULB after completion of a baccalaureate degree.
3. Must be enrolled in the semester or summer session in which the advancement to candidacy takes place and this must occur no later than one semester or summer session prior to completion of course requirements.

**Most importantly you may not advance to candidacy and graduate in the same semester!**

### Student Learning Portfolio (SLP)

The SLP is designed to monitor and to document students' educational progress over their tenure in the program. Guidelines for the SLP are in the SLP Handbook. Students collect course work throughout the MPA program and present the completed SLP to the PPA 697 Instructor for final approval. The SLP must be approved as a requirement for graduation.

More specifics on policies and procedures governing the SLP can be found in the MPA Student Learning Portfolio Handbook available on the GCPPA website. Be sure to follow the instructions concerning how to save your coursework in the MPA program for the SLP. You will need to get the completed SLP approved before you can graduate.

**Important parts of the SLP include:**

**Part One:**
The Initial Skills Self-Assessment (completed in PPA 500)
The Final Skills Self-Assessment (completed in PPA 697)
**Part Two:**
Pre- and Post-Instructional assignments from all core (required) courses
**Part Three:**
Case Studies (completed in PPA 697)

The SLP must be submitted using One Drive. One Drive is available in your CSULB Application Dashboard. A video detailing how to use One Drive is available below:

**The case study deadlines are November 15th (Fall) and April 15th (Spring), and If you fail to meet these deadlines, your graduation may be delayed until the following semester, so plan ahead.**

## Maintaining Enrollment

A student who has been admitted to the University and accepted in the MPA program is expected to maintain continuous enrollment. This means you must be registered for one or more courses each Fall and Spring semester until completion of the program. Registration in Summer and Winter is NOT required to maintain continuous enrollment. Students who register for classes at the beginning of the semester but withdraw from all classes before the end of the fourth week of the semester are considered to be absent for the entire semester. In other words, withdrawing from all classes prior to the fourth week of the semester would constitute a break in enrollment.

**Educational Leave**

Any graduate student in good academic standing is eligible to request an Educational Leave. Students requesting such a leave must complete an Educational Leave form. The completed form needs to be signed by the Graduate Advisor before turning it in to Enrollment Services.

You must have completed at least one semester and earned units to request an Educational Leave for a minimum of one semester or a maximum of two semesters. Additional leaves must be requested by submitting a new form. Under no circumstances will the total number of semesters exceed four per academic career.

**Readmission to the University**

A student must reapply online at Cal State Apply if enrollment has been interrupted.

**Time Limit**

The university requires that all coursework for the degree be completed within seven years. Any coursework that exceeds this requires revalidation by the GCPPA. Courses less than ten years old will be revalidated. Course completed more than ten years ago will not be revalidated. For more information on the revalidation policy, please contact the Graduate Advisor.

## General Regulations and Procedures

You should familiarize yourself with CSULB regulations concerning academic credit, grading policies and procedures, class attendance, minimum grade standards for graduate students, and similar administrative matters. These regulations and policies are contained in the current edition of the CSULB Catalog.
csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/

**Course Withdrawals**
Students are responsible for withdrawing from the classes they are not attending. A Petition to Withdraw from a Class form must be officially filed by a student and can be found in your MyCSULB Student Center.
Students who fail to withdraw from a class, regardless of whether they have ever attended the class, will receive a grade of "WU" (unauthorized withdrawal). A grade of "WU" is equivalent to an "F" in computing the student's GPA.

Withdrawals from a course, after the first three weeks but before the last three weeks of the semester, require the approval of the instructor and the Director of the GCPPA. Withdrawals during the final three weeks of the semester are not normally approved except in such cases where the circumstances are beyond the student's control and an Incomplete grade would not be practical. Ordinarily, such withdrawals will involve total withdrawal from all classes in which the student is enrolled for the semester.

**Incomplete Course Work**
The symbol "I" indicates that a portion of required course work (normally not more than one-third) has not been completed and evaluated in the prescribed time due to unforeseen, but fully justified, reasons and that there is still a possibility of earning credit. It is the responsibility of the student to determine from the instructor the remaining course requirements that must be satisfied to remove the "I." The conditions for removal of an "I" must be recorded in writing by the instructor on an Assignment of Incomplete Grade form. An "I" must normally be made up within one calendar year immediately following the end of the term during which it was assigned, regardless of whether the student maintains continuous enrollment during the year. Failure to complete the assigned work will convert the "I" to the grade that is stipulated on the Assignment of Incomplete Grade form.

**Academic Probation**
A graduate student whose cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 is placed on academic probation. Generally, the student is given two semesters to bring their GPA back up to 3.0. In no case, can the student continue to be on academic probation for more than two semesters. See the current edition of the CSULB catalog

**Cheating and Plagiarism**
California State University, Long Beach, has adopted a policy on cheating and plagiarism, which is stated in the current edition of the CSULB Catalog. This policy applies to all students in the GCPPA. Cases of cheating or plagiarism are subject to change of grade and administrative sanctions.

A major potential for University sanctions and change of grade occurs in the preparation of research and term papers. The GCPPA policy does not permit the submission of required research or term papers in more than one class. Further, research or term papers must be based on original research, and may not be reproductions, in whole or in part, of work completed by others.

## Graduation Procedures

Students must be enrolled currently in the University during the semester in which they officially graduate

**Receiving Your Degree**
Your diploma will be ready in two to three months after your degree is recorded. Your diploma will be mailed to you.

You may not register for the semester following your intended graduation unless you moved your graduation date or re-apply to CSULB as a graduate student. You may participate in the commencement ceremony immediately preceding or following your graduation date.

## University Student Services

The University offers a wide range of student services and organizations. For more information, consult the CSULB Catalog or contact the service or organization directly.

**Academic Technology Services**
Academic Technology Services manages campus computing resources including Canvas, Computer Labs, Instructional Technology and Classroom Support Services, Software Depot, and Technology Help Desk.

**Beach ID**
Students must have a Beach ID account to use CSULB computing services.

**Canvas**
Canvas is the University's e-learning environment. It provides students with the opportunity to stay connected with their instructors and classmates. Canvas may be a component of some or all of a student's courses as either a supplement to the course, as an element of a hybrid course, or as the structure for a completely online course.

**Bob Murphy Access Center**
The Bob Murphy Access Center (BMAC), a department within the Student Services Division, ensures access to education for students with disabilities. BMAC provides support services, resources, equipment, and liaison with campus and community agencies to assist students in obtaining their degree.

**Financial Resources**
The CSULB Financial Aid Office assists students in seeking financial assistance from a variety of public and private sources, including grants, scholarships, loans, fellowships, and work programs.

**University Library**
The library provides information resources that support teaching and learning and provide enrichment and recreation for members of the campus community, as well as other scholars and community members.