GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK
2012-2013

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
MASTER’S PROGRAM IN
PUBLIC POLICY & ADMINISTRATION

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Introduction

This manual is intended to be of benefit to current and prospective PPA students. It contains important "nuts and bolts" program information, organized alphabetically. Some of the manual sections in part reiterate general University policy, but much of the material in this document is unique to our program.

We urge you to consult the manual before asking faculty about departmental policies. We also welcome input on corrections and changes that should be made, as well as suggestions for additions. Please direct your comments to the department chair.
I. Advising

New students will receive a preliminary advisor prior to their first semester of course work. In general the preliminary advisor may be a faculty member teaching the introductory core course, PPA 200 or the Department chair. The preliminary adviser will guide students in selecting courses during their first year, planning courses for future years, satisfying unmet prerequisites, and addressing other curriculum related issues.

By the end of their first semester, each student must select -- in consultation with the PPA 200 instructor -- a faculty advisor from the PPA core faculty, which may be his or her original advisor. The advisor will guide the student in further course selection, planning for electives, selection of an internship assignment (if appropriate), planning for a master’s project, and other matters. A student’s faculty advisor does not necessarily need to also be their thesis advisor. Students should meet with their advisors at least once a semester.
II. Culminating Requirement Policy

OVERVIEW

The PPA Department is very flexible in its interpretation of the culminating experience requirement for its Master’s students. Students may chose, in consultation/approval with an advisor who must be a full-time faculty member, to decide what constitutes an approved thesis/project. An overriding guideline is that the culminating project be something that would be appropriate for consumption in real-world public policy and/or public administration community. This guideline is intended to (1) increase timely completion of the PPA program and (2) give students experience producing the kinds of reports commonly frequently called for in public sector careers.

GUIDELINES

- Students are encouraged to address some public policy/administration issue or problem, with an eye toward developing a master’s project of perhaps 40-60 pages, with the exact length dependent on the type of topic, methodology, use of graphs and other visual material, etc.

- A thesis/project may consist of the more traditional format of a five chapter analysis of some question including an introduction, literature review, summary of methodology, review of data, and conclusions/recommendations. Alternatively, it could follow a pattern more consist of a PPA master’s project that includes a summary of the problem, development of criteria for assessing solutions, consideration of possible alternatives, and conclusions/recommendations. The master’s project also will generally consider a variety of perspectives on the issue, drawing on different disciplines incorporated within PPA (e.g., economics, political science, organizational behavior). These are just two possibilities. Others are fully acceptable as long as approved by the student’s primary advisor.

- In their thesis/project, students should draw upon the variety of analytical tools taught in PPA Master’s Program core courses. For example, in analyzing data a student might incorporate a regression analysis, analysis of cross-tabulated data, survey results, a comparative case study, and/or a cost-benefit assessment.

- Master’s thesis/projects should also draw upon academic literature as appropriate, but with less emphasis on showing “command of the field” and more emphasis on drawing on exactly what is necessary for the method to be used. In some cases the literature itself might be part of the data analysis (e.g., when the only evidence of effectiveness of alternatives
comes from secondary literature about how such alternatives are working in other states).

- To assist students in completing their master’s thesis/projects, PPA 500 will meet frequently in the beginning of the semester when students are formulating their plans. Clear expectations will be offered regarding products to be developed and should be submitted to the student’s primary advisor and PPA 500 seminar leader every few weeks. For example, students will be required to submit a two to three page prospectus by about the second week of class outlining the thesis/project statement they will be analyzing. Several weeks later students will submit a second memo outlining the analytical approach they will be taking, including possible alternatives to be considered, criteria for evaluating alternatives, and analytical tools or methods to be used. All of these submissions must be done in consultation with the student’s primary advisor.

- A large portion of PPA 500 class time will be devoted to working in groups or as a whole class to help students revise and improve their problem definitions and their analytical approaches.

- The strong expectation will be that students will complete their master’s projects within a single semester. Students will only need to take PPA 500 a second time if they fail within their first time of taking it of being within striking distance of finishing it the next fall or spring semester.

- Students will have two readers (a primary and secondary) for their Master’s thesis/project, and will be expected to have identified the readers before the start of PPA 500. The PPA 500 seminar leader may be one of the readers but this is not required.

