

MPA Handbook: Guide for Graduate Students

**Master of Public Administration Program
Political Science Department
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Master of Public Administration

The Department of Political Science offers a Masters Degree in Public Administration (MPA). The MPA program, accredited by the **National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration** (NASPAA), is designed to provide professional training for careers in public management, public safety, and policy analysis in the public and nonprofit sectors. The Master of Public Administration is intended to equip students to conduct scientific inquiry in the social sciences, develop insights into the field of public administration, and apply knowledge to the solution of specific problems in the field.

We welcome applicants with any undergraduate major. Employees entering the public sector have a wide range of backgrounds, including the sciences, social sciences, technology, and the humanities.

Graduates of public administration programs hold a wide range of positions in governmental and nonprofit organizations. Examples include city manager/administrator, human resource director, social services administrator, budget manager, facilities manager, legislative analyst, agency director, community relations specialist, nonprofit executive director, policy analyst, budget analysts, planner, management consultant, community development director, among others. Courses are scheduled in the evening with working professionals in mind. Special activities and program office hours are scheduled to accommodate those who are employed full-time.

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Director Welcome

Dear MPA Students:

Welcome to the Department of Political Science at Missouri State University. We trust that the time you spend during your course of study here will be challenging and rewarding. We have compiled this handbook to help answer some of your basic questions about the MPA program, including degree requirements, course scheduling, expectations of the faculty, etc.

The handbook covers specific information regarding the Master of Public Administration Program. It explains general policies and requirements, such as thesis/seminar paper requirements, application for candidacy, etc. The Handbook also describes policies and procedures for graduate assistants and contains other useful information, such as a list of “Frequently Asked Questions” about the Program. We expect all students in the program to be very familiar with requirements and aware of the deadlines.

If there are any questions or issues that we have not covered, or if you have any suggestions regarding improvements to this handbook, please let me know.

Best wishes to you in your graduate studies in the Department of Political Science.

Kant Patel

Kant Patel, Director
Master of Public Administration Program

Mission of the MPA Program

The MPA program is designed to prepare students for careers in public service and to provide professional development for administrators of public agencies and non-profit organizations. The purpose of the program is to help students develop theoretical and analytical insights into problems of governance in a democratic society, into the interplay between politics and public service, and into the relationship between elected officials and bureaucracy in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Specifically, the goals of our program, in conjunction with the University's state-wide mission in public affairs, are to produce graduates who:

1. are culturally competent and understand the importance of civic engagement and the role of ethical leadership in public service;
2. have an understanding of the role that public service plays in democratic society; and
3. are prepared to pursue advanced study in public administration.

MPA Degree Requirements

The MPA degree program consists of 39 semester hours.

I. Required Core Courses: Total 21 hours

- PLS 673: Policy Analysis
- PLS 676: Quantitative Methods for Political Science and Public Policy
- PLS 752: Public Personnel Management
- PLS 753: Management Techniques and Organizational Behavior
- PLS 756: Financial Management in State and Local Government
- PLS 771: Seminar in Public Administration
- PLS 778: Ethics and Leadership in the Public Sector

NOTE: If the student has taken a 500 level required course for undergraduate credit, he/she shall substitute a 600 level course selected with the approval of the MPA Director for the course already taken. **No more than three courses at the 500 level can be counted toward fulfillment of the MPA degree.**

II. Cognate Fields: Total 18 hours

The MPA candidate, in consultation with the MPA Director, shall choose a concentration (cognate field) in, **Local Government Management, Public Safety, or Public Policy**. Students are required to take a minimum of nine hours in their area of concentration, but there are several additional courses students should take to further their specialization and expertise in accordance with their particular career interests and objectives. In addition, the total number of courses depends on the research option selected (thesis or non-thesis option) and whether the internship is waived.

Listed below are required and elective courses pertaining to each of the cognate field. Students should choose courses contained within each cognate field below.

