General Public Policy and Administrative questions

Q. Why study public administration?

A. Broadly speaking we study public administration to prepare for professional and administrative careers in the public or not-for-profit sectors.

Q. What kind of degrees do you offer?

A. The Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Long Beach offers a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree.

Q. Do I need an MPA degree for a career in the public or not-for-profit sectors?

A. The MPA is considered a gateway degree for a career in public service.

Q. What is the difference between an MPA and a MBA?

A. The MPA is specifically designed to prepare people for professional and administrative careers in the public or not-for-profit sectors while the MBA is more appropriate for those who are seeking careers in the private sector.

Q. Why should I apply to California State University, Long Beach for an MPA?

A. We are a fully accredited program by the National Association of Schools of Public Administration/Affairs. All of our full-time faculty have the highest degrees in their fields from highly regarded Universities and have extensive experience in teaching, and research. Our part-time faculty members are highly respected practitioners in the region. For over twenty-five years many of our graduates have attained senior managerial and leadership positions in the public and not-for-profit sectors. We have a flexible program that will permit you to design a program of study that will help you achieve your particular career goals.

Q. Can I pursue an MPA if I work full-time?

A. Yes, most of our students work full-time; thus, we hold classes late afternoons, early evenings, and on the weekends.

Q. If I have been out of school for a while, how difficult is it?

A. Well it is graduate school and as such can be very demanding of your time and it may take a little time for you to get used to being backing school but if you able and willing to work hard and manage your time effectively, you should be fine. After all, we have hundreds of graduates who were in the same situation as you and they were successful.
Q. What is the typical workload per course?

A. That varies depending on a number of factors including your academic preparation prior to enrollment but generally you can expect to be assigned two hours of work outside class per week for each hour of class time.

What Is Required to Get An MPA From California State University, Long Beach?

Q. What are the program requirements for the MPA?

A. Our program requires completion of 36 units of coursework with a minimum grade point average of 3.00, and completion of a student-learning portfolio. Each course is 3 units so there are 12 courses you must take. In the case of students with no professional experience a 3-unit internship is required in addition to the 36 units.

Q. Are there any required courses?

A. Yes, there are six required lecture courses and one applied research, independent study course.

Q. Is there a thesis required or comprehensive exams?

A. No, we have no thesis requirement or comprehensive exams but we do require an applied research course that is the second course of a two-course sequence on research methodology and analysis. Also, instead of formal comprehensive exams, we have a comprehensive student learning portfolio requirement.

Q. Are there any other academic requirements?

A. Yes, the University requires that all graduate students take and pass the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) by the end of the first semester of graduate study.

Q. How can I get more information about the WPE?

A. Contact the Testing and Evaluation Services office for the University.

The Application Process

Q. How do I apply to the program?

A. There is a two-part process. First, you must apply the University and second you must apply to our Department.
Q. How do I apply to the University?

A. All graduate and post-baccalaureate applicants must file a complete graduate application as described in the graduate and post-baccalaureate admission materials at www.csumentor.edu.

Q. How do I apply to the Department?

A. Complete and submit the Department Application for Admission form. Provide undergraduate and/or graduate transcripts (They may be photocopies). Submit a Statement of Career Objectives. Submit two letters of recommendation.

Q. Who should I get the letters of recommendation from?

A. It can be a current or former professor and/or a current or former supervisor.

Q. When are the application materials due?

A. Generally, applications for Fall are due by July 1st and applications for Spring are due by November 1st.

Q. What if I miss the deadline can I still take start the program?

A. You need to apply to the following semester.

Q. Is the process the same for international students?

A. The process is the same for the Department but not for the University. You will need to contact the International Admissions Specialist in the Center for International Education at the University for their requirements. In fact, they want international students to contact them first and then the Department.

Admission Requirements

Q. What kind of grade point average (GPA) do I need for admission?

A. You will need a 3.00 in your undergraduate coursework from an accredited institution.

Q. What if I do not meet the GPA requirements, can I still be admitted?

A. If you have at least a 2.50 GPA in the last 60 units of undergraduate coursework, you may be admitted by the University.
Q. How does the Department decide if I can be admitted under probation?

A. We look at a number of factors such as where you got your undergraduate degree from, the type of course you took, letters of recommendation, your Statement of Career Objectives, and your work history.

Q. How important is work history?

A. It is very important. Prospective students who have clearly demonstrated substantial professional progress may be given extra consideration in the admission decision.

Q. What can I do if I am not accepted even under probation?

A. You have essentially two choices if you want to continue to try to be admitted. First, you may continue to work on your professional progress and reapply in a year or two. Second, you can take additional courses to increase your GPA.