- To make it entirely possible to complete the Master’s thesis/project in the time frame of one semester, it is strongly suggested that students begin work on identifying a topic, choosing a primary advisory, and beginning an appropriate literature review the semester before they are scheduled to take PPA 500. This is a minimum suggestion; ideally this pre-PPA 500 work should be begun even earlier.

- A PPA student will only be allowed to enroll in PPA 500 when he/she has no more than one core course to take in the program to take. They may take their last core course at the same time as PPA 500. Only the department chair will be authorized to modify this requirement in exceptional circumstances.

- Good writing is essential to successful completion of the MPPA degree. The Department encourages anyone who wishes to strengthen writing
skills or address writing problems to visit the Writing Center on campus. [http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/) Students should definitely seek the help of a Writing Center tutor if a faculty member advises it. [http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/writingcenter/urwc_flyer.pdf](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/writingcenter/urwc_flyer.pdf)

Students may, at their own expense, hire a private thesis editor. Editorial services vary by each editor and the needs of each student. However, there are certain services editors can and cannot provide to students. Thesis advisors always have final approval of a thesis and its content.

Editors’ services CAN include:
- Providing advice about structure and clarity
- Formatting
- Proof-reading for grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Assisting with style

Editors’ services CANNOT include:
- Doing research
- Conducting surveys
- Writing thesis content
III. Curricular Structure

A. REQUIRED COURSES (27-30 UNITS)

- PPA 200 Introduction to Public Policy and Administration (3 units)
- PPA 205 Research in Public Policy and Administration (3 units)
- PPA 207 Quantitative Methods in Public Policy and Administration (3 units)
- PPA 210 Political Environment of Policy Making (3 units)
- PPA 220A Applied Economic Analysis I (3 units)
- PPA 220B Applied Economic Analysis II (3 units)
- PPA 230 Public Budgeting and Finance (3 units)
- PPA 240A Public Management & Administration (3 units)
- PPA 240B Public Management & Administration (3 Units)
- PPA 295* Internship in Public Policy and Administration (3 units)

* [This requirement may be waived if the student has appropriate experience; see "Internship Policy"]

B. ELECTIVE COURSES (6 UNITS)

Students choose from electives that fulfill their particular needs and goals. Normally one of these courses must be chosen from among PPA electives, although this requirement may be waived when circumstances justify and with approval of the department chair. Currently the Department offers specializations in urban policy and collaborative decision making.

Students considering taking elective courses in other departments should consult with their academic advisor or the department chair about the appropriateness of such courses.

C. CULMINATING REQUIREMENT (3 UNITS)

- PPA 500 Culminating Experience (3 units) (Master's project or thesis)
IV. Grading Policy

University policy states: "Students who are enrolled in graduate degree programs in conditionally classified or classified standing shall be subject to academic probation if they fail to maintain a cumulative and semester grade point average of at least 3.0 in all units attempted subsequent to admission to the program." (1988-90 catalog, page 83)

The PPA faculty has further specified the requirements for our program as follows:

1. A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 in all course work for the degree is required.
2. A minimum course grade of "B-" in all core courses is required. Core courses with a "C+" grade or lower must be repeated, can only be repeated once, and a grade of "B-" or higher must be achieved to remain in the program.

Repeating a course:
A repeat petition is ONLY to be used in situations where one of the courses taken was NOT at Sacramento State.

See Repeat Petition (Appendix A).
V. **Human Subjects Protection Policy and Procedures**

**DEPARTMENTAL HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE**

To protect human subjects involved in student research and meet University requirements in this area, the PPA Department has established a Human subjects Committee. Ordinarily the Committee will consist of the Chair of the Department (who will also serve as Committee Chair) and two others elected from among the full time faculty; elections for Committee positions will occur in the summer prior to each academic year or early in the fall semester.

**COMMITTEE CHARGE**

The Human subjects Committee is charged with reviewing student research that involves contact with human subjects, including but not limited to:

1. Student initiated research related to Master’s projects or theses; and
2. Collaborative projects between faculty and students in which students are involved in project development and contact with human subjects outside the classroom, and/or students who present their findings outside the classroom (e.g., at a professional conference).

