

# **CPAP POLICY GUIDE**

## **CENTER FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY**

School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA)  
College of Architecture and Urban Studies (CAUS)

## **VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE & STATE UNIVERSITY**

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The mission of the Virginia Tech Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) is to promote good governance and the advancement of capable and ethical public service by providing outstanding education, research, and outreach in the theory and practice of public administration, management, and policy.

CPAP seeks:

- A. To provide qualified public service professionals currently in service and pre- or early- career students who plan to become public service professionals with a rigorous program of study for developing managerial, analytical, and normative evaluation skills in public management and public policy.
- B. To prepare teachers and scholars for faculty service in colleges and universities around the country and the world, thereby broadening the scope of knowledge in public administration and policy studies among administrators and citizenry.
- C. To engage faculty, practitioners, and graduate students in systematic research and study designed to improve the quality of policy making and public service within the varied jurisdictions of government in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the national capital region, as well as nationally and internationally.

CPAP offers two degrees: the Master of Public Administration (MPA) and the Ph.D. in public administration and public affairs. The MPA is offered in Blacksburg, the National Capital Region (NCR), and Richmond. The Ph.D. is offered in Blacksburg and NCR. CPAP also is the home for two graduate certificates, in Homeland Security Policy and in Local Government Management.

Virginia Tech is committed to providing appropriate services and accommodations to allow identified students with disabilities access to academic programs. Information for students needing special services can be found at <http://www.ssd.vt.edu/students.htm>. CPAP students with special needs should contact the CPAP chair.

## **THE MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM**

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The Master of Public Administration (MPA) is a professional degree intended for future and present practitioners in the public service. Its purpose is to educate early career individuals for administrative and analytical posts and to improve the skills of in-career public administrators.

International students should recognize that a substantial portion of the program's subject matter focuses primarily upon public administration, management, and policy in the United States.

### **A. PREREQUISITES**

*Course in U.S. Government:* Entering students must have taken at least one undergraduate course about the institutions of the U.S. government or have equivalent experience, training, or instruction.

Equivalent experience is at least three years of full-time work in local, state, or federal government. This prerequisite can also be satisfied by completing the CLEP American Government exam with a score of 60 or higher. If this requirement has not been fulfilled upon entry into the program, it should be fulfilled in the first semester.

- I. In order for a full-time student taking 12 hours each semester to complete the coursework for the degree program in three semesters, he or she must complete the prerequisite, before beginning the first fall semester. We advise most full-time students to take three courses each semester, using research and thesis hours if needed to reach the 12 hours that some assistantships require.
- II. Students must receive a grade of “C+” or better in the pre-requisite course in order to gain entry to the relevant graduate courses.
- III. All students are expected to be familiar with the use of standard word processing, spreadsheets, file manipulation, and presentation software, plus e-mail and basic internet applications. Certain courses may require the use of additional statistical, modeling, or other software packages. In the case of students not having these skills, students should arrange appropriate training outside the standard CPAP curriculum.

## **B. REQUIREMENTS**

- I. *Academic Requirements:* It is vital that all students review the overall requirements for graduate admission, coursework, and graduation posted on the Graduate School website at <http://graduateschool.vt.edu>.

The MPA entails 39 semester hours of credit, including the final portfolio requirement. Nine of the 12 courses necessary for graduation are required; the rest are elective. With the prior approval of the student’s advisor, up to six credits of the elective courses may be taken at the 4000-level. If students enroll in a 4000/5000-level conjoint undergraduate/graduate course, students must register for the 5000-level version of the course. Any student contemplating enrolling in a 4000-level course must meet with his/her advisor and provide the advisor the course syllabus for review. If the advisor finds the 4000-level course meets expectations that it will aid the student in “preparing to be a capable professional,” the advisor will place a statement and brief explanation to that effect, along with a copy of the syllabus, in the student’s file. At the end of the term, the faculty member will review the course experience with the student, and if appropriate, report concerns about quality to the CPAP chair.

The required courses cover topics in public management, public policy, and public service as shown in the table outlining the MPA Curriculum that follows. Elective courses may be taken through CPAP, in other SPIA departments, or elsewhere in the University.

- II. *Internship Requirement:* An internship is required of pre- or early-career students who will have less than three years of professional experience completed in parallel with their course work. Internship activities normally include a full-time assignment in an organization for twelve weeks and the writing of journal entries or other short assignments under the guidance of an Internship Faculty Advisor. The internship is a non-credit requirement, but students may opt to earn 3 hours of elective credit by registering for PAPA 5954 during the semester in which they fulfill the internship requirement.

- III. *Transferring Credit:* With the approval of at least two faculty members, appropriate substitutes for up to twenty percent of the MPA coursework (9 semester hours of credit) may be transferred into the program from previous graduate work done at schools other than Virginia Tech. For graduate courses taken at Virginia Tech, students can appeal to the CPAP Chair to have additional coursework transferred.
- IV. *Course Advising and Course Substitutions:* At the time of admission, each student is assigned a faculty advisor who will work with the student to review course options. It is the student's responsibility to make an appointment with his or her advisor. Students may change advisors with the permission of the CPAP chair and the consent of the new advisor.

Initial discussion of student plans of study and course substitutions takes place during orientation or in individual meetings during which students work with faculty advisors to approve course transfers and to plan initial courses. In Blacksburg, acceptance of transfer courses usually is held as part of the fall orientation. The National Capital Region and Richmond programs set up separate times for advising processes. Students seeking course substitutions should bring a copy of a transcript listing the courses to be substituted and a syllabus describing course content for each course that they wish to transfer.

