PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION, DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN URBAN AND REGIONAL POLICY

Program mission

The mission of the Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration program is to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to conduct original and scholarly research in academic institutions, governmental agencies and public policy research institutions. The purpose of the program is to prepare students for scholarly and leadership roles in government, universities, research organizations and other settings where knowledge and research skills in public policy and administration are needed. The doctoral program is committed to accomplishing this mission by creating an intellectually vibrant atmosphere for scholarship involving an active faculty from a broad spectrum of academic disciplines and substantial interaction with government agencies and community groups.

Program goals

1. Enable students to develop expertise in a particular area of public policy
2. Enable students to apply their knowledge and skills in order to conduct original and scholarly research

Student learning outcomes

Public policy and administration program outcomes

1. Students will be able to expertly apply public policy theories, integrating relevant ideas, concepts and approaches from the humanities, social sciences, law and public administration to policy formulation, implementation and analysis.
2. Students will develop mastery in a concentration area of the appropriate literature and methods that will qualify them to design and conduct original research.
3. Students will be able to formulate appropriate research questions related to public policy and apply methodological knowledge to develop an appropriate research design for a research proposal.
4. Students will complete an original research project that will demonstrate the capacity to utilize appropriate methods in addressing major public policy and administration issues.
5. Students will be able to conduct and defend original and scholarly research on public policy issues.

Urban and regional policy concentration-specific outcome

1. Students will be able to design an academic research study using methods and literature appropriate in the field of urban policy.

VCU Graduate Bulletin, VCU Graduate School and general academic policies and regulations for all graduate students in all graduate programs

The VCU Graduate Bulletin website documents the official admission and academic rules and regulations that govern graduate education for all graduate programs at the university. These policies are established by the graduate faculty of the university through their elected representatives to the University Graduate Council.

It is the responsibility of all graduate students, both on- and off-campus, to be familiar with the VCU Graduate Bulletin as well as the Graduate School website (http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/) and academic regulations in individual school and department publications and on program websites. However, in all cases, the official policies and procedures of the University Graduate Council, as published on the VCU Graduate Bulletin and Graduate School websites, take precedence over individual program policies and guidelines.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on academic regulations for graduate students. (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/)

Degree candidacy requirements

A graduate student admitted to a program or concentration requiring a final research project, work of art, thesis or dissertation, must qualify for continuing master's or doctoral status according to the degree candidacy requirements of the student's graduate program. Admission to degree candidacy, if applicable, is a formal statement by the graduate student's faculty regarding the student's academic achievements and the student's readiness to proceed to the final research phase of the degree program.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following degree candidacy policy as published in the VCU Graduate Bulletin for complete information and instructions.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on degree candidacy requirements. (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/candidacy/)

Graduation requirements

As graduate students approach the end of their academic programs and the final semester of matriculation, they must make formal application to graduate. No degrees will be conferred until the application to graduate has been finalized.

Graduate students and program directors should refer to the following graduation requirements as published in the Graduate Bulletin for a complete list of instructions and a graduation checklist.

Visit the academic regulations section for additional information on graduation requirements. (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/)

Apply online today. (https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/graduate/)

Admission requirements

Degree:	Semester(s) of entry:	Deadline dates:	Test requirements:
Ph.D.	Fall	Dec 15 for assistantships (Jan 30 final date for admission consideration)	

Special requirements

- Master's degree, J.D. or M.D. from an accredited university. Graduate assistantships are only awarded for fall admission. For students wishing to be considered for a limited number of fellowships, materials must be received no later than Dec. 15. Spring admissions are considered exceptions and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Admission is open to qualified persons without regard to age, physical disability, national origin, race, religion or gender. Admission is competitive. The admission process is intended to assure a reasonable fit between the student's professional and research interests and faculty expertise. Consequently, otherwise qualified applicants may be denied admission.

In addition to the general admission requirements of the VCU Graduate School (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/study/admission-graduate-study/admission-requirements/), applicants to the program must hold a master's degree or a recognized post-baccalaureate degree in one of the professions such as law or medicine from an accredited institution of higher education. Standardized test scores, fewer than five years old, are optional. Accepted examinations include the Graduate Record Examination, the Graduate Management Admissions Test, the Miller Analogies Test and the Law School Admissions Test and the Test of English as a Foreign Language for international students. Professional experience is not required, but is considered desirable.

In order to apply for admission to the Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration program, prospective students must submit:

1. A VCU application for graduate study
2. Transcripts from all previous colleges or universities
3. Three letters of reference
4. A personal statement describing reasons for applying to the program
5. A current professional resume

Scores from a standardized examination (GRE, GMAT, MAT or LSAT) are optional.

Admission standards

Applicants are evaluated based on the entire admission package; however, the following provides some guidelines for a competitive application.