Pursuant to University policy, the departmental Human subjects Committee does not include oversight of faculty’s own research, with the exception of faculty-student collaborative projects discussed in the prior paragraph. Proposals by faculty to engage in other research involving human subjects bypass this Committee and go directly to the University’s IRB Committee. Projects in which the only subjects are other students in the same course and the only reporting of results is in that course do not require review. It should be noted that faculty-student projects in which the student role is limited to data collection are considered faculty research for the purpose of this document.

**COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

- The Human subjects Committee will meet at least once a semester, with the meeting date to be announced to faculty and students early in the semester. The Committee Chair will call the meeting. The Chair may cancel the semester meeting if no proposals are submitted.

- Any student who is aware that his or her research will involve contact with human subjects, or who receives advice from a faculty member that such research may involve such contact, must submit a proposal to the Human Subjects Committee. Any faculty member who assigns a
course project for students to conduct research with human subjects outside the classroom must submit a proposal to the Committee.

- When submitting a proposal to the Human subjects Committee, a student or faculty member should:
  1) Complete three copies of the University’s IRB proposal form found at the Research and Sponsored Projects Web site (http://www.csus.edu/research/humansubjects/).
  2) Complete the departmental application that distills the crucial information (see Appendix B).
  3) Submit the above materials (stapled together) in hard copy to the PPA office. Submit the form via electronic mail to the Chair of the Committee.

- Human subjects Committee members will review proposals independently and discuss them when the entire Committee meets.

- The individual submitting a proposal may attend the Human Subjects Committee meeting but it is not required that he or she do so.

- In accordance with standards set forth in the subsequent section, the Human subjects Committee will make a decision about the need for further review of each proposal submitted. Each such decision will be recorded in writing.

- As soon as is convenient after the Human Subjects Committee meeting, the Committee Chair will inform the individual submitting the proposal of the Committee’s decision. The proposer may be notified either by letter or by electronic mail.

- Records of the Committee’s actions, including copies of correspondence and electronic mail messages, will be maintained in the PPA office.

CRITERIA AND STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

Proposals are to be evaluated in accordance with the following five criteria:
1) Does the proposal adequately explain the research project?
2) Does the proposal include any “protected classes” of subjects (i.e., minors, prisoners, pregnant women, fetuses, elderly people, patients of hospitals or mental facilities, or any other person who may be legally unable to give consent)?
3) Can the project be classified as “exempt” by Federal regulations?
4) To what extent does the project pose risk to subjects or the researcher?
5) To what extent does the research design protect human subjects?
The Committee may make any of the following decisions with respect to a proposal:

- It may approve a proposal if it finds no risk to the subjects or researcher and that no members of “protected classes” are subjects, or if the research qualifies for “exempt” status under Federal regulations.

- It may approve a proposal contingent on specified changes to the research protocols.

- It may return the proposal for further information if Committee members find that aspects of the proposal are unclear.

- It may forward the proposal to the University Committee if Committee members find that the proposal poses some risk to the subjects and/or the researcher or if the proposal uses subjects who are members of “protected classes.”

NOTES REGARDING RESEARCH USING SECONDARY DATA

Our expectation is that the vast majority of projects using only secondary data sets (e.g., Field Polls, the General Social Survey) will be exempt from the University approval process because they pose no danger to human subjects, as the researcher is not in direct contact with individuals and it is not possible even to identify individual participants. Nevertheless, secondary data sets may occasionally pose the danger of violating individual privacy, especially if the data set in question is small and makes it possible to identify individuals through a combination of variables. For this reason, students using secondary data sets should complete a proposal describing the variables to be used and means of protecting individual privacy. If the researcher expects that the research is exempt, it should indicate why they believe so in their proposal. A distinguishing factor that is likely to make research exempt is if the database is freely available to the general public. The situation is different when only users with certain credentials, or by paying a certain fee, can access a human subject database.

APPROVAL PERIOD AND MODIFICATIONS TO RESEARCH PLAN

Unless the Committee specifically indicates otherwise, approval for research involving human subjects shall be in effect for one year.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to notify the Committee chair of changes to the research proposal subsequent to approval, if such changes might affect human subjects. Upon being notified of any such changes the
Committee chair may either do one of the following:

1) Approve them if in his or her judgment the changes do not substantially increase the potential of the research to cause harm to human subjects.