- V. *Plan of Study:* Students should prepare a Plan of Study form, available on the CPAP website, as soon as possible. The Plan of Study must be completed before the student completes 24 semester hours of coursework and be approved by the student's advisory committee and committee chair and the Graduate School. All courses on the Plan of Study must be taken for a letter grade except for courses offered on a pass/fail basis only. Once the Plan has been sent to the Graduate School, changes must be made on the appropriate form available from the Graduate School and approved by the student's advisory committee and committee chair, the CPAP Chair or Associate chair, and the Graduate School.
- VI. *Course Load, Other Requirements, and Graduation Procedures:* Students should carefully read the Graduate School Policies and Course Catalog ([http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate\\_catalog/](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/)) regarding permissible course loads with or without assistantships; the necessity of being registered for 3 hours at the time of the final exam (Portfolio defense); the types of courses and grading options for courses that are eligible for inclusion on the plan of study; and other requirements affecting program eligibility and completion. Students must be enrolled in the semester in which they complete the degree; full-time students must be enrolled for at least three hours during each of the fall and the spring semesters.

### **C. PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT**

Effective for students entering in Fall 2013 and after, all MPA students in their final semester of study shall present and defend an electronic portfolio that includes a variety of course and other program-related materials. Assessment of the portfolio is based on the six performance objectives below; through the portfolio, each student provides evidence (e.g., course assignments, internship reports, videotaped presentations) showing fulfillment of the evaluation criteria associated with each performance objective.

The portfolio is a project about which students should think about and work toward throughout their time in the program. Its overall purpose is to demonstrate that a student's educational experiences, work, and new knowledge show that she or he has developed the competencies expected of an MPA graduate. The performance objectives that follow reflect the "universal competencies" that we and NASPAA, our

accrediting organization, expect MPA students to have developed and strengthened as they complete their degrees.

## I. PORTFOLIO STANDARDS AND PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

**Standard A:** Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively through concise, grammatically correct and clear, well-organized writing.

### **Performance Objectives:**

1. Provide at least one single-authored example that conveys complex ideas through professional quality writing and graphics.
2. Provide examples of a variety of communication formats to reach different target audiences.

**Standard B:** Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively through clear, well-organized oral presentations.

### **Performance Objectives:**

1. Provide at least one example of oral communication presenting analysis succinctly and/or engaging in productive discussion.
2. Provide at least one example of oral communication that conveys complex ideas through visuals.
3. Provide examples of a variety of communication formats to reach different target audiences.

**Standard C:** Perform and utilize qualitative and quantitative research methods and tools.

### **Performance Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate the ability to locate, critically select, and interpret or translate data into information useful for understanding a public administration or policy issue.
2. Demonstrate the ability to use data analysis to improve decision-making.
3. Demonstrate the ability to select and apply an appropriate method, model, or tool to analyze or gain insight into a research question, policy problem, or public administration concern.

**Standard D:** Apply theory to practice in a range of settings.

### **Performance Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate the practical application of theory broadly understood (theories, models, conceptual or analytical tools, frames of analysis, or other scholarly perspectives).
2. Present concrete recommendations for practice that are realistic, achievable, and can be evaluated.
3. Provide examples of the application of theory to professional practice.

**Standard E:** Understand the nature and functions of management and leadership in public administration and policy.

**Performance Objectives:**

1. Reflect on one's leadership style while demonstrating an understanding of leadership theories.
2. Provide evidence of an understanding of organizations and the management of people.
3. Reflect on one's capacity for, and past demonstration of, effective collaboration with others.
4. Demonstrate a sensitive awareness of professional norms, including the values of diversity and inclusion.

**Standard F:** Recognize, analyze, and understand the normative dimensions of management and policy issues.

**Performance Objectives:**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the normative foundations of public administration and the ability to apply that knowledge to a range of settings.
2. Demonstrate the ability to engage in ethical reasoning when confronted with challenging ethical situations.
3. Demonstrate the ability to engage in normative and ethical reasoning.

**Standard G:** The portfolio includes the required artifacts and a 12 to 15-page narrative.

**Performance Objectives:**

1. The portfolio includes the required artifacts.
2. The narrative explains how the included artifacts demonstrate competence with respect to each specific performance objective.

## II. CREATING A PORTFOLIO

Where applicable, MPA core courses will provide students with the opportunity to address the performance objectives. It is the instructor's responsibility to determine which performance objectives are applicable to a particular course and to develop assignments that address the objectives. However, it is ultimately each student's responsibility to fulfill each of the performance objectives by meeting the evaluation criteria. Instructors are not required to create assignments that explicitly align with the evaluation criteria. Each student will determine which products provide the best evidence of satisfaction of the evaluation criteria. Products can include, but are not limited to, assignments from core MPA courses, assignments from elective courses, personal statements or essays developed specifically for the portfolio, or work products (provided the product was created while the student was enrolled in the MPA program). However, at least one assignment from each core MPA course must be included in the portfolio. Thus, at minimum, the portfolio must include 9 distinct products, but students are strongly encouraged to use multiple relevant products to illustrate conformance with each of the criteria; repeated use of one product to demonstrate conformance with more than one objective should be done only if necessary.

Each portfolio also will contain a substantive narrative describing the items that are included and explaining how these products demonstrate conformance with the performance objectives.

Portfolios will be archived and available for viewing by CPAP faculty, students, and anyone given explicit permission by the CPAP faculty. Additionally, students are encouraged, but not required, to make portfolios available to the public via the CPAP website.

Please note that there is no single correct template for portfolio development. Students are encouraged to review past portfolios for ideas, but not necessarily as templates for their own portfolios.

### III. PAPA 5904 (PROJECT AND REPORT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)

During the final semester of study, the student will enroll in PAPA 5904, which is offered each Fall and Spring semester. Prior to the first class meeting, the student should conduct a self-assessment to evaluate performance for each objective, and identify areas for improvement.

During the semester, the PAPA 5904 instructor will advise the student on determining which types of products may be most useful for satisfying each performance objective. Working with the PAPA 5904 instructor, the student will craft a written portfolio narrative and presentation, and develop a plan for ensuring conformance with the performance objectives and associated evaluative criteria that the student or the instructor identify as needing additional attention.