1. Local Government Management

REQUIRED COURSES:

- **PLS 776: Local Public Service Delivery (Spring-Even years)**
- **PLS 777: Local Government Politics and Administration (Spring-Odd years)**

ELECTIVE COURSES:

- PLS 772: Introduction to Public Safety Services
- PLS 757: Topics Seminar in Public Policy and Administration (When appropriate)
- PLS 759: Seminar in Administrative Management and Organization Theory
- PLS 760: Management of Intergovernmental Relations
- PLS 761: Management of Nonprofit Organizations
- ACC 632: Governmental and Not-For-Profit Organizational Accounting
- ECO 615: Public Finance
- IDM 701: Project Management
- PLN 670: Planning Law
- PLN 671: Land Use Planning
- PLN 704: Community Resource Planning

2. Public Safety

REQUIRED COURSES:

- **PLS 772: Introduction to Emergency Services (Fall)**
- **PLS 773: Hazard Analysis, Mitigation, and Preparedness (Spring)**

ELECTIVE COURSES:

- PLS 717: Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Homeland Defense and Security
- PLS 719: Strategic Planning/Org. Imperative in Homeland Defense and Security
- PLS 757: Topics Seminar in Public Policy and Administration (when appropriate)
- PLS 759: Administrative Management and Organization Theory
- PLS 761: Management of Nonprofit Organization
- CRM 740: The Foundations of Homeland Defense and Security
- PBH 720: Epidemiology

3. Public Policy

REQUIRED COURSES:

- **PLS 762: Public Policy and Program Evaluation (Spring-Odd Years)**
- **PLS 763: The Policy Process (Fall-Even Years)**

ELECTIVE COURSES (Select one of the three sub-sets):

Policy Analysis:

- QBA 737: Research Design and Analysis
- MTH 647: Applied Regression Analysis
- MTH 648: Applied Time Series Analysis
- PSY 627: Multivariate Statistical Methods for the Behavioral Sciences
- PSY 745: Statistics and Research Design
- ECO 709: Applied Econometrics

Health Policy:

- PLS 754: Seminar in Health Policy
- HCM 604: Health Care Economics
- MGT 701: Health Services Organization
- NUR 631: Gerontological Health Care
- NUR 700: Epidemiology OR PBH 720: Epidemiology
- PBH 745: Environmental Health
- PBH 756: Introduction to Public Health
- COM 605: Health Communication
- FGB 788: Healthcare Financial management
- HLH 752: Health Risk Identification and Management
- PSY 771: Organizational Health Psychology
- SWK 715: Social Welfare Policy and Services

Environmental Policy:

- PLS 755: Public Policy for a Global Environment
- ECO 640: Economics of Environment
- GRY 731: Environmental Assessment
- RIL 637: Environmental Regulation
- HST 615: American Environmental History
- PBH 772: Toxicology and Hazardous Materials
- PLS 757: Topics Seminar in Public Policy and Administration (When appropriate)

III. Research Options (Total 0 – 6 hours):

Non-Thesis Option: Complete Required Core courses and up to 18 hours of courses in the student's chosen area of concentration (See #2 above).

Thesis Option: Complete Required Core courses, PLS 799 Thesis (6 hrs), and up to 12 hours of courses in the student's chosen area of concentration (See #2 above).

IV. Internship

- PLS 781: In-Service Training in Public Administration (0-3 hours)

The internship is designed to give students the opportunity to integrate the theory and practice of public administration. Students are required to work a minimum of 300 hours in a public or nonprofit agency and write a comprehensive paper that details their internship experience. Additional information about internship requirements are found in the Section, **"Internship Requirements."**

V. Comprehensive Examination

The Director of the MPA Program will prepare and administer a written comprehensive examination covering the general field of public administration, reflected in the Required Core courses offered (See above). Students not performing at a satisfactory level will be required to pass a comprehensive oral examination administered by the MPA faculty.

*Please Note: The Comprehensive Examination requirement is **not** required for students choosing to pursue the Thesis Option.*

Evaluation of the MPA Program

Evaluation from the students in the MPA program is both desired and solicited. We encourage students to talk with MPA faculty about their perceptions of each course taken while in the MPA program. Prior to the close of each semester a course evaluation form will be submitted to each student enrolled in a MPA course. On this form the student is encouraged to analyze and describe strengths and weaknesses of MPA courses, instructors and procedures. In addition, upon completion of all course requirements the MPA Director conducts an exit interview with each student. This provides an opportunity for discussion of areas of program strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for improvement.