2) Call another meeting of the Committee to consider the revised plan.

END OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR REPORT

At the end of the academic year the Chair of the Human subjects Committee will report to the University Committee about the number and disposition of proposals considered during that year. The report may also contain recommendations for improving consideration of proposals within the PPA Department.

See Human Subjects Proposal cover page (Appendix B)
VI. Incomplete Grades

University policy states: “The symbol “I” (Incomplete Authorized) indicates that a portion of required coursework has not been completed and evaluated during the course 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 bring pertinent information to the attention of the instructor and to determine from the instructor the remaining course requirements that must be satisfied to remove the Incomplete. A final grade is assigned when the work agreed upon has been completed and evaluated. An “I” (Incomplete Authorized) should not be assigned when it is necessary for the student to attend additional class meetings to complete the course requirements. An Incomplete must be made up within the time limit specified by the instructor when the completed "I" grade is assigned. The time limit may not extend beyond 12 months. If the instructor does not specify a time limit, then the student must meet the conditions specified by the instructor within 12 months from the day grades are due on the Academic Calendar (the last day of the term) the same term in which the "I" grade was assigned. This limitation prevails whether or not the student maintains continuous enrollment.

“Failure to complete the assigned work will result in an Incomplete being converted to an “F” or “NC” on the academic transcript.” (Catalog 2010-2011)

*Note: Students in the military reserve whose units go on active duty during or around the final examinations period are eligible to receive an “I” provided they meet the conditions above.

See Incomplete Grade Petition (Appendix C).
VII. Internship Policy

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the internship requirement is to ensure that all students graduating from our master's program have significant, professional experience that prepares them for careers in the policy/administrative arena.

B. REQUIREMENT

Unless evidence is provided that a student has fulfilled the requirement in some other way (e.g., in an employment setting), our presumption is that the requirement will be fulfilled through an internship undertaken while the student is enrolled in the program.

The internship should normally provide the equivalent of a one semester (twenty hours a week) placement in a public or private, non-profit agency; under compelling circumstances the department chair may modify these guidelines for individual PPA students. The internship must be arranged in consultation with the student's primary advisor and formalized in an internship proposal (see Appendix D). The proposal is subject to final approval by the department chair. The student must also do both of the following:
1) Register for three units of PPA 295 during the semester in which the internship will be completed (which will often be the semester after the internship commenced).
2) Complete an internship report (for example see Appendix L) and any other requirements set forth by the PPA 295 advisor.

C. INTERNSHIP WAIVER

A student with the equivalent of six months of professional experience in a public agency, private/non-profit agency, or private organization closely linked to the public policy making arena may apply for a waiver from the internship requirement using the department's waiver form (see Appendix E). The department chair determines if the waiver should be granted, and may request that the student provide supporting information (e.g., a note from a supervisor about the student's responsibilities).
Following are examples of the type of experience that would qualify for a waiver:

- A position as a legislative committee consultant;
- A position as an analyst or mid-level manager in a state agency.
- A position as the legislative analyst for a trade organization engaged in lobbying and providing information to lawmakers.

Following are examples of the type of experience that would not qualify for a waiver:

- A clerical position in a state agency.
- A sales or administrative position in a local firm not involved in the policy making process.

D. APPLICATION PROCESS FOR INTERNSHIP

Due to heightened university concerns regarding risk exposure to students and the university during internship placement, the requirements for internship approval for Sacramento State course credit have increased. The specific process that must be followed is described next:

(1) Let the PPA Chairperson know of your desire to pursue an internship in an upcoming semester at least 8 weeks before the semester is scheduled to begin in which you want the credit. Do this by sending him/her an email with the completed internship proposal form which is in Appendix D of this Handbook. The Chairperson will then contact Suzanne Swartz (Contract Administer in Procurements and Services at Sacramento State) to determine if an internship agreement has already been established with this site and the University. If an agreement does not exist, it will need to be in place before proceeding further.