At the conclusion of PAPA 5904, the student will have prepared a final narrative, will have addressed any outstanding issues in demonstrating conformance, and will have developed the final portfolio.

### IV. PORTFOLIO EVALUATION PROCESS

The portfolio including the narrative will be finalized and submitted to the student's faculty advisor and committee no later than 10 days before the last day of classes in the semester during which the student defends the portfolio.

#### 1. Portfolio Defense

During the final week of classes, MPA committees will hold a portfolio defense meeting with each graduating student. This constitutes the MPA final exam. Students will have five to ten minutes to describe how their portfolios demonstrate satisfaction of performance objectives. The committee members and other faculty will then have 15 minutes to ask questions. Without the student present, the committee members will deliberate and reach a final exam result. The committee will inform the student of the exam result, and where appropriate, designate requirements the student must meet for developing additional actions to ensure conformance.

#### 2. Grading

Committees will evaluate the student's portfolio and oral defense on each of the performance objectives according to the following three possible outcomes: Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail.

- a. **Fail:** If a student receives a grade of Fail from the committee on any performance objective, the student must submit an outline for addressing this discrepancy to the committee within 48 hours. The committee chair must then agree that the plan will achieve conformance with the objective in order for the student to be declared eligible for graduation. If the committee does not declare the student eligible to graduate, the student must submit a detailed plan ensuring

conformance with all performance objectives for which the committee indicated a grade of Fail. The student must submit this plan by the first day of classes in the ensuing Fall or Spring semester and register for any remaining courses, or if all other course requirements are complete request a Start of Semester Defense Exception (SSDE). The student and committee will meet within the first five weeks of the semester to discuss the plan, recommend any changes and complete the portfolio process.

- b. **Pass:** If the Committee passes the student on all six performance objectives, a grade of Pass for the portfolio and the final exam will be submitted, and the student will be eligible to graduate.
- c. **Pass with Distinction:** In order to Pass with Distinction, students must receive unanimous Pass with Distinction ratings from all committee members on all performance objectives. It is expected that few students will achieve a Pass with Distinction.

#### **D. CRITERIA FOR CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES**

All portfolio committee members are appointed by the Graduate School upon the recommendation of the CPAP chair. For each student's committee, the committee chair (or co-chair) must be a member of the CPAP core faculty, and the committee must include three faculty members total, with a majority consisting of CPAP core faculty. CPAP faculty emeriti/ae, faculty from other departments, and adjunct faculty may serve on a student's committee with approval of the CPAP chair. Appropriate non-faculty personnel may be recommended to the Dean of the Graduate School for inclusion on a portfolio committee.

Ph.D. students may only serve on a MPA portfolio committees with the authorization of the MPA governance committee. The full committee must be present for the portfolio meeting, and members must contribute to determining whether the student's portfolio is a Fail, Pass, or Pass with Distinction.

**E. THE M.P.A. CURRICULUM (39 Credit Hours)**

**Required Courses — 27 Credit Hours**

Core Area	Course Number and Name
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT	PAPA 5315: Behavioral Skills for Managers
	PAPA 5316: Systems Skills for Managers
	PAPA 6314: Public Budgeting Processes and Their Policy Implications*
	PAPA 6324: Public Personnel Processes and Their Policy Implications*
PUBLIC POLICY	PAPA 6214: Public Policy Processes and Analytical Approaches
	PAPA 6224: Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Policy and Programs (prerequisite: PAPA 6514)
PUBLIC SERVICE	PAPA 5014: Concepts and Approaches in Public Administration
	PAPA 6414: Normative Foundations of Public Administration
METHODS AND ANALYSIS	PAPA 6514: Public Administration and Policy Inquiry

\*PAPA 6354 may be substituted for one of these classes, when taken as part of the Local Government Management Certificate

**Electives (9 credits), Internship, and Portfolio Requirement (3 Credits)**

ELECTIVE COURSES	INTERNSHIP	PORTFOLIO
Three courses (9 credit hours) composed of other CPAP courses or courses in other departments. Options should be related to public affairs and be discussed with faculty advisors. For pre- and early career students, internship credit (PAPA 5954) may be used for 3 of these hours.	To be completed by pre- and early career students as defined in Section I.B. above. Internships may be for credit or not for credit.	Student are required to take 3 credit hours of PAPA 5904, Project and Report [portfolio preparation and defense].

## THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM: Ph.D. IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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The Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) is academia's highest degree and prepares one for research and scholarship, whether or not in affiliation with a university. The Center offers this degree for both full-time and part-time students. Many of these students are mid-career professionals who have reached a point in their professional development where they can commit the time and energy necessary to earn the Ph.D. degree. Qualified individuals just beginning their careers are also welcome. A master's degree in a relevant field (not necessarily public administration or public policy) ordinarily is required for admission, but this requirement can be waived in exceptional cases. Those earning the CPAP MPA degree may apply for admission to the Ph.D. program as the end of the MPA work draws near.

All Ph.D. students take foundation courses in five core areas: policy, organizations, management, ethics, and theory/context. Advanced Topic courses examine topics in the core areas at a deeper level, and the two capstone seminars are a gateway to advanced research and preparation for the dissertation. Other components of the program include Measurement and Analysis Tools, Concentration Courses, the Qualifying Examination, the Prospectus Defense (Graduate School "Preliminary Exam"), and the Dissertation and defense (Graduate School "Final Exam").

### A. PREREQUISITES

Entering students must have had courses in United States government, microeconomics, and introductory statistics. Students failing to meet this requirement must take these courses as soon as possible and must have completed them prior to enrolling in PAPA 6224. The U.S. government prerequisite may be satisfied by equivalent experience, training, or instruction. Equivalent experience is at least three years full-time work in local, state, or federal government in the U.S. This prerequisite also can be satisfied by completing the CLEP American Government exam with a score of 60 or higher. If this requirement has not been fulfilled upon entry into the program, it should be fulfilled in the first semester. Computer competency is also required.