MPA Faculty

The graduate public administration faculty places particular emphasis on teaching and working with individual students. Members of the graduate faculty are very active in professional areas of research and publishing. Many are active in areas of public service through their work on various advisory boards and committees of city and state government. Contact information for each MPA faculty member is provided below.

	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Email</u>
Kant Patel , Professor and MPA Director (Ph.D., University of Houston) Policy Analysis, Health Policy, Intergovernmental Relations	836-5925	KantPatel@missouristate.edu
Mark Rushefsky , Professor (Ph.D., SUNY-Binghamton) Policy Analysis, Health Policy, Environmental Policy, Public Administration	836-5922	MarkRushefsky@missouristate.edu
Mark Ellickson , Professor (Ph.D., Southern Illinois University) Organizational Behavior, Quantitative Methods	836-4870	MarkEllickson@missouristate.edu
Patrick Scott , Professor (Ph.D., Syracuse University) Public Administration, Organization Theory	836-5028	PatrickScott@missouristate.edu
James Kaatz , Associate Professor (Ph.D., Northern Illinois University) Human Resources Management, Public Management	836-6424	JamesKaatz@missouristate.edu
Yuhua Qiao , Associate Professor (Ph.D., Florida Atlantic University) Financial Management, Public Budgeting	836-6426	YuhuaQiao@missouristate.edu
David Johnson , Assistant Professor (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh) Emergency Management, Information Technology, Public Administration	836-5630	DavidEAJohnson@missouristate.edu

Important Information for All MPA Students

Research Requirement:

A student admitted to candidacy for a degree may elect the Thesis or Non-thesis Option as the research component to be completed in partial fulfillment of the MPA degree requirements.

Comprehensive Examination:

During their last semester of study, students choosing the non-thesis option are required to complete a comprehensive written examination. The comprehensive examination provides students the opportunity to demonstrate a high level of understanding regarding the various courses they have taken in pursuit of their graduate degree. Questions are formulated by the MPA Director, in consultation with the MPA faculty. Questions cover the range of topics and materials taken from the Required Core sequence of courses (PLS 673, PLS 676, PLS 753, PLS 756, PLS 771, and PLS 778). The comprehensive examination responses are graded by the entire MPA faculty. Students not performing at a satisfactory level will be required to pass a comprehensive oral examination.

Special Student Status - Attending Courses Prior to or Without Formal Admission:

Without formal admission, but with departmental permission, a student may take up to 9 credit hours of instruction. A student must first be admitted to the Graduate School as a non-degree seeking student. If appropriate, these credits may be applied to the MPA degree but taking such courses in no way guarantees admission to the MPA program.

Graduate Assistantships:

The Department typically awards about five graduate assistantships per year. All students applying for a graduate assistantship must have their GRE scores (verbal and quantitative) on file at the time of application. A stipend of \$7,340 per academic year and a waiver of tuition accompany the assistantship. Loans, part-time employment, and some cooperative education placements are also available.

Expectations and Requirements:

To remain in good standing, students must maintain continuous registration for each Fall and Spring semester until they have completed all requirements. A minimum grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale must be maintained in order to graduate. Compliance with other University regulations is also required. A student enrolled in the MPA program is limited to two "C" course grades (2.0 on a 4.0 scale). An individual is placed on academic probation after earning the second "C" and he or she is subject to suspension for academic deficiency if he or she makes a grade below a "B" while on this period of probation.

Computer Proficiency:

Familiarity with basic microcomputer applications, including word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation programs, is essential to successful completion of graduate study. Familiarity with basic Internet tools is also recommended. Students lacking in these skills are strongly urged to develop them prior to enrollment or early in their program of study. While access to the Internet is available on campus, it is generally advantageous for students to have access through a connection at home or work. Students should provide the MPA Director their email address as soon as possible. New students who do not already have an email account may obtain a University account by presenting their Student ID at several Computer Labs across campus.

Specified Period of Time for Degree Completion:

Only that course work completed within the eight calendar years prior to completion of the degree requirements will apply toward graduation.