(2) The Chairperson will then notify you of the presence of an agreement, or how long it will take to get one, or if one is not likely to be established. If an agreement cannot be established, then this site cannot be used for a PPA Internship.

(3) Though unlikely for the public governments and organizations that a PPA Internship is likely to occur at, part of the internship agreement may require a site visit by a PPA Faculty and the student desiring the internship. Students will be notified if this is the case. The purpose of this site visit is to look for concerns that are partially described at http://www.rms.csus.edu/riskmanagement/documents/servicelearninginternrisks.pdf.
(4) The student must next receive an orientation to the internship and the site before starting the internship. The orientation is intended to be a very brief outline of the purpose of the internship and must apprise the student of foreseeable hazards. A form is provided to show that the student received the orientation. Students must sign the form indicating that they have received an orientation and have read all required materials. This form is at http://www.rms.csus.edu/riskmanagement/documents/InternshipOrientations.pdf. It must be fully completed and turned into the PPA Chairperson before the internship begins.

(5) Finally, the student must complete and sign a liability release form and turn it into the PPA Chairperson before the internship begins. This form is at http://www.rms.csus.edu/riskmanagement/forms/FieldTripStudentWaiver.pdf.

See Internship Proposal (Appendix D).
See Internship Waiver Form (Appendix E).
See Examples of Good Internship Papers (Appendix L).
http://www.csus.edu/ppa/about/gradmanual/example/index.html
VIII. Newsletter and ListServ

The PPA Office posts *The Communicator*, a start of the academic year, online newsletter designed to keep students and faculty in touch. The URL is www.csus.edu/ppa/current.htm. We will include program developments and announcements, etc. The newsletter welcomes student contributions and provides an excellent forum to share opportunities, information, and special announcements with classmates. All contributions are welcome and encouraged. Please contact the Department at 916-278-6557 or ppa-01@csus.edu.

The PPA ListServ is an information service provided by the department through your e-mail. It is designed for PPA graduate students and alumni at California State University, Sacramento (though anyone may participate). The department provides information to you, via this listserv, about our graduate program, career opportunities, internships and student jobs. This system also allows members to access old messages that have been archived. Additional information is provided upon subscription.

To subscribe, either send your request to the department at ppa-01@csus.edu, or send the following message from your email account to:

listserv@listserv.csus.edu

subscribe PPA-IA-BULLETIN-L *firstname lastname*

end

(Replace italics with your information.)

As a courtesy, the department will subscribe first year students initially. All students are responsible for keeping email addresses current with the department and the listserv.

Anyone may post an announcement, subject to department approval. Send your announcement directly to:

Ppa-01@csus.edu, tedl@csus.edu or suzi_byrd@csus.edu.
IX. Special Majors (also known as Special Master’s Program)

Note: See also the separate policy statement regarding programs for students specifically interested in gerontology and public policy.

A. BACKGROUND

From time to time, a student will consult PPA faculty about the possibility of developing a Master’s program in Special Major, (hereafter referred to as a "special Master’s program"), combining PPA courses (inevitably including only a portion of our core curriculum) with graduate level courses from other departments. Usually such a special Master’s program is designed to address specific interests of the student (e.g., in policy communication) that are not seen to fall neatly within the confines of a single department.

Special Master’s programs have created concerns for PPA faculty, related both to student preparation and integrity of the curriculum. For instance, there may be a tendency to design such programs so as to avoid core courses that students see as especially challenging (e.g., quantitative methods courses). And even if such is not the intention, we are concerned that students may not benefit from the careful blending of disciplinary perspectives that characterizes our core curriculum, although such blending may be possible through mixing courses from different departments. Students may also suffer from not having a clear cohort with whom they can regularly interact.

Special Master’s programs can be appropriate. For example, we have recognized that some students have a deep interest in gerontology issues which currently can only be accommodated through a special Master’s program, given that the University does not now offer a gerontology graduate degree. However, we believe the special Master’s is appropriate only under exceptional circumstances.