### B. COURSE PREPARATION FOR CORE AREAS

A minimum of 90 credit hours is needed for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. A maximum of one half of the coursework, or 30 of the 60 credit hours of coursework required for the CPAP Ph.D., may be transferred from an accredited university other than Virginia Tech upon approval by two core faculty evaluating the student's plan of study. The 60 course work credits include 18 hours of foundation courses, 15 hours of advanced topics and capstone courses, 6 hours of measurement, 9 hours of electives, and 12 hours of research concentration. These courses must correspond to the requirements of the five curriculum core areas. Students must also take 30 hours of research and dissertation credit, three hours of which must be constituted by participation in 15 sessions of the Doctoral Mentoring Program (DMP) or other activities approved by the faculty for DMP credit.

- I. *Foundation Courses* broadly survey sub-fields of public administration and public policy. These courses are offered by the Center but, as noted above, equivalent coursework at other universities on occasion may substitute for some of these courses, subject to faculty approval.

At least 3 credit hours must be completed or transferred in at the foundation level in each core area except Policy, which requires 6 credit hours. Students complete at least 18 credit hours of foundation coursework in the core areas, at least 9 hours of Advanced Topics, and at least 6 hours of coursework in Measurement and Analysis Tools components. Students should complete foundation courses before enrolling in Advanced Topics classes. Before enrolling in the two-course

sequence of Capstone Seminars, however, they must have completed all foundation courses and passed the qualifying examination.

- II. *Advanced Topics Courses* examine specialized areas. These courses are designed to expose the student to an in-depth analysis of some specialized aspects of a core area of the Center's curriculum.
- III. *Capstone Seminars* provide the opportunity to develop ideas that may form the foundation for the dissertation. They represent the most advanced formal coursework at the Center. The seminars are to be taken in sequence: Capstone A followed by Capstone B. They need not be taken in contiguous semesters. Capstone A is a research seminar that offers students the opportunity to develop ideas for a paper that may support a dissertation topic. Capstone B is a writing-intensive seminar in which students refine rough drafts developed in Capstone A. The final paper for Capstone B should be of publishable quality in a refereed journal. Admission to the capstone seminar sequence is contingent upon successful completion of all foundation coursework and the qualifying examination.

### **C. RESEARCH METHODS**

A basic knowledge of statistics and familiarity with computers is assumed upon admission. Students taking PAPA 6514, Public Administration and Policy Inquiry, or substitute research methods courses approved by the faculty, will be expected to use qualitative and quantitative inquiry and computing skills. If they have not already completed this coursework elsewhere, students are required to complete a graduate-level, intermediate statistics course, which covers techniques through multiple regression. Where appropriate, based on the student's research interests and with the approval of the student's adviser, coursework covering other techniques in advanced qualitative and quantitative analysis may be substituted for multiple regression, such as ethnographic field work, textual analysis, historical research, survey design, simulation, operations research, or mathematical programming. Students may enroll in these advanced courses prior to or while enrolled in either PAPA 6514 or PAPA 6224.

### **D. RESEARCH CONCENTRATION**

- I. *Focused Study*: Students complete nine credit hours of focused study consisting of either coursework, independent studies, internship, and/or field studies. Students complete this work during their CPAP doctoral studies and may not transfer work completed prior to their enrollment in the Ph.D. program. This work should permit the student to delve more deeply into a subject-matter field or an area of theory or research methodology. Faculty advisors will counsel students on the need to take additional credit study or noncredit training in data collection or analysis tools needed for their anticipated dissertation projects as part of the Research Concentration requirement.

Students are encouraged to use the Research Concentration as an opportunity to begin work on the dissertation. For example, the nine credit hours may include special study in a potential dissertation research methodology, an independent study on a preliminary review of the literature base for the dissertation, some background coursework, or some form of applied field work. Students work with a member of the faculty to determine the activities for the nine credit hours. However, the Concentration also may be used to pursue field experiences or special study independent of the dissertation topic.

The Research Concentration may be completed before or after the qualifying exam. Students are encouraged to discuss with their advisors the appropriate time to complete the nine hours of research concentration work and the three credit concentration lecture.

- II. *Concentration Lecture*: A lecture is prepared and presented by students after completing the nine credit hours of research concentration work. This lecture (three credit hours of PAPA 7964) integrates the Concentration work and must be presented before the faculty advisor and at least six other students or guests, including faculty. The lecture may focus on either the anticipated topic of the student’s dissertation or another major area of research concentration that the student expects to offer as part of his or her academic credentials upon completion of the Ph.D. degree. This lecture is given before the dissertation prospectus defense. Where appropriate, part of this lecture should lay out the student’s five-year plan of research for post- doctoral investigation. Students are responsible for assembling the audience for the lecture.

## E. THE Ph.D. CURRICULUM

### Required Courses

Core Area	(18 hours) Foundation Courses	(9 Hours) Advanced Topics (AT) Courses	(6 Hours) Capstone Seminars*
THEORY/CONTEXT	PAPA 6014: Public Administration Theory and Context		Capstones A & B
ORGANIZATION	PAPA 6114: Complex Public Organizations	PAPA 6154: AT in Public Organizations	
POLICY	PAPA 6214: Public Policy Processes	PAPA 6254: AT in Public Policy**	
	PAPA 6224: Public Policy Design	PAPA 6264: AT in Policy Systems**	
MANAGEMENT	PAPA 6344: Leadership and Management in Public Administration	PAPA 6354: AT in Public Management	
ETHICS	PAPA 6414: Normative Foundations of Public Administration	PAPA 6454: AT in Ethics ant the Public Sector	

\*Taken after the qualifying examination

\*\* Student has the option to take either PAPA 6254 of PAPA 6264.