Residency and Transfer Credits:

A maximum of nine semester hours of graduate credit from an accredited institution may be applied toward the MPA degree. The MPA Director will evaluate each course requested for transfer to determine its equivalency in the MPA Program.

Course Substitutions:

Under certain circumstances, students may be unable to take all the courses required by their degree outline or may have a specific career need that is not met by the required curriculum. In such cases, the MPA Director may recommend a substitution of courses. Requests for course substitutions must be approved by the MPA Director. The Dean of the Graduate College has the final authority to approve or disapprove course substitutions.

Independent Study:

From time to time students may find it necessary to pursue an independent study in lieu of a regularly-approved course or elective. The Department recognizes the benefit of allowing students to pursue graduate study on an independent basis, but it also recognizes the disadvantages that may accompany an excessive number of independent studies. Accordingly **it is the policy of the Department that students take no more than one independent study course as part of their program of study for the MPA degree.**

Candidacy For The Degree:

To apply for candidacy for the degree students are required to submit an “Advisor Approved Program of Study,” to the Graduate College. It is essential that students consult with the MPA Director in planning their degree program. A student may submit the Advisor Approved Program of Study form at any time after having been admitted to the MPA degree program, but it is best to submit it to the Graduate College after completion of more than half of the coursework required for the degree.

1. Students must consult with the MPA Director before completing the Advisor Approved Program of Study form. The Advisor Approved Program of Study is available for download at the Graduate College’s website (<http://graduate.missouristate.edu>).
2. The MPA Director will forward the Advisor Approved Program of Study form to the Graduate College for approval. Once approved, a copy will be sent back to the MPA Director and become part of the student’s file. The student will also receive a copy of the approved form from the Graduate College.
3. Once the Advisor Approved Program of Study has been approved, changes to it may be made by completing a Change of Degree Program form which can be obtained from the Graduate College’s website.

Internship Procedures and Requirements

Non-Thesis Option- PLS 781

Procedure

Students normally pursue internship credit during the summer between the first and second years of study or during the last semester of the course work. Students should consult with the MPA Director during the semester before they plan to begin their internship. Students are free to look for an internship on their own, however, the internship must be in a local, state, or federal agency, or with a non-profit organization. Students who need help in seeking an internship should work with the MPA Director to find a suitable agency. The MPA website also has internship information for students:

http://polsci.missouristate.edu/MPA/Internship_Search.htm.

Requirements

Once an agency has agreed to take on a student, the student should review all requirements with the MPA Director. The following are requirements for receiving credit for an internship:

1. You are expected to work 300 hours for 3 credit hours. In the regular semester, this means 20 hours a week for 15 weeks.
2. At least a week prior to starting your internship, you must turn in a completed "Internship Agreement" form to the MPA Director.
3. Maintain a weekly log of your work/activities as an intern. It should summarize your work activities and observations. Submit these logs to the MPA director on a weekly basis.
4. Turn in an internship portfolio to the MPA director a week before the final exams period. The portfolio should include your formal internship report and copy of projects you completed as an intern (excluding material of confidential nature). You should consult with your agency supervisor about what is public and what is confidential information.
5. Your internship report should be about 20 double-spaced types pages and should discuss the following:
 - a) A brief description of office/and organization where you worked – organization goal, mission, organization, etc.
 - b) Nature of your responsibilities and projects you worked on.
 - c) Your experiences as an intern – what you learned.
 - d) Problems you observed and your suggested solutions.
 - e) Your report should integrate relevant academic literature and classroom learning.
6. Turn in a completed "Student Evaluation of Internship Experience" form to the MPA director a week before the final exams period.

7. Remind your agency supervisor to turn in completed "Agency Evaluation of Student Intern" form a week before the final exam period.

These forms are available on the MPA website:

http://polsci.missouristate.edu/MPA/Current_StudentForms.htm.