B. POLICY

Requests for approval of a special Master’s petition require the signature of the department chair. The chair will sign such a petition only if the student can make a compelling case for both the educational desirability of such an approach and the student's capacity to undertake the project. More specifically, in addition to any requirements set forth by the Graduate Division, all of the following conditions must be met:
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- In the judgment of the chair, the special Master’s petition student would have been admitted to the PPA program if he or she had applied during the prior admission cycle.
- The student has satisfactorily completed all the PPA program prerequisites.
- The student has demonstrated how the courses chosen for the proposed special Master's program fit together in a coherent manner.
- The student provides a written statement that offers compelling reasons for pursuing the special major approach rather than the traditional Master’s degree approach.

The department chair will send a written explanation to any student whose petition for a special Master’s program is denied, explaining the specific reasons for that decision.

C. APPLICATION MATERIALS

In addition to submitting the Graduate Division’s Special Major Application, a candidate for a special master's program is required to submit all of the following materials to the PPA department:

- Three letters of recommendation.
- Copies of transcripts for all previous college level work.

D. ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Special Master’s students generally are bound by the same academic requirements that apply to regular PPA students. In particular, this means that special Master’s students must:

- Obtain a grade of "B-" or better in all of their required PPA courses.
- Maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 or better in their PPA courses.

E. EXAMPLES OF INAPPROPRIATE USES OF THE SPECIAL MASTER’S PROGRAMS

Inappropriate uses of special Master’s programs include but are not limited to the following:

- Constructing a Master’s program that closely parallels the PPA curriculum but leaves out one set of courses (e.g., a proposed "public administration" Master’s that includes the management and politics courses but leaves out the economics and statistics classes).
Constructing a Master’s program from courses from a disparate set of departments without a clear sense of the unique skills and/or learning outcomes each will provide.

F. QUESTIONS

Students should consult the department chair with questions about the appropriateness of a proposed special Master’s program.
X. Special Major (Special Master’s Program) in PPA and Gerontology

Substantive Emphasis Related to Gerontology and Public Policy & Administration

A. OVERVIEW

This document sets forth guidelines for students wishing to develop Special Major Master's degree programs combining gerontology and public policy/administration (PPA) courses (hereafter known as special master's programs in PPA and gerontology).

B. BACKGROUND AND NEED

In recent years, several students have approached gerontology and PPA faculty about developing special master's programs drawing on curriculum elements from both units. Some of these students have a deep interest in advocating for public policies that serve the interests of elderly Americans. Others desire to work in capacities that require both substantive gerontological knowledge and understanding of the policy and administrative arenas.

We believe that the University is well served by permitting special master's degree programs that combine courses from both units. At the same time, we have a mutual interest in ensuring that such special programs are coherent and rigorous. Such an interest is reflected in the present set of guidelines.

The guidelines outlined in this document are in addition to the general standards for special master's programs developed by the University's Graduate Center. Students should obtain and consult the Graduate Center standards.

C. PREREQUISITES

Before a special master's program in PPA and gerontology can be approved, a prospective student needs to meet the following prerequisites:

Complete introductory level college courses in the following subjects with grades of B or better:
1) statistics and/or research methods;
2) introduction to American government; and
3) microeconomics.
D. SPONSOR AND COMMITTEE

All Special Major students in this area must choose as their faculty sponsor either the director of the Gerontology Program or the chair of the Department of Public Policy and Administration. The remaining two faculty committee members must come from these two disciplines, and every committee must include representation from both disciplines. Students must also obtain approval from the Office of Graduate Studies.

E. REQUIRED COURSES

Student in the special master’s programs in PPA and gerontology must complete the following courses:

- GER 101, Elder Care Continuum Services and Strategies
- GER 102, Social Policy for an Aging Society

Note: The Director of the Gerontology Program may waive the above requirements and authorize substitution of other courses if a student has already completed similar course work.

- GER 200, Adaption to Age Related Changes
- GER 221, Models for Successful Longevity
- GER 222, Managing Disorders in Elders
- GER 295, Internship/Project
- PPA 200, Introduction to Public Policy and Administration
- PPA 205, Research in Public Policy and Administration
- PPA 210, Political Environment of Policy Making, or PPA 240A, Public Management and Administration
  PPA 220A, Applied Economic Analysis, or
  PPA 230, Public Budgeting and Finance
- ID 500, Thesis Seminar

Except as specified above, any modifications to these requirements must be approved by the directors of both programs, and will only be permitted under unusual circumstances.