Q. If I take more courses, what should they be?

A. They have to be upper level undergraduate or graduate courses from an accredited institution. Further, you should take courses that are related to the study of public administration such as social science courses.

Q. Is the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) required?

A. No, but you may wish to take the quantitative, verbal, and analytical sections and submit the scores to the Department if you do not meet the GPA requirement.

Q. What are the admission requirements if I already have graduate degree?

A. If you have a graduate degree from an accredited graduate school you automatically meet our GPA requirement but you must still complete the other University and Department requirements.

Planning and Managing Your MPA Education

Q. How long does it take to complete the program?

A. As noted above, the program requires 36-39 units so it depends how many courses you take each term and how many terms you take course each year. A full-time student going year round including summer can complete the program in a year and a half. Part-time students usually take about three years to finish.
Q. Is there a time limit to complete the program?
A. Generally, the University requires that students complete graduate programs in seven years.

Q. Do I need to take courses continuously?
A. Yes, unless you take an Educational or Medical Leave. Students who are not enrolled for two or more semesters without a Leave must reapply to the University.

Q. What if I have completed my coursework but am finishing my Directed Research Project and/or the Student Learning Portfolio?
A. If you have completed your coursework but have to finish the Student Learning Portfolio you must enroll in GS-700 to maintain your enrollment in the University up until and including the semester you wish to graduate.

Q. How do I enroll in GS-700?
A. Get the enrollment form and authorization from the Department Office and bring it to University College/Extension Services.

Q. How many courses should I take each semester?
A. It depends on how fast you want to complete the program. If you are a full-time student you probably want to take four courses per term. If you are part-time, you should not take more than two courses per term.

Q. How many required course are there and how many electives do I have to take?
A. As stated above, you must take seven required courses and five electives.

Q. Are there prerequisites or a required sequence of courses?
A. No but we generally recommend that you take as many of the required courses as early as possible.

Q. How do I decide which electives to take?
A. You need to get a faculty advisor and discuss with them your career goals and then develop a program of study.

Q. How do I get a faculty advisor?
A. Any full-time faculty member can serve as a faculty advisor. You should consult with the Program Graduate Advisor to help you decide on whom to ask.

Q. Can I take any electives from other departments?

A. Yes, you can take any electives in any other departments at the University as long as they are 500 or above level courses, relate to public policy and administration and approved by your faculty advisor.

Q. Is there a difference between a 500 and 600 level course?

A. No, there is no difference in our program between a 500 and 600 level course although in some other departments there may be.

**Graduation Requirements and Procedures**

Q. What do I have to do to graduate?

A. First, you must make sure that you have satisfied all the program requirements as stated above for the MPA and University requirements (See the University Catalog for details). Master’s students must have an approved Advancement to Candidacy on file, or in the process of being advanced to candidacy. Second, at the same time that submit your Advance to Candidacy form to the department for signatures, a you should submit to Enrollment Services Request to Graduate form.

Q. What is the Advancement to Candidacy requirement?

A. The Advancement to Candidacy form is required for matriculation in the University.

Q. Where can I get the Advancement to Candidacy form?

A. You can get the form on this website or from our Department office.

Q. How do I file for Advancement to Candidacy?

A. You should meet with your Faculty Advisor and discuss your proposed program of study. Once you both have agreed on a program of study, complete the form and return it to you Faculty Advisor. He/she will sign it and forward it to the Department Chair and the College Dean’s office for their approval. The Dean’s Office will notify you in writing of the approval. This process takes several weeks.
Q. When can I file for Advancement to Candidacy?

A. You can file for Advancement to Candidacy anytime after you have completed six units of coursework with at least a 3.00 GPA and have passed the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE). In fact it is highly recommended that you start the process as soon as you have satisfied the requirements for Advancement to Candidacy.

Q. What happens if I want to change my program of study after I have Advanced to Candidacy?

A. If you need to change your program of study, and you have already Advancement to Candidacy, you will need to submit a Change of Program form. Discuss your desire to change your program of study with your Faculty Advisor. Upon approval from your Faculty Advisor get and complete a Change of Program form from the Department Office. Then submit the form to your Faculty Advisor for their signature. The form will then be forwarded to the Department Chair and the Dean’s Office for their approval. This process will amend your original Advancement to Candidacy form.

Q. What will happen if I take courses that are different from the ones on my Advancement to Candidacy form and do not complete the Change of Program form?

A. The University Office of Enrollment Services will block your graduation.

Q. Where can I get more detailed information on all the above topics?

A. The Department and University websites contain all the information you will need.