

Master of Public Policy Progressive Degree Application Process

Progressive Degree Eligibility Criteria

- MPP progressive degree applicants must have completed a minimum of 64 units since high school graduation and must submit their completed, progressive degree application prior to the completion of 96 units of course work. (AP units, IB units, and college course work taken prior to high school graduation are excluded).
- Applicants are not required to submit GRE scores, but are expected to have a minimum 3.0 GPA at the time of application. Due to MPP program rigor, *GPA's of 3.5 or higher are preferred.*
- Applicants must provide two letters of recommendation from USC faculty supporting their admission to the progressive degree and at least one from a faculty member in the student's major.

Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

Can I apply for the MPP if I have earned more than 96 units?

An applicant must have 96 units or less in order to apply for the progressive degree. The 96 units does not include Advanced Placement units, International Baccalaureate units or any community college coursework completed *prior* to high school graduation. The 96 unit total does not include any USC in progress coursework.

**If a student has earned 97-99 units, an exception to this policy may be possible and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.*

How many MPP progressive applicants are there and what is the acceptance rate?

The total number of applicants and the acceptance rate varies from term to term. The MPP program is looking to admit top tier, high-performing undergraduate students.

Why am I considered a graduate student once I have completed 144 units?

Once the undergraduate degree is conferred or the student has completed 144 units, a progressive degree student can no longer be considered an undergraduate for financial aid purposes. At that time, progressive degree students will be reclassified as graduate students. While classified as graduate students, they are assessed the graduate tuition rate, and their enrollment status and financial aid eligibility are determined by graduate standards. Graduate students are not eligible for federal, state or university need-based grants. Graduate-level progressive degree students are eligible to borrow Direct Unsubsidized Loans and Direct Graduate PLUS Loans, up to the maximum yearly amounts established for graduate students.

How many semesters do I have to complete my bachelor's and MPP degree?

USC policy states that the time limit for completing the undergraduate and graduate degree is 12 semesters (6 years). This time limit starts with the student's *first semester* as a college student (including transferred community college course work completed prior to USC). Any time limit extension would need to be supported by the MPP program and petitioned through the associate vice provost.

Can I meet with the MPP program administrator to work out my course plan prior to being admitted to the MPP progressive program? Due to the high volume of undergraduate student inquiries, students will be scheduled for an advising appointment and transcript review *following* admission into the progressive degree program. MPP progressive degree information sessions take place each semester, offering an opportunity for students to obtain program details as well as engage in Q &A. Students may feel free to call or email the program administrator with any specific questions at any time.

If a prospective applicant would like to know if they will earn any course waivers using their completed upper division coursework, they may email an updated STARS Report along with a request to Suzanne Alexander, program administrator at alexa1@usc.edu. As collaboration with the vice chair is usually included, please allow 2 weeks turnaround time. Please note that some requests will yield return requests for course syllabi prior to waiver decisions can be determined.

When will I be notified if I have been accepted in to the progressive degree?

All applicants will be notified of their admissions status via email, 2-3 weeks after the February application deadline.

When can I register for my fall semester graduate courses?

To develop an official course plan, all *admitted* MPP progressive degree students will meet with the MPP Program Administrator upon program acceptance. Once this course plan has been created, all required signatures have been obtained and the plan is approved by the University, the course plan will be loaded onto the Student Information System. At that time, the student will be eligible for fall graduate course registration. This process can take several weeks. Pre-emptive d-clearance entry may be obtained from the MPP program administrator, reserving a seat in the first-semester MPP core classes.

What is the maximum MPP progressive student course load each semester?

The MPP imposes a 15-unit maximum while taking any graduate courses. Any exceptions must be requested by departmental petition. MPP students traditionally complete 12 units per semester during the first year, and 13/11 units during the second year.

Can my units taken at another school be used to waived graduate coursework?

Graduate course waivers are considered only on the basis of upper-division, undergraduate courses that have been completed at USC.

Do progressive students automatically receive a reduction in the MPP 48 unit requirement?

No. Some students will have units waived pending transcript review, following program admission. Coursework waivers depend on the relevance of the upper-division, undergraduate coursework and the grades earned.

What is the maximum number of units MPP progressive students can waive?

The maximum number of MPP degree units that a progressive student may waive is 16 units.

Does the Progressive MPP program have any prerequisites?

Yes. The MPP program requires a basic background in probability and statistics. First-semester Progressive Master of Public Policy (MPP) students must complete two prerequisites: (1) completion of a college-level statistics or econometrics course with a grade of B or better and (2) completion of both pre-semester program labs.

Statistics Prerequisite

All progressive MPP students are required to demonstrate proficiency in foundational statistical methods. The statistics prerequisite can be satisfied in one of two ways:

- **A statistics or econometrics course taken prior to enrollment in the progressive MPP**

Completion of a college-level statistics or econometrics course with a grade of “B” or better within three years of matriculation.

- **Completion of the PPD 504 Essential Statistics for Public Management course**

If a student has not completed a college-level statistics course with a grade of “B” or better within three years of matriculation, they will need to complete the 2-unit PPD 504 course the summer prior to starting the MPP program.

Depending on prior coursework and grades received, some students may waive out of the statistics prerequisite requirement.

Pre-semester MPP Labs

The Professional Fundamentals and Statistics/STATA Labs provide an introduction to the program and help to create a genuine camaraderie within the first-year student cohort. Progressive MPP students are required to participate in the Statistics/STATA Lab as well as the Professional Fundamentals Lab. The labs meet the Thursday, Friday and Saturday prior to the start of the fall semester AND on the first Friday of the semester. Foundational knowledge of STATA software is essential for success in PPD 558, Multivariate Statistical Analysis. The lab will provide STATA tools and explain how to apply this within the MPP program. If a student registers for PPD 558 in spring, the Statistics/STATA Lab will be required the Friday and Saturday prior to the start of the spring semester.

Application Requirements

- Students must complete a *Progressive Degree Program – Proposed Course Plan* form as part of the application process. This is necessary to determine how future terms of registration will apply to progressive degree requirements. Future course work (applying to both the undergraduate major and the MPP degree requirements) is listed by term, indicating whether each course satisfies an undergraduate or graduate requirement. **In the application packet, please list only the remaining undergraduate course work requirements.** This information should be reviewed and verified by your undergraduate advisor prior to submitting the progressive degree application packet.
- Students must complete all necessary sections of the *Application for Admission to a Progressive Master’s Program* form. The final version of the form as well as the applicant’s admission must be approved by both the dean of the student’s undergraduate major(s), as well as the department chair and dean of the master’s degree program.

Application Package and Instructions

Application Requirements

- University Progressive Degree proposed course plan (to