F. PROGRAM TITLE

The master's degree is a Special Major. Each student may select up to four words to describe the emphasis in his/her program coursework (e.g., Elder Policies and Politics). The degree cannot use the words gerontology or public policy as CSUS offers specific degrees in those areas.
G. THESIS/PROJECT

Each Special Major student must complete a culminating thesis or project developed in consultation with the student’s faculty committee.

H. APPLICATION MATERIALS

In addition to the University’s application materials, candidates for the as Special Major are required to submit the following materials to both the PPA Department and the Gerontology Program:

- Copies of the Graduate Special Major Application available from Graduate Studies,
- Three letters of recommendation;
- General Subject GRE Scores;
- Copies of transcripts for all previous college level work; and
- A current resume.
XI. Special Problems (aka Independent Study)

A. BACKGROUND

Each PPA student is required to take two elective courses in addition to completing the core curriculum. Such elective courses are to focus on a particular substantive or skill area (e.g., urban policy, collaborative decision making, higher education), and are chosen in consultation with the student's advisor. Normally at least one elective must be a PPA course.

In the past many students chose to petition for independent study credit to fulfill one or more elective requirements, although this has been less true since the department established the present special problems policy. In some circumstances such an approach was appropriate, especially when course offerings in the area of the student's interest were very limited. However, we concluded that in many other situations students' education was better served by avoiding the independent study approach and enrolling in traditional courses that offer structured meetings and interaction among classmates.

B. POLICY

We begin with the presumption that students normally will enroll in two traditional elective courses. Students wishing to petition for independent study credit in lieu of taking a regular course must justify the conclusion that their educational needs are better served by undertaking an independent study. As appropriate, students must provide supportive evidence (e.g., evidence that existing courses do not cover adequately the subject area in question). All petitions for independent study credit must be signed by both the proposed faculty advisor and the department chair; if the chair is the faculty advisor an additional faculty member must sign the petition. While the major product for an independent study may be a final paper due at the end of the semester, independent study plans must include means of periodically evaluating the students' progress (e.g., through assessing shorter papers and/or exams).

C. EXAMPLES OF APPROPRIATE AND INAPPROPRIATE USES OF INDEPENDENT STUDY CREDIT

Appropriate uses of independent study credit include but are not limited to the following:
• Learning about an area of study relative to public policy and administration (e.g., public policy with respect to government regulation of industry) for which there currently are not courses offered at CSUS.

• Prior to beginning a master’s project, developing a familiarity with a broad area of literature (e.g., the literature on environmental justice) to determine what controversies or questions might be addressed by a culminating thesis or project.

Inappropriate uses of independent study credit include but are not limited to the following:

• Substituting independent study for a course that is regularly offered at CSUS but only by a faculty member with whom the student is unfamiliar.

• Substituting independent study for a course that is offered during the regular school year but not in the summer.

• Taking an independent study in place of a course the student previously had taken but earned a grade lower than a "B-.

D. QUESTIONS

Students should consult the department chair with questions about the appropriateness of an independent study project for elective credit.

See Special Problems Petition (Appendix F).
XII. Student Responsibilities

A. ADDING/DROPPING A COURSE

Students use their MySacState accounts to add and drop classes until Census Date each semester. Students are responsible for verifying the accuracy of their own schedules. Students may add classes they cannot enroll in through MySacState due to course restrictions by submitting an Add Permit, with approving signature(s), to the appropriate department office. After Census Date, students may add or drop classes by submitting an Add/Drop Permit, with approving signatures and documentation, to the appropriate office. Census date and deadlines for adding and dropping courses vary by semester and are published in the Student’s Registration & Advising Handbook and on-line. Please remember that students are not automatically dropped just because they stop attending class. Those who stop attending, and do not submit an approved drop form, may end up with an "F" or a "U" on their transcript, as well as being academically disqualified.

See Add Permit (Appendix G).
See Add/Drop Permit (Appendix H).

B. ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Initiation of advancement to candidacy is the responsibility of the student. Students must file an application for Advancement to Candidacy listing their program of graduate study. The filing procedure should begin as soon as the student has:

1. Removed any deficiencies in admission requirements;
2. Completed at least five of the program’s required courses (except PPA 295) with a minimum grade of “B-” in each and an overall grade point average of at least 3.0;
3. Received approval of a written proposal for the culminating requirement form the thesis advisor and the Department Chair; and
4. Satisfied the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement.

_The PPA department has its own advancement to candidacy form, and students should use that form, not the more general University form._

See Advancement to Candidacy Form (Appendix I).
C. ADVISING AND REGISTRATION

Each semester, continuing students will be given a registration appointment through their MySacState account. Students who did not register the previous semester may need to notify Admissions and Records of their plans to enroll in order to receive an appointment. All students are expected to meet with their advisor at least once a semester and prior to registering for classes.

D. APPLICATION FOR GRADUATION WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE

The forms necessary to apply for graduation with a Master's degree and to file a project or thesis are available the Office Graduate Studies and on-line. The forms require approval signatures and a diploma fee paid at the Cashier's Office before the forms are returned to Graduate Studies. Forms must be completed and filed no later than October 1 for fall, February 1 for spring or summer graduation.

See Graduation Application (Appendix J).

E. CLASSIFICATION STATUS

Students admitted to the program with conditions placed on their admissions must verify that they have met these qualifications before they can advance to candidacy or graduate. Conditionally classified students are required to provide proof (copies of transcripts showing prerequisite completion or other documentation as necessary) to the PPA Office before they can become fully classified and thus eligible to receive the MPPA. Once the office has received evidence that the conditions are met, we will submit a Classification Application to the Office of Graduate Studies.

F. CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT

Continuous Enrollment (PPA 599) is required for students who have successfully completed one semester of PPA 500 but still need to complete the project or thesis.

1. Eligibility is based upon the following.
   a. The student has advanced to candidacy.
   b. The student has not enrolled in 599 more than two of the three times allowed.
   c. The student has completed all course work and does not intend to enroll in any additional courses.
2. To register for Continuous Enrollment, students must go to the Office of Graduate Studies to obtain a registration packet. Packets completed and returned to the Office of Graduate Studies prior to the deadline for that semester avoid the late fee.

G. MINIMUM ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Students enrolled in graduate degree programs as conditionally classified or classified shall be subject to academic probation if they fail to maintain a cumulative and semester grade point average of at least 3.0 in all units attempted subsequent to admission to the program (see MPPA grading policy for additional requirements).

Graduate students shall be subject to disqualification if, while on probation, they fail to earn sufficient grade points to be removed from probationary status. Disqualification may be either from further registration in a particular program or from further enrollment at the campus.

Students may also be subject to administrative or academic probation for the following reasons.

1. Withdrawal from all or a substantial portion of their courses in two successive terms or in any three terms.
2. Repeated failure to progress toward a degree or other program objective.
3. Failure to comply, after due notice, with an academic requirement or regulation.

Students will receive written notification of administrative-academic actions with an explanation of the basis for the action and the appeal processes available to them.

H. REGISTRATION FOR INTERNSHIP (295), SPECIAL PROBLEMS (299), AND MASTER’S PROJECT/THESIS (500)

Students are not permitted to register for the above listed courses through MySacState. They must contact the department to enroll and possibly complete a petition.

See Internship Proposal (Appendix D).
See Internship Waiver Form (Appendix E).
See Special Problems Petition (Appendix F).
I. REPEATING A COURSE

Students are required to complete all core PPA courses with a minimum grade of B-. Students who do not meet this requirement may repeat a course once in order to continue in the program. To do so, the student must obtain prior approval from either his/her advisor or the PPA Chairperson. A repeat petition is ONLY to be used in situations where one of the courses taken was NOT at Sacramento State.

See Repeat Petition (Appendix A).
XIII. Appendices

A. Repeat Petition
B. Human Subjects Application
C. Incomplete Grade Petition
D. Internship Proposal
E. Internship Waiver Form
F. Special Problems Petition
G. Add Permit
H. Add/Drop Permit
I. Advancement to Candidacy Form
J. Graduation Application
K. Examples of Good Internship Papers
   http://www.csus.edu/ppa/about/gradmanual/example/index.html