(6 Hours) Measurement & Analysis Tools	(9 Hours) Electives	Qualifying Examination*	(12 Hours) Research Concentration**	(30 Hours) Dissertation Hours**
PAPA 6514: Public Administration & Policy Inquiry or substitute (or PSCI 5115) Intermediate/Advanced Statistics or other quantitative or qualitative skills	9 semester hours in any combination of advanced PAPA courses or courses in related disciplines.	Test in three (3) of the following core areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Theory/Context</li> <li>● Organization</li> <li>● Policy</li> <li>● Management</li> <li>● Ethics</li> </ul>	9 semester hours coursework in dissertation research area. May include Independent Study (PAPA 5974) or Internship and/or Field Studies PLUS 3 hours of Concentration Lecture (PAPA 7964) prior to the prospectus defense	30 semester hours PAPA 7994, including 3 hours dedicated to professional development (Doctoral Mentoring Program). Dissertation credits may be taken throughout the student’s studies.

\*See Section F Below

\*\* May be taken before or after qualifying examination

## F. QUALIFYING EXAMINATION

This examination tests the substantive knowledge, analytical ability, intellectual ability, and writing skills necessary for completing the Ph.D. in Public Administration and Public Affairs. For all Ph.D. students, the format of the exam will change effective Fall 2017.

The Qualifying Exam is designed to assess student mastery of the material covered in the six Foundation courses. Students are eligible to take the exam as soon as they have accumulated at least 21 credit hours of CPA-specific course work, which must include the 18 credit hours of foundation courses plus PAPA 6514 or its designated alternative. Students must take the exam **no later** than after the completion of 30 credit hours, which must include all required foundation courses plus PAPA 6514 or its designated alternative. The exam will be offered in the fall and spring semesters, and students may choose to register for the qualifying exam as soon as they meet the minimum credit hour and course threshold. The Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code is in effect for all aspects of this examination.

Students select **three** of the five core areas – Complex Organizations, Ethics, Public Management, Theory and Context of Public Administration, and Public Policy – to be tested in. The qualifying examination has two parts – written and oral – but will be considered as a whole.

- I. *Written*: Essay questions will be based solely on the content of the foundation coursework (that is, no specific themes and related departure readings will be circulated). The written exam will consist of one broad question for each foundation area. Students must demonstrate mastery of the foundational material by composing coherent essays responding to the questions presented in their three selected fields.

Mastery is defined according to the following criteria:

1. Completeness of response to the question
2. Grounding in the relevant scholarship
3. Accuracy
4. Coherence
5. Synthesis
6. Critical analysis

For each foundation area, the faculty will prepare a periodically updated list of relevant published scholarship, as well as providing students access to course syllabi (both past and present) to ensure that students have a rich and relatively standardized resource in each core area on which to draw to prepare for the exam.

Faculty will set a minimum level of competence (i.e., a passing grade) based on the above criteria. Students must pass all three essays in order to be considered ready to defend the essays in the oral portion of the exam. Students failing to reach this threshold must write new essays during the next scheduled qualifying exam period, but only for the foundation area(s) not meeting the threshold. Students may not change foundation areas between attempts to pass the written portion of the exam. Failure to successfully pass the written exam in all three areas after a second attempt at one or more essays will constitute a failure of the qualifying exam.

- II. *Oral*: The oral defense will be used to confirm faculty assessments of the students' essays. Each of the three essays will be considered in sequence, and students will be expected to sustain and defend their arguments in each essay in response to questions.

Students judged to have passed the written and oral portions of the exam will be considered “qualified” to complete the remaining required coursework in the Ph.D. program. Students successfully completing this coursework may move on to the dissertation milestones, including the concentration lecture, prospectus defense, dissertation, and dissertation defense. Any student whose oral qualifying exam defense is considered unsatisfactory will be given one opportunity to complete an alternative project in order to pass the qualifying exam. Failure to successfully complete this project will constitute failure of the qualifying exam. All students will receive written feedback on their performance in the exam after each cycle in which they participate.

### III. Overview of Qualifying Exam Process:

1. Students will complete foundation courses in all five core areas, and select three of the five core areas to be tested in the written and oral portions of the examination.
2. The examination will be offered twice a year in the fall and spring semesters. The written portion of the exam will consist of three take home essays (see below) and students will have 8 hours to complete each one. The essays will be written on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday schedule with one day scheduled for each core area. The written portion of the examination will be scheduled approximately within the first three weeks of the semester followed by the oral component of the examination approximately two weeks after the last written one. The oral portion of the exam will be scheduled within the first five weeks of the fall and spring semesters.
3. Students wishing to take the examination must fill out the top portion of the CPAP form “Request to Admit Candidate to Qualifying Examination,” have it signed by their committee chair, and submit it to the CPAP office in Blacksburg or the National Capital Region no later than one month before the first day of the written portion of the examination.
4. Prior to the administration of the written examination, each core area committee will develop one question in their respective area. Students will be presented with this question on the day that each respective written exam is administered.
5. On each of the written exam days, a student will have an 8-hour period (8:00am to 5:00pm, with an hour allowed for lunch) in which to respond to the question in an essay no more than ten pages in length, double-spaced.
6. In the two weeks following the administration of the last core area written examination, a six-member examining committee (two readers from each chosen core area) will read and assess the student’s essays in preparation for the oral portion of the exam. At the same time, the student will be given an electronic copy of her/his three essays so s/he may prepare for the oral exam.
7. Each student will have an oral exam committee consisting of the six readers of their written essays. The committee will ask questions that build from the questions the student answered in the written portion of the exam. The oral portion of the exam will last for approximately an hour. Following the exam the committee will discuss the student’s performance on both the written and oral portions of the examination and decide whether the student has earned a grade of pass or fail.