Internship Experience

The internship consists of more than simply carrying out an agency's clerical or courier duties. During the time spent with the agency, the MPA student should be in an applied learning experience for management skills and policy analysis and implementation. Examples of the level of responsibility commensurate with a master's level internship include:

- Conducting research and helping to develop or revise regulations or policies for the agency
- Evaluating the impact (costs or benefits) of changes to regulations, policies or programs
- Reviewing and analyzing effectiveness of regulations, policies, or programs
- Coordinating work and monitoring the progress of a team or group project
- Facilitating meetings or group discussions
- Writing technical or nontechnical documents (summaries and memos)
- Training others in specific skills areas
- Setting up information systems (including designing information flow; devising formats)
- Development of standards and measures for various aspects of agency performance
- Installing troubleshooting or conflict resolution techniques

You should meet with their supervisor to establish goals and objectives for your work. Come to an understanding about what is expected of you and establish a time line for the successful completion of the projects on which you will be working. Discuss the methods through which your work will be monitored and evaluated by your supervisor during the semester.

Waiver

The MPA internship is designed for persons who have no experience in working in a public or non-profit agency. Students who have had considerable experience working in the public or non-profit sectors may be permitted to exempt the internship requirement. Students desiring to do so are required to submit a formal letter of request to waive the internship requirement. This request should be submitted to the MPA Director and contain a clear rationale for the waiver. The request should include a resume and description of the student's job duties and administrative or managerial responsibilities associated with their current or prior position(s).

Grade

The grade for the internship will be assigned by the MPA Director. Much of the grade will be determined according to the quality of the internship paper, and particularly, how well you were able to integrate various theories and ideas taught in the classroom into your work experiences. The grade for the paper will also be based, although to a much lesser degree, on the quality of your performance as documented in your supervisor's evaluation.

Thesis Option

The purpose of the thesis is to give students the opportunity to pursue in-depth, independent research in a particular area of interest. The thesis option is especially encouraged for those planning to pursue further study at the doctoral level. A thesis project normally involves a significant expenditure of time and effort devoted to a comprehensive background review of the literature. It often entails the collection and analysis of original data and is used to test theoretical frameworks, qualify existing theories, and in general, add to our understanding regarding an issue or series of issues germane to the field.

Students wishing to pursue the thesis option will need to form a graduate committee consisting of three members, two of whom must be on the MPA faculty and one of whom must serve as Chair. In addition, all three members are required to have graduate faculty status. Appointment of a committee member who is not on the graduate faculty at Missouri State University must first receive approval from the Dean of the Graduate College. The thesis shall be approved by the committee and by the Graduate College before the degree is granted. Approval of a thesis proposal must be obtained in order to exercise the thesis option. After a proposal is accepted, any change in the original proposal must be approved by all members of the student's committee.

The thesis should not be viewed as a means by which to take fewer classes. Indeed, a thesis entails a great degree of work. A student is, in essence, writing the equivalent of a book that will be reviewed by both members of the thesis committee and the graduate school.

The thesis must contain original research (it should not simply be a recitation of facts) and must be presented to the members of the committee in a chapter-by-chapter fashion. Students must follow an acceptable manual of style when writing a thesis (see Graduate College guidelines contained with the Graduate Catalog for more information) and use the same style throughout the thesis. Otherwise, the thesis will be rejected by the Graduate College.

Theses with numerous grammatical errors, spelling errors and so forth are unacceptable. It is recommended that a student use the services of Missouri State University's Writing Center and/or hire a proof-reader to make necessary corrections. Be forewarned that a sub-standard thesis will delay or prevent graduation from the program. Finally, it is important to remember that your committee must have time to read and review your final product. When the thesis is completed, present copies of the thesis to all members of the committee at least TWO WEEKS prior to the deadline set by the graduate school for submitting a thesis.

Academic Integrity at Missouri State University

Missouri State University is a community of scholars committed to developing educated persons who accept the responsibility to practice personal and academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing and following the university's Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Student Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures, available at www.missouristate.edu/provost/22102.htm and also available at the Reserves Desk in Meyer Library. Any student participating in any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to sanctions as described in this policy.

