

# PUBLIC POLICY, PHD

**Banner Code:** PP-PHD-PUBP

## Academic Advising

560 Van Metre Hall  
Mason Square Campus

336 Aquia Building  
Fairfax Campus

Website: [schar.gmu.edu](https://schar.gmu.edu)

This doctoral degree in public policy is distinctive in its heavy emphasis on the combined influence of technology, culture, and institutions on public policy. Students investigate the increasing tensions created by technologically driven organizational change. This doctoral program prepares its graduates to assume positions of significant responsibility in academia, government, and the private and public sectors. With a focus on analytical and research-based approaches to public policy, our students seek to understand the underlying determinants of public policy choices, analyze and improve the implementation of policy, and identify and assess new opportunities to address emerging issues.

To investigate the policy issues associated with substantive policy areas, students develop in-depth understanding of American institutions, values, and culture; competence in research methods and advanced analytical methodologies; and a comparative, international perspective. At the time of admission, each student is assigned a faculty advisor who assists in the design and development of the student's program.

## Admissions & Policies

### Admissions

See Graduate Admission Policies (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/graduate-policies/>) for general information on graduate admission to George Mason University. See Schar Admissions (<http://schar.gmu.edu/admissions/>) for application requirements and deadlines for the PhD in Public Policy. Students are considered for admission for the Fall term only.

### Policies

For policies governing all graduate degrees, see AP.6.10 Requirements for Doctoral Degrees (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-10>).

### Program Requirements

Students are required to complete a minimum of 80 credits of graduate coursework, of which no more than 12 may be dissertation credits. Specific coursework requirements include four foundational core courses, one semester of participation in the research colloquium (public policy seminar), two advanced methodology courses, three courses in an area of program specialization, and three advanced courses tailored to the student's research needs and interests. Courses are determined in

collaboration with the student's advisor and are drawn widely not only from Schar, but also from other programs at Mason.

At the completion of core skills coursework (Stage One), students must pass a qualifying exam that evaluates mastery of the first year's material, as well as the ability to integrate that material when addressing important and complex public policy problems and issues. Students must then develop their research areas through specialized coursework, and pass a field exam structured around their specific field of proposed doctoral research (Stages Two and Three). Other requirements include the successful preparation and defense of a doctoral research proposal and the ensuing dissertation (Stage Four).

A complete description of the program policies, procedures, and requirements is in the PhD student and faculty handbook (<https://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/phd-student-services/phd-handbook-forms/>), which is published annually.

### Transfer of Credit

Previously earned and relevant graduate credits may be eligible for transfer into this program; details can be found in the Credit by Exam or Transfer section (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/graduate-policies/#ap-6-5-2>) of this catalog.

### Prerequisites: Methodological and Substantive Foundations

PhD students are required to have competence in the following three areas, either by taking these courses or by proving competence through a placement exam and/or evidence of previous relevant coursework.

Prerequisite courses will not count as part of the 80 credit requirement.

Code	Title	Credits
POGO 511	Introductory Data Analysis for Policy and Government	3
PUBP 720	Microeconomics for Public Policy	3
PUBP 730	US Institutions and the Policy Process	3

## Requirements

### Degree Requirements

Total credits: minimum 80

### Doctoral Coursework and Requirements

#### Stage One - Core Skills

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Coursework</b>		
Four credits of		4
PUBP 800	Culture and Public Policy	
POGO 801	Research Design for the Social Sciences and Public Policy	3
PUBP 804	Multivariate Statistical Analysis in Public Policy	4
PUBP 805	Foundations of Social Science for Public Policy	4

Pass the comprehensive Qualifying Exam

**Total Credits** **15**

### Stage Two - Policy Fields and Skills

After passing the qualifying exam, students assemble a Field Research Committee. By the end of their third semester, full-time students (fourth semester for part-time) must choose a chair for their Field Committee.

By the start of their fourth semester, full-time students (fifth semester for part-time) must submit to the chair of their Field Committee a plan for their Field of Study. The Field of Study Plan will describe a proposed research area, including citations relevant to current research in that field; four relevant field courses; and the names of faculty who will be involved. The plan must be approved by both the student's Field Committee chair and the program director.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Coursework</b>		
Three courses in an area of program specialization, chosen in collaboration with advisor		9
One advanced methods course chosen from the following: <sup>1</sup>		3-4
POGO 611	Advanced Data Analysis for Policy and Government	
PUBP 754	Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis for Public Policy	
PUBP 791	Advanced Field Research for Policy: Theory and Method	
PUBP 792	Advanced Economic Analysis for Policy Research	
POGO 793	Big Data Analytics for Policy and Government	
POGO 850	PhD Professional Development Seminar	1
<b>Total Credits</b>		<b>13-14</b>

<sup>1</sup> Other courses may be approved by the program director.

### Stage Three - Research Foundations

In Stage Three, students take coursework approved in the Field of Study Plan.

The Field of Study must include one advanced methods course from the approved list for the doctoral program, or be approved in writing by the Field Committee Chair and Doctoral Program Director. Where appropriate courses are not available from Schar School, students may petition the Director of the PhD program for substitute courses to count for their Field of Study Plan.

Students are expected to complete coursework before taking PUBP 998 credits. A student may take no more than six credits of PUBP 998 before completing a field of study plan and having it approved by three Graduate Faculty members.

Code	Title	Credits
<b>Coursework</b>		
Three substantive Field of Study courses that will serve as a foundation for their Field <sup>1</sup>		9-12
PUBP 810	Regional Development and Transportation Policy	
PUBP 811	Applied Methods in Regional Development and Transportation Policy	

PUBP 820	Technology, Science, and Innovation Policy	
PUBP 821	Analytic Methods for Technology, Science, and Innovation Policy	
PUBP 834	Entrepreneurship, Growth, and Public Policy	
PUBP 835	Entrepreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation	
POGO 840	Policy, Politics, and American Government Institutions	
POGO 841	U.S. Political Behavior and the Process of Policymaking	
PUBP 860	Social Theory and Policy Analysis	
PUBP 861	Culture and Social Policy Analysis	
PUBP 880	Global and International Public Policy I	
PUBP 881	International Trade Policy	
One Advanced Methods course <sup>2</sup>		3-4
POGO 611	Advanced Data Analysis for Policy and Government	
PUBP 754	Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis for Public Policy	
PUBP 791	Advanced Field Research for Policy: Theory and Method	
PUBP 792	Advanced Economic Analysis for Policy Research	
POGO 793	Big Data Analytics for Policy and Government	
Total Credits		12-16

<sup>1</sup> Courses must include at least one 800 level Schar course from this list.

<sup>2</sup> Other courses must be approved in writing by the Field Committee Chair and program director.

Note: Where appropriate courses are not available from Schar, students may petition the program director for substitute courses to count for their Field of Study Plan.

### Dissertation Research

#### Qualifying Exams

Students must pass a qualifying exam which is taken after the core courses are completed.

When students have completed all coursework, have passed the qualifying exam, have an approved dissertation committee and presented and successfully defended a dissertation proposal, they advance to candidacy.

#### Stage Four - Dissertation

Twelve credits of PUBP 998 and PUBP 999 must be applied to the degree. A minimum of six credits must be PUBP 999.

Code	Title	Credits
Up to six credits of		6
PUBP 998	Research/Proposal for Dissertation	
Proposal Oral Defense		
At least six credits of		6
PUBP 999	Dissertation	

Dissertation Oral Defense	
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<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>12</b>
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