8. For students who fail the examination, the examining committee will determine the appropriate form of a re-take during the next scheduled examination period. In most instances this likely will involve a decision on whether a student should re-take one, two, or three of the examination core areas. Failure to start and complete the required re-take by the next scheduled examination will constitute a second failure of the examination. For students who retake the exam and fail the second time, the entire faculty will meet as a committee of the whole to assess the student's entire performance to date and decide if the student should be allowed to continue to the dissertation.

## G. DISSERTATION

Ph.D. candidates must write a dissertation. The dissertation is expected to make an original contribution to knowledge of the field. The student is eligible to receive the Ph.D. degree upon the successful defense of the dissertation. As a result of their course work and advising, students should have identified and discussed a dissertation advisory relationship with an appropriate faculty member by the time they begin the Capstone seminars.

- I. *Dissertation Committee*: After the student completes the Qualifying Examination and before they begin Capstone A, he or she formally establishes a dissertation committee. The first step in this process is to ask a member of the Center's core faculty to chair this committee. The faculty member who agrees to chair the dissertation committee will then become the student's formal advisor. The next step is to constitute the dissertation committee, which consists of at least four members including the chair.
- II. *Criteria for Committee*: Ordinarily, a dissertation committee is comprised of four members, at least three of whom shall be members of the CPAP core faculty. The chair (or co-chair) must be a member of the core faculty (see Section III. A. below). A fourth or fifth committee member, if not a member of the Virginia Tech full-time faculty, must be approved by the committee chair and by the Graduate School. Dissertation committees are subject to the approval of the Graduate School. Graduate School regulations require that persons other than Virginia Tech faculty members comprise no more than one-third of a dissertation committee's membership. Therefore, if two members from other institutions serve on a dissertation committee, a fifth member must be added from the Virginia Tech faculty. Under no circumstances may more than two colleagues from other universities serve on a dissertation committee.
- III. *The Prospectus and Prospectus Defense ("Preliminary Examination")*: After establishing the committee of a minimum of four members, the student writes the Dissertation Prospectus under the guidance of his or her committee chair. This document essentially is a research design setting forth the program of research that the student proposes to follow in writing his or her dissertation. The prospectus should address the topic or question to be assayed in the planned dissertation; the scholarly and public affairs significance of the proposed research; the present state of knowledge on the topic or question, and the sources that will shape the work; the research design (including the research strategy, methodology, and methods) to be employed; an outline of proposed chapters; and a timeline for completing the work.

When the student and the chair agree that the prospectus is ready, arrangements will be made for the student to defend it before the dissertation committee. Students must complete the "Request to Admit Candidate to Preliminary Examination" form (available from the Graduate School website under Academics/Forms) and have it approved by their advisory committee and committee chair

and the Graduate School. When the prospectus has been successfully defended, the student will proceed to write the dissertation itself.

- IV. *Dissertation Defense (“Final Examination”)*: The defense of the dissertation is the final requirement. No student may advance to the Dissertation Defense until all other requirements have been completed successfully and until the chair and at least two out of three or three out of four of five other members of the dissertation committee agree that the dissertation is ready to be defended. The dissertation defense focuses on the dissertation research project but is not limited to it. Candidates are expected to answer questions about the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the dissertation and its contribution to new knowledge in the field.

The dissertation defense must be scheduled no sooner than six weeks after a draft, approved by the chair, has been distributed to the members of the committee. Students must complete the “Request to Admit Candidate to Final Exam” form (available from the Graduate School website under Academics/Forms) and have it approved by their advisory committee and committee chair and the Graduate School. Members of the dissertation committee must be present for the defense.

## H. ADVISEMENT

The advising process constitutes a crucial dimension of the graduate experience. The advisement systems may vary somewhat between CPAP’s locations.

- I. *General Information about Advising*: The general orientation of the advising activities at both locations is directed not only toward counseling students on the choice of course work, but also toward helping them develop a clear sense of intellectual direction and a framework for thinking about their dissertation projects. The systems at the two locations vary only in order to meet the distinctive requirements of the type of student community that exists at each location.
- II. *Assignment of Advisors*: The CPAP chair or associate chair will assign a member of the core faculty to each student upon his or her arrival on campus. Students who know one or more members of the core faculty may request their advisors by name before arriving, a request that the CPAP chair and/or associate chair will try to accommodate insofar as the equitable distribution of advising duties will permit.

Students may change their advisors at any time with the approval of the CPAP chair and the consent of the new advisors. After a dissertation chair has been selected, however, this option should be exercised prudently and then in accordance with Graduate School procedures. The student may also request a change in the membership of the dissertation committee, subject to the approval of the committee chair and the CPAP chair and in accordance with Graduate School procedures. This option should be exercised with increasing caution as work on the dissertation progresses.

- III. *Transfer of Credit and Plan of Study Development*: An advising session concerning transfer credit and program of study development is offered at least once a year, usually at the beginning of the fall term. Entering students should attend the first session offered after they have entered the Ph.D. program. Students meet with teams of at least two members of the core faculty assigned by the CPAP chair to review the student’s previous graduate work in order to determine which courses match the CPAP curriculum sufficiently to merit transfer credit, to identify the remaining courses that the student must take, and to fill out the original plan of study form.

Once formal decisions have been made by the faculty at each location concerning transfer credits, the faculty will sign the Plan of Study form and submit a copy to their respective office managers who will submit the information electronically to the Graduate School and place a copy of the form into the student's file. The Plan of Study will appear in the student's electronic Graduate School records, along with their transcripts and other information. This document should be looked upon as though it were a contract specifying the requirements the student must meet as he or she moves through the program.

Later adjustments to the Plan of Study are made following consultation between the student and his or her faculty advisor. Before completing 24 hours of course work, the student should schedule a Plan of Study or "milestone" session with his or her advisor and a second faculty member selected by the student and advisor. At this session, the student's Plan of Study will be reviewed and, if approved, will be forwarded to the CPAP chair or associate chair and the Graduate School. In implementing their Plans of Study, students must contact their advisors during their course work to review course options.