Non-Discrimination Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, contact the Director of Disability Services, Plaster Student Union, Suite 405, (417) 836-4192 or (417) 836-6792 (TTY), <http://www.missouristate.edu/disability>. Students are required to provide documentation of disability to Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations. Disability Services refers some types of accommodation requests to the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, which also provides diagnostic testing for learning and psychological disabilities. For information about testing, contact the Director of the Learning Diagnostic Clinic, (417) 836-4787, <http://psychology.missouristate.edu/ldc>.

Accelerated Master of Public Administration Option

Eligible Missouri State University majors in public administration or political science may apply for preliminary acceptance into the Master of Public Administration program through the Accelerated Master's of Public Administration Program. If accepted, an undergraduate student can take only the following classes for a maximum of 12 hours to count for both undergraduate and graduate credit: PLS 673 (Policy Analysis), PLS 676 (Quantitative Methods of Political Science and Public Policy), PLS 771 (Seminar in Public Administration), and PLS 781 (In-Service Training in Public Administration). This option gives exceptional undergraduate students the opportunity to complete their bachelor's and master's degrees in ten semesters and a summer.

Undergraduate students must be accepted into the Accelerated MPA program and receive prior approval from the MPA Director before enrolling in a course for dual credit to count towards the Master's degree. Student must also complete the necessary form for dual credit. Acceptance into the program and all approvals must be completed prior to the end of the Change of Schedule Period for the course(s). See the Graduate College for further information.

Students in the Accelerated Master's Degree Program must maintain a 3.50 GPA in the public administration and/or political science curriculums and maintain a 3.00 overall GPA to remain in the program.

Admission Requirements:

1. Public administration and political science undergraduate students at Missouri State University must have at least junior standing and a minimum of 60 credit hours.
2. Applicants must have a minimum 3.50 GPA in the public administration or political science curriculum and 3.00 overall GPA.
3. Eligible students must submit a sponsorship letter from a Political Science faculty member to the MPA Director recommending the student to the program.
4. Transfer students will be allowed into the Accelerated Masters Degree Program. Transfer students must have a minimum of 30 graded hours of course work at Missouri State University and meet all the above mentioned requirements before they can be accepted into the program.

Admission Process:

Prior to or during his/her junior year, the prospective student should discuss the possibility of participating in the Accelerated Master's Degree program with the MPA Director. The Director will recommend the student for acceptance into the Accelerated MPA program if she/he meets the admission requirements. Students admitted into the Accelerated MPA program will not be fully

admitted into the MPA program until completion of their undergraduate degree and fulfillment of all other requirements for admission to the MPA program (such as the minimum score of 900 on Graduate Record Examination and submission of three letters of recommendation). Students should be awarded the bachelor's degree upon completion of a minimum of 125 hours of combined graduate and undergraduate course work and degree specific requirements.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between a thesis and non-thesis option?

The essential difference between the two is whether you prefer to work on a more comprehensive and in-depth research project or whether you prefer to take additional courses to round out your program of study. The thesis option provides 6 hours of graduate credit and normally entails the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, with a view toward testing or qualifying existing theory(ies) germane to the field.

Students choosing the thesis option will need to request faculty members to serve on his or her committee; this includes requesting a faculty member to serve as Chair. Up to one member outside the Department may serve on the committee. The Chair plays a particularly important role in helping guide the student toward successful completion of the thesis. The committee will evaluate the quality of your thesis and forward it on to the Graduate College for external review.

Given the fact that the thesis is a research-intensive undertaking, it is usually pursued by those planning doctoral level work as well as those who are capable of working independently without a lot of day-to-day oversight. Completed and approved thesis projects are bound and placed in Meyer Library Collections. ***Students choosing the thesis option are not required to take comprehensive exams.***

2. I'm having a serious problem with my professor. What should I do?

The best course of action is to discuss your concerns with your professor and try to resolve it at that level. Normally, any kind of misunderstanding or miscommunication can be resolved fairly easily. If for some reason the problem is not resolved, then you should discuss your concerns with the MPA Director and/or the Department Head. Please be assured that, if you have any kind of problem, the Department is committed to treat your concerns with respect and confidentiality and to resolve quickly any problems you may encounter.

3. I'm having serious problem with another student. What should I do?

Try to resolve your problem with that student. If that does not work, see Point Number 2.

