

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, PHD

The PhD in public administration program creates a supportive, collaborative, and rigorous environment for students to develop their intellectual identities and a comprehensive understanding of the field and a range of research traditions. Our students and alumni make significant contributions to theory, policy, research, and practice towards enhancing a democratic society. We value intellectual openness, collaboration, diversity, and excellence.

The PhD program in public administration is a research degree with a focus on public and nonprofit administration and management in a democratic and diverse society. It is the terminal degree for research and theory development.

Program Related Information

Program Contact

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Program Website (<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/public-administration/academics/phd.php>)

Admissions

General Application Requirements and Admission Criteria (<http://catalog.unomaha.edu/graduate/admission/>)

Application Deadline

- Fall 2026: Applicants seeking funding January 15, all other applicants March 1

Other Requirements

- An earned master's degree in public administration or related field from an accredited institution.
- Generally, the target master's degree level GPA is above 3.20 (on a 4.0 scale).
- **English Language Proficiency:** Applicants are required to have a command of oral and written English. Those who do not hold a baccalaureate or other advanced degree from the United States, **OR** a baccalaureate or other advanced degree from a predetermined country on the waiver list, must meet the minimum language proficiency score requirement in order to be considered for admission.
 - Internet-based TOEFL 90, IELTS: 7, PTE: 64, Duolingo: 120
 - Applicants are expected to demonstrate the ability to communicate orally and in writing in a manner sufficient to compete effectively at the doctoral level.
- **Statement of Purpose:** A five-page statement of intent describing the applicant's goals in pursuing a PhD and plans after completion of the PhD, research interests and desired area of specialization offered in the PhD program, discussion of school faculty with whom the applicant would like to work related to research interests, and an explanation of academic and professional backgrounds preparing the applicant to pursue a PhD.

- **Writing Sample:** An academic or professional writing sample is required. This can be, for example, a term paper, thesis, conference paper, evaluation report, or published work.
 - Include a separate 1-page abstract that summarizes the contents of the writing sample. If applicable, please include an explanation of your contribution if the work submitted is multi-authored.
- **Resume:** The resume or CV will be examined to assess an applicant's professional work experience and/or extracurricular activities while attending school. Additionally, resumes are examined to assess an applicant's potential ability to understand and do research on the context and practice of contemporary public administration.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Three letters are required. At least two recommendations must be from academics such as current or former professors. The Office of Graduate Studies will contact each recommender via email to obtain the letters.
- Students are responsible for additional information found on the PhD in Public Administration website.
- The doctoral program committee reviews student academic preparation, specifying appropriate courses that must be taken as prerequisites to doctoral study. Except for those who have completed an MPA degree, new doctoral students may be required to first complete MPA course prerequisites or reading prior to enrolling in 9000-level core or research courses.

Degree Requirements

Required Courses Summary

92 hours of graduate credit hours beyond the baccalaureate degree. This includes 21 hours of core courses, 12 hours of research courses, six hours of specialization courses, two 1-hour workshops on teaching and research skills, 15 hours of dissertation coursework, and 36 hours of additional graduate-level coursework. The 36 hours of additional graduate-level coursework may be earned from an accredited institution toward a Master of Public Administration degree or a master's degree (MA or MS) in a related academic discipline or field.

Code	Title	Credits
Seminar Courses		21
Research Courses		12
Specialization Courses		6
Teaching & Research Skills Workshops		2
Dissertation		15
Additional graduate-level coursework (from master's degree)		36
Total Credits		92

Required Courses

Code	Title	Credits
Seminar Courses		
PA 9000	FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	3
PA 9200	THEORIES OF THE POLICY PROCESS	3
PA 9300	KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND USE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE PROFESSION	3
PA 9400	THE ENVIRONMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	3
PA 9500	THEORIES OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY	3
PA 9600	SEMINAR IN ADVANCED MANAGEMENT THEORY	3
PA 9700	PUBLIC BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL THEORY	3

Research Courses

PA 9800	ADVANCED RESEARCH DESIGN	3
PA 9950	QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	3
PA 9960	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS	3
PA 9970	DIRECTED RESEARCH IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION	3

Specialization Courses

Take 2 elective courses related to one of the following -	6
Public and Nonprofit: Policy, Theory, Management, Budgeting & Finance, Technology & Data Analytics	

Workshops

PA 9920	TEACHING AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS WORKSHOP	1
PA 9930	PHD RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL SKILLS WORKSHOP	1

Dissertation

PA 9990	DISSERTATION	15
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Progress Review

The doctoral program committee will conduct a review of student progress each year. The committee will make such recommendations as appropriate to the student's advisor. As part of the review, students will be required to submit a summary of annual progress and plans.

Field Examination

Following completion of coursework, doctoral students take the field examination, which includes two questions: one comprehensive and one related to the student's specialization. The field exam is given in open-book format over two days, eight-hours each day. The field exam testing period is in August (about one week before the fall semester starts) each year.

Degree Candidacy

Students who have successfully passed the required coursework in their program of study and the field examination apply for Admission to Candidacy for the Doctoral Degree. This application requires majority consent of the student's supervisory committee, the doctoral program committee, and the dean for Graduate Studies.

After admission to degree candidacy, the student must maintain continuous enrollment until they receive the degree. The School monitors this enrollment. Students not in residence must register for a minimum of one semester credit hour of dissertation research. Failure to register during each academic semester will result in termination of the candidacy. Per Graduate College policy, if the term of candidacy is extended beyond three years (excluding summer terms), the candidate must pass another examination.

Dissertation Proposal

Once field exams are successfully completed, students will complete and defend a dissertation proposal before their supervisory committee. Students are encouraged to submit the dissertation proposal within 12 months of completing field exams. Students enroll in PA 9970 for at least one semester while working on the proposal.

The proposal should consist at minimum of a statement of the topic to be addressed, an explanation of why the topic is important, a review of the relevant literature, and an appropriate research design. The supervisory committee chair will assist the student in the development of the proposal. Oral defense of the proposal will be before a majority of the members of the supervisory committee and the chair of the DPC no earlier than three weeks after they have received the proposal.

After the oral proposal defense, the Proposal Defense Form (https://drive.google.com/file/d/19J35OKcMWvTeghIR41QM_FSUd1KKCADb/view/?pli=1) should be submitted to the chair of the DPC.

Dissertation

The dissertation represents an original contribution to knowledge development in the field of public administration. Following successful completion of all coursework and field exams, doctoral students apply for candidacy for the degree and then defend a dissertation proposal before their supervisory committee. Following successful defense of the proposal, students work under the guidance of their supervisory committee chair until the project is complete. Two readers from the student's supervisory committee then review the entire document and may recommend further work or changes. After the committee chair and readers agree that the dissertation is ready for defense, the student schedules a public defense.

The time limit on granting the PhD in public administration degree is eight (8) years from the time of filing the plan of study in the Office of Graduate Studies

Quality of Work Standards

Doctoral students are expected to do work of high caliber. Failure to maintain quality of work standards may result in probation or dismissal from the program. Reasons for probation or dismissal may include:

- Failure to maintain a 3.33 average for all course work
- A grade of C+ or below in one course
- Failure to maintain continuous enrollment
- Failure to pass field exams
- Failure to form a supervisory committee
- Violating Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/public-administration/documents/spa-doctoral-handbook-updated-september-2024.pdf>) standards