Master's Degree in Public Administration (MPA)

The degree is innovative in a number of ways. It is an integrated educational experience that balances a prescribed curriculum with choices that reflect personal and professional interests. The strongest integration occurs during the Core Year, which accounts for 14 of the 30 credits and is organized in modules of varying lengths. These modules, which evolve in response to changes in the public service environment, are intended to cover the most important concepts, tools and skills that an individual needs to know to be effective in public service work. Integration also occurs through the capstone, the requirement that must be completed last. It asks that a significant public issue be addressed working in teams, using what has been learned, and in communication with appropriate community organizations and individuals.

Personal and professional interests are pursued most fully in the Individuated Concentration and in the Practicum. In the Concentration (9-credits) the participant defines a theme of special interest, and then takes courses in the Program or elsewhere that satisfy them. In the Practicum (3-credits) the participant spends 240-320 hours with an organization, in Hawai`i or elsewhere, that responds to specific learning goals she or he has defined.

A person working while attending the University can expect to complete the Program in two to three years, while a full-time participant normally could finish in two years. The Program is designed for people with public service experience, as well as individuals who wish to enter public service. There is an option that allows the Master’s degree to be completed in 18 months. The emphasis on the development of meaningful relationships among participants dictates that once the core year begins in the fall there are no new admissions to the Program until the following fall semester.
The degree program consists of **30 credits** organized into **four** interrelated segments:

1. Core Year
2. Individuated Concentration
3. Practicum
4. Capstone

The core year must be taken first and consists of a common, prescribed curriculum. Once it is completed (or simultaneously in the case of full-time participants) students undertake the individuated concentration. The concentration encourages the pursuit of individual interests. The practicum may be done any time after the core year. The capstone consists of a planning seminar taken the semester preceding that in which graduation is expected, and the seminar itself, which is taken in the last semester in the Program.
A. Core Year (14 credit hours)

The first year of the MPA consists of a prescribed core year that emphasizes, among other things, self-understanding, learning to work effectively in groups on problems of common concern, increasing abilities to integrate knowledge and analyze complex issues, and developing individual skills in a cooperative, collaborative environment. It is based on an integrated, team-taught curriculum presented in a format that utilizes seminar and discussion sessions. The core year is organized on the following topics that are linked to one another and are taken in this order:

**Fall Semester**

**Political & Economic System Processes - PUBA 600** (7 credit hours): This course consists of six modules that cover the broad context within which public organizations operate, and a set of communication, organizing, and thinking skills. Certificate and Master's Degree students are required to complete all modules. The Modules are:

- **Managing Ideas, Writing, Time and Thinking Critically**: Writing for yourself - to learn what you think and why; writing for others - to communicate your position and argument; reading analytically; time management; an orientation to critical thinking and to specific tools for thinking about complex issues.
- **Interpersonal & Group Communication Processes**: Interpersonal communication styles; group processes and group development; verbal and nonverbal communication in organizational settings; meeting facilitation; making formal presentations.
- **Economic Perspectives**: The nature of economic thinking and economic analysis; dynamics of Hawai‘i’s economy; economic perspectives on government and public actions; state and local economic issues and economic policy.
- **Political Perspectives**: Foundations and evolution of the liberal state and public institutions in the United States; stresses and conflicts in the American political economy and in American political myths; history of Hawai‘i’s political economy and development of its public institutions; internationalization of economic relations and their implications for local public sector concerns.
- **The Legislative Processes**: Functions of legislatures; the relationship between formal rules and informal dynamics.
- **Hawaiian Perspectives**: Issues of indigenous peoples generally and of Native Hawaiians in particular; public policy and the Hawaiian community; sovereignty and futures for the Hawaiian people.
B. Spring Semester

Policy & Organizational Processes - PUBA 601 (7 credit hours): This course consists of six modules that cover the organizational settings in which public service work is done, and a set of skills useful for information systems, budgets and data analysis. Certificate and Master’s Degree students are required to complete all modules. Pre: 600. *The Modules are:*

- **Understanding, Diagnosing & Improving Organizations:** The characteristics of bureaucracies and the issues that they present; multiple - political, cultural, structural, gender - frameworks for understanding and diagnosing organizations.
- **The Budgetary Processes:** Federal, state, and local budget issues; budget analysis and budgetary process.
- **Issues in Public Policy, Admin. Law & Rule-Making:** Policy analysis as a tool; issues in administrative law, rule-making and bureaucratic discretion.
- **Research Design and Methods:** Asking and answering relevant questions; obtaining and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information; evaluating public programs and policies.
- **Ethics & the Public Interest:** Exploring the idea of “public interest,” and of public service ethics.
- **Hawai‘i’s Futures:** Implications and Consequences: Alternative futures in Hawai‘i and their implications for public problems and public agencies; futures analysis as a tool for public decision-makers.
C. Individuated Concentration (9 credit hours)

The individuated concentration consists of work in courses, directed reading or directed research. In consultation with an advisor, participants choose a theme of interest that becomes the focus of their studies during this part of the Program. The theme may relate to anything of personal or professional interest as long as it has relevance to public issues and public service work. Students may use courses from other departments and programs, as well as the Program in the individuated concentration.

The Program accepts for graduate credit work completed in the state of Hawai`i Management Certification Program and the federal Pacific Leadership Academy. In both cases the work may count as six credits toward completion of the nine-credit Individuated Concentration in the MPA. Please check with an advisor for specifics.

D. Practicum - PUBA 690 (3 Credit Hours)

The practicum places individuals in settings where they can compare organizational structures and policy processes. Participants may choose public, nonprofit or private organizations as practicum sites. The faculty advisor works closely with each person to make arrangements, based on the participants' interests and learning goals. Sites are not restricted to Hawai`i or the U.S. The practicum is a minimum of 240 hours. Most people find it convenient to undertake the practicum in the summer months, but there is flexibility on timing and scheduling.
E. Capstone (4 credit hours)

The capstone completes the Program experience by integrating knowledge and skills gained through course work and the practicum into an examination of a public issue of importance to Hawai`i or the Asia-Pacific Region. The focus is on pooling individual members’ resources in a collaborative analysis of the selected public issue.

**Capstone Planning - PUBA 709 (1 credit hour):** The capstone planning seminar is taken during the semester preceding that in which graduation is expected. Students use the planning seminar to define a topic or issue, decide upon the focus and methods to analyze that topic, locate informational resources, identify public organizations or officials as recipients of the work, and establish working relationships within the group.

**Capstone Seminar - PUBA 710 (3 credit hours):** The capstone seminar is taken during the last semester in the Program. Participants undertake and complete group work based upon what was decided in the Capstone Planning seminar. The completed analysis is shared with the individuals or organizations identified in the planning seminar.

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F. Thesis Option - PUBA 700 (variable credit hours)

The thesis is an individualized project selected, with an advisor’s approval, by participants wishing to pursue in-depth research in a specific area. The thesis option involves six or nine credits of thesis research on an agreed-upon topic. A thesis research committee oversees and evaluates thesis work. If nine credits are taken in thesis work, no course work is taken in the individuated concentration. If only six credits are used for the thesis, three credits are taken in the individuated concentration. These credits must be consistent with a theme agreed to by the participant and a faculty advisor.