4. Where can I get a key to the graduate assistant office?

Graduate Assistants are allowed to have a key to their office. Your key request can be processed through the Department's Administrative Secretary. If you plan to use your office during nights or weekends, please make sure you lock everything up before you leave.

5. Can I use the conference room refrigerator and/or microwave oven?

Yes, within reason. The refrigerator and microwave were purchased by the faculty for their use. Therefore, please keep your use to a minimum and respect others by keeping the area clean;

cover your food when using the microwave and do not let last week's lunch become a science project!

6. Can graduate assistants have outside employment?

Yes, technically, but there are limits. Any outside job that interferes with the student's successful completion of course work or graduate assistant responsibilities will result in termination of the assistantship. One of the underlying reasons why we provide assistantships is to give students financial support in order to *avoid* having to pursue outside employment. A full-time load for students on a graduate assistantship is nine semester hours. Between working up to 20 hours for the department, as well as pursuing a 9-hour semester load of graduate study, it is almost impossible to hold down an outside job and be successful in the program.

7. What is the "Advisor Approved Program of Study"?

This is the form you will need to fill out generally during your second full semester in the program. The form is essentially your "roadmap"—that is, the courses you will be taking to complete your degree. This form is required by the Graduate College, and you will be "encumbered" if this is not on file after having completed up to 15 semester hours. That means you cannot register for the next semester until this form is completed and signed by your graduate program director.

8. How do I write a research paper?

Talk to your professor. S/he will be happy to go over course requirements and provide specific information regarding research paper requirements. Missouri State University also has a campus Writing Center that is staffed with individuals who will be happy to help you improve your writing skills. To find out more, call the Writing Center at 836-6398.

9. What exactly is plagiarism?

In essence, plagiarism occurs when a student, in the course of writing a paper, fails to give appropriate credit for the words or ideas of someone else. The way to give appropriate credit is to cite the source of the information in both the text of your paper and the bibliography. If you use a direct quote from a book or journal article, be sure you include the author, publication information, and page number from where the quote is taken. If you are paraphrasing, you still need to give credit for the idea itself by citing the author and the publication where it is found.

There are different formats used, such as APA, Chicago, and Turabian styles. Follow the requirements of your professor. ***If you are in doubt about how to cite a particular source in your paper, ask your professor.*** If you plagiarize, you seriously jeopardize your chances of staying in the MPA program. Please refer to the Section on "Academic Integrity Policies" for more specific information.

10. How do I sign up for an internship?

Please see the Section on “Internship Procedures and Requirements” for the MPA program.

11. Can I use the graduate office on weekends?

As a general rule, no. The suite to the Political Science Department is locked on the weekends. However, the Computer Lab in Strong Hall is open on the weekends if you need access to a computer. In case of exceptional circumstances, prior arrangements can be made with the Political Science Department Office to have weekend access.

12. Can I install my own software programs on the GA computers?

Please consult with the MPA Director and/or the Department Head prior to doing this.

13. I am having a problem with the computer in the GA office, what should I do?

Please call Jay Jenkins, our computer support specialist, at 836-6487. You will also want to let the one of the Department’s secretaries know about the problem.

14. Can I reserve the conference room for a graduate student gathering?

If your meeting is related to the academic program, you may reserve the room. However, remember that faculty requests take precedent and it is possible that you could get “bumped” from the room on very short notice.

15. If I am interested in pursuing a Ph.D. at another university, how should I proceed?

Gaining admission to a Ph.D. program is a competitive process. First, you should do your very best in your classes at Missouri State. Other universities do not look favorably upon low grades at the Master’s level. Second, try to “separate yourself from the crowd.” In this regard, publications, presentations at major conferences, and participation on published research projects may help you accomplish that goal. The Graduate College provides money to assist with attendance at conferences to present your research, so take advantage of these opportunities. Third, apply early and give your professors ample lead time to write letters of recommendation for you. More information may be obtained from your professors.

16. I would like to earn credit toward my degree while studying abroad. Is this possible?

Yes, in some instances this is possible. Schedule an appointment with the MPA Director to discuss your options. Be sure to bring all relevant information (program of study, brochures, etc) with you to the meeting.