- IV. *Doctoral Mentoring Program*: The goal of the Doctoral Mentoring Program (DMP) is to maximize the student learning experience by developing academic-collegial relationships within the CPAP community, and to assist in professional socialization and development.

The DMP satisfies 3 of the 30 credit hours of PAPA 7994, Research and Dissertation, required for the Ph.D. degree program. Attendance is required at a minimum of 15 DMP meetings in order to complete the DMP requirement and enroll in the special section of PAPA 7994 where DMP credit is given. New students in the doctoral program are assigned to mentoring groups in either Blacksburg or the National Capital Region (Alexandria) upon entry.

Mentoring groups meet at least three times in each fall and spring semester for a total of six regular meetings per academic year in each program location. As implied above, participation in the mentoring groups carries the same status as participation in an academic course, and course credit is allocated to students upon completion of the mentoring program. Mentoring groups meet both as a general community and in individual sessions with their colleagues and their faculty advisor. The topical agenda of the community and group sessions covers all aspects of the CPAP program, questions about individual programs of study, individual research interests, and broader topics having to do with intellectual and academic life both during the graduate school experience and afterwards in the career stage.

In some instances, such as when students begin taking courses while they are pursuing admission to the program, it may happen that a student will not be eligible to be assigned formally to a Mentoring Group or to attend an advising session for two or even three semesters. In these cases, the faculty member currently serving as Manager of the Mentoring Program will also act as the student's individual faculty advisor. Such students are welcome to attend the DMP as guests. Should they later be admitted to the program, they will then receive DMP credit for their attendance.

## **I. THE RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT**

As specified in the Policies of the Virginia Tech Graduate School, students may fulfill their doctoral residency requirement through two consecutive semesters of full-time enrollment. Students may also

fulfill the residency requirement on the Blacksburg campus or in the National Capital via the following alternative plan, which has two components:

- I. *Doctoral Mentoring Program*: Participation through the completion of the Mentoring Program as described in Section H.4 above.
  
- II. *Residency Capstone Seminar Sequence (Capstones A and B)*: This is a special two-semester seminar sequence focused on the research and conceptual development of an academic paper, and the revision and continued development of the paper. The focus of the first seminar (Capstone A) is an advanced research topic demanding that students engage in intensive and original thought and analysis. Special colloquia and lecture presentations by various resource persons that follow the formal classroom sessions are also included in this program, and students are expected to attend and participate in them. During the second seminar in the sequence (Capstone B), students extensively critique and revise their manuscript from the first seminar, examine early research and developed research, learn about the publishing process, and present their work at the spring High Table conference. The final capstone requirement is to submit the manuscript for review to a journal.

University residency requirements require that National Capital Region students spend some time on the Blacksburg campus. Students enrolled in capstone seminars spend several days on the Blacksburg campus in the fall semester and in the spring semester during CPAP's annual High Table conference.

## GREIVANCE PROCEDURES

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### A. APPEALS PROCEDURES AT THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY (CPAP) LEVEL

The Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) follows the procedures for grievances as accepted by the Graduate School. Whenever a graduate student believes that any work has been improperly evaluated, or believes that there has been unfair treatment, it is expected that the student will follow the procedures below in a timely fashion. The CPAP faculty shall take all reasonable and proper actions to resolve the question at the Center level.

#### I. Ph.D. Program Students Appeals

1. *All matters except those related to the qualifying examination:* The student should take up the issue directly with the faculty member involved. This may be the committee chair, another faculty member, or an instructor responsible for a course.

If the matter is not reconciled, the student should take the issue to the Ph.D. Program Governance Committee. If the chair of that Committee is a party to the grievance, the student should take the matter to another member of the Committee. The Committee, absent any members who are parties to the issue, will consider the grievance. If the issue is still not reconciled, the student may appeal the matter to the CPAP core faculty.

2. *Matters related to the qualifying examination:* Student grievances related to the qualifying examination should be appealed to the CPAP core faculty. If the matter is not reconciled, the student should take the issue to the Director of the School for Public and International Affairs (SPIA) as described below.

#### II. MPA Program Student Appeals

The student should take up the issue directly with the faculty member involved. This may be the committee chair, another faculty member, or an instructor responsible for a course. If the matter is not reconciled, the graduate student will be expected to appeal the question to the Director of the School for Public and International Affairs (SPIA).

### B. APPEALS PROCEDURES AT THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND UNIVERSITY LEVELS

#### I. School of Public and International Affairs

Any matter not reconciled at the Center for Public Administration and Policy level should be taken to the Director of the School for Public and International Affairs (SPIA).

The Director, in consultation with the SPIA Executive Committee (and/or the Dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Studies as appropriate), shall take all reasonable and proper actions to resolve the question at the School level. The student shall be informed in writing of the results no later than one month after the appeal to the Director of the School of Public and International Affairs.

#### II. The University Appeals Procedure

If the aggrieved student believes that their rights were abridged at the program and school levels, the student may file a request for review with the Dean of the Graduate School. A full description of these procedures is found in the Graduate School Policies and Procedures.

Students should be aware of the availability of the Graduate Student Ombudsperson for consultation and guidance. The graduate student ombudsperson helps graduate students resolve issues and address concerns that arise within the university setting.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

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### **A. CORE FACULTY**

The term “core faculty” as used in this document includes the following: Professors Bredenkamp, Dull, Edisis, Hult, Jensen, Lemaire, Malczewski, Rees, Roberts, Smith and Zuniga, and Professors Emeriti/ae Dudley, Cook, Goodsell, Wamsley, White, and Wolf.