1. Cumulative minimum GPA of 3.6 (on a four-point scale) or equivalent for graduate-level work
2. Three references – a minimum of one academic recommendation attesting to the applicant's ability to succeed in doctoral-level work
3. Personal statement, resume, curriculum vitae that:
   a. Clearly articulates the applicant's academic research interests whereby a decision can be made as to the applicant's "fit" with the program
   b. Shows a clear indication of a faculty match and expertise for the applicant's research interests
   c. Displays enthusiasm for the field of public policy and administration
   d. Is well-written and error-free
4. All students admitted to the program must have completed prior to admission, or are required to complete during the first year, the following graduate-level courses (or their equivalents):
   a. Research methods (equivalent of PADM 623/GVPA 623/CRJS 623/URSP 623)
   b. Statistics (equivalent of PADM 624)
   c. Public policy, economics or administration/management

The primary admission deadline is Jan. 30 for enrollment to begin the following fall semester; however, materials must be received no later than Dec.15 from those students wishing to be considered for assistantships. A small number of special admissions may be offered (Oct.15 application deadline) for entry the following spring semester; however, these are considered on a case-by-case basis. Assistantships are only offered to those offered full-time admission in the fall. Applicants who wish to be considered for the Oct.15 deadline must include a letter requesting and justifying early admission. If the request for early consideration is not accepted, the application will be held over to the Jan. 30 application deadline for consideration for the following fall admission.

While VCU Graduate School policy allows up to six credit hours of course work to be taken as a nondegree-seeking student prior to formal admission, taking such courses in no way guarantees admission to the program. Also, transfer credit hours are only considered for elective courses. Core courses must be taken at VCU.

Application information is available from the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs Office of Graduate Advising or the Graduate Admissions Office. International applicant information and materials are available from International Admissions (https://www.vcu.edu/admissions/apply/international/).

Degree requirements

The doctoral program is structured around a core curriculum and four areas of concentration. The curriculum is designed to provide a sound intellectual foundation for the pursuit of scholarly research in areas of public policy, urban and regional policy, public administration and criminal justice policy. Students will select a concentration after the first year of study and after passing the comprehensive examination.

In addition to general VCU Graduate School graduation requirements (https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/graduation-info/), students take a minimum of 45 graduate credit hours of course work and dissertation research in addition to any prerequisites that might be necessary. Five of these courses are part of the core, and at least four are concentration courses. The remaining two electives are to be taken outside the concentration with additional methodology courses highly recommended. Required courses generally will be available on an evening or weekend schedule.

Course work in the Ph.D. program has a strong orientation toward research, both applied and theoretical. Where appropriate, course work may be linked to funded university projects or to external agency-based

analytical work. Courses emphasize research, writing and presentation skills.

All students must take a comprehensive qualifying examination on the core course requirements and a written or oral comprehensive examination in the concentration and must be approved by the VCU Graduate School for degree candidacy before beginning work on their dissertations.

Curriculum requirements

Course	Title	Hours
Core courses (required)		
PPAD 711	Seminar in Public Policy I	3
PPAD 712	Seminar in Public Policy II	3
PPAD 721	Survey of Applied Research Methods in Public Policy	3
PPAD 722	Survey of Data Analysis Techniques in Public Policy	3
PPAD 724	Seminar in Advanced Analytical Methods	3
PPAD 780	Synthesizing Seminar in Public Policy	3
Concentration courses		
PPAD 716	Public Policy Economics	3
PPAD 750	Seminar in Urban Policy	3
Select six credits from the following concentration electives:		6
PPAD 791	Topical Seminar	
URSP/GVPA 632	Planning Theory and Processes	
URSP 637	Sustainable Community Development	
URSP 643	Housing Policy	
URSP 651	Transportation Policy and Planning	
URSP 655	Environmental Policy and Planning	
URSP 664	Urban Economic Development Policy	
URSP 681	International Urban Policy and Planning	
Electives outside concentration		
Students will take at least two elective courses outside the concentration. Students may take courses at the 500-level or higher from other Ph.D. concentration areas (as listed under each concentration) and other programs such as homeland security, criminal justice, public administration, and urban and regional planning within the Wilder School. Alternately, students may choose two elective courses from other VCU graduate programs with the approval of the Ph.D. director.		6
Dissertation research		
PPAD 898	Dissertation Research (minimum)	9
Total Hours		**45**

The minimum number of graduate credit hours required for this degree is 45.

Students who complete the requirements for this concentration will receive a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy and Administration.

Qualifying examinations

After completing all of the core courses in the Ph.D. program, each student takes a **comprehensive qualifying examination on the core.** The examination is designed to evaluate the mastery students have achieved over the body of knowledge represented by the core. It is intended to measure the ability of students to organize, integrate and creatively apply the knowledge in the field to important problems. Although organized around the courses in the core, the examination is not restricted to material covered in those courses. It is expected that doctoral students will read well beyond the confines of individual courses.

In order to continue in the program, students must attempt the qualifying examination no later than the next regular semester following the completion of the core course requirements. They must pass the exam by the end of the second regular semester after completing the core course requirements. A student may attempt the examination twice. Examinations are offered twice per year.

A student also must take a **written or oral comprehensive examination in the concentration**. The concentration faculty will determine the form of the examination. A student may attempt the examination twice. Each student must pass this second examination before defending a dissertation proposal.

Dissertation

After completing all course work for the concentration and passing both qualifying examinations, students must prepare a dissertation involving original research that contributes to the body of knowledge in the field. A committee approved by the associate dean of the Wilder School supervises the dissertation work. The chair of the committee must be appointed as graduate faculty and be a core or affiliate faculty member of the Ph.D. program.

The first formal step in the dissertation process is the development and defense of a dissertation prospectus that frames the problem to be studied, provides background on the problem, presents a review of relevant literature and justifies the methodology to be used. The defense of the prospectus as well as the completed dissertation must be presented orally and be approved by the dissertation committee. The dissertation defense is conducted in a forum open to other students and faculty.

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Program website: https://wilder.vcu.edu/programs/public-policy/