### **B. NORMS FOR COURSE GRADING**

As a policy, the classroom faculty members are responsible for assigning the grades that they deem appropriate. Faculty should make standards for grading known to students at the beginning of each semester. The CPAP faculty agrees that grades should provide an opportunity to provide feedback on various dimensions of performance in courses.

### **C. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND GRADES**

All students are expected to assume full responsibility for knowledge of all regulations pertinent to the procedures of the Graduate School as set forth in Graduate School Policies, available on-line at ([http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate\\_catalog/policies.htm?policy=002d14432c654287012c6542e38200](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/policies.htm?policy=002d14432c654287012c6542e38200)

[a\)](#) and any other regulations and procedures published by the Graduate School and the Center for Public Administration and Policy.

In scheduling their preliminary exams (prospectus defense) and final exams (dissertation defense), Ph. D. students are expected to adhere strictly to Graduate School deadlines and are responsible for confirming those deadlines as announced by the Graduate School for a given semester. Exceptions to those deadlines will be considered only under very unusual circumstances, and must be approved by both the student’s committee chair and the CPAP chair. Concentration lectures must be scheduled before December 1 for the fall semester and before May 1 for the spring semester. No concentration lecture can be scheduled during summer sessions.

The Center abides by the rules and procedures of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System, which may be found on-line at: <http://ghs.graduateschool.vt.edu>. Letter grades A through F are given for all regular courses. No grades are given for research and thesis/dissertation hours; however, thesis and dissertation hours are assigned appropriate equivalent credit hours for the purpose of registration and payment of fees.

Students must be registered to take examinations and defend theses and dissertations.

Students must maintain an overall grade point average (GPA) of at least “B” (3.00). The Graduate School automatically places students whose GPA falls below 3.00 on academic probation. They will have one regular semester to return the GPA to 3.00 or better or face recommended dismissal. All courses taken at Virginia Tech that are listed on the approved program of study must be completed with a grade of “C” or better. Transferred courses will count only as credit hours and will not be used in computing the grade index; the grade transferred, however, must be a “B” or better.

Incompletes remains “I’s” until students complete the work; however, they may not graduate until all incompletes are removed from courses on the official Plan of Study. Most incompletes should be finished within one semester. Grades of “NR” and “NG” count in the GPA calculation, so students should monitor their transcripts regularly for grades that may not have been recorded.

#### **D. COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION AND MONITORING**

- I. *Procedures Used in Monitoring Advisory Committee Assignment Criteria:* At the time graduate student dissertation committees are established, the above criteria are considered by the CPAP chair and by the student's committee chair. The CPAP faculty or specific Graduate degree committees that may be established offer supervision of the process and must review exceptions to the criteria.
- II. *Expectations for Faculty Participation on Student Committees:* It is the expectation that all faculty serving on advisory, thesis, and dissertation committees will actively participate in the academic advisement of students in the direction of their research programs. Participation on student committees should be limited in number to ensure that the faculty member is able to fulfill the responsibilities of committee membership.

Evaluation of the performance of faculty in this important capacity is the joint responsibility of the CPAP chair and appropriate chairs of graduate degree committees that may be established.

#### **E. FREQUENCY OF POLICY GUIDELINES**

Twice a year the faculty meets to discuss policy issues and often changes to the Policy Guide become necessary. The CPAP Policy Guide will be revised appropriately.

#### **F. GRADUATE CERTIFICATES**

SPIA and other University programs offer graduate certificates of possible interest to CPAP students. (See [http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate\\_catalog/certificates.htm](http://graduateschool.vt.edu/graduate_catalog/certificates.htm).) Two certificates – Homeland Security Policy and Local Government Management – are lodged in CPAP. MPA students may use certificate courses to fulfill elective requirements; one of the local government certificate courses may substitute for one of the required courses (either PAPA 6314 or PAPA 6324).

##### **I. Homeland Security Policy**

The graduate certificate in homeland security policy (12 credits) focuses on domestic security and emergency management issues. The certificate can serve either as a stand- alone credential of advanced educational achievement for non-degree students or as a supplement to a master’s or a doctoral degree. Taking four homeland security courses will introduce students to the complexity of the homeland security environment, from analyzing the terrorist threat, to considering questions of hazard mitigation, preparedness, and resilience, to investigating response and recovery strategies.

The certificate is comprised of four courses (12 hours of graduate coursework). The core courses focus on:

1. Threat: PAPA 5254 - Homeland Security and the Terrorist Threat)
2. Prevention: PAPA 6264 - Advanced Topics in Policy: Homeland Security and Prevention
3. Response and Recovery: PAPA 5354 - Homeland Security Response and Recovery

A fourth course is selected from specified electives.

MPA students may use the certificate as their concentration and reflect upon the certificate and homeland security issues in their portfolio or internship. Ph.D. students may use the certificate as a foundation for dissertation research in homeland security policy and management.

**II. Local Government Management**

The graduate certificate in local government management (12 credits) is a set of master’s level courses designed to prepare the next generation of U.S. local government leaders including county and city managers. The certificate provides a thorough understanding of the operations of U.S. local government and the political and administrative contexts of working with elected officials, citizens, and other stakeholders. The courses are taught by current or former practitioners in Virginia local government and are available at multiple sites throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia or at the Fairfax County Government Center. Master of Public Administration students can use the certificate courses to satisfy the 9 elective hours, and they can elect to substitute PAPA 6354 (Human Resources, Financial and Performance Management for Local Government Managers) for either PAPA 6314 (Public Budgeting Processes) or PAPA 6324 (Public Personnel). See the table below for the courses in the certificate. An on-line version of the certificate examines local governments throughout the United States; students need permission from the program director to enroll in these on-line classes.

PAPA 5044	Local Government and the Professional Manager
PAPA 5784	Local Economic Development Planning
PAPA 6354	Human Resources, Financial and Performance Management for Local Government Managers
PAPA 6154	The Context of Local Government Management and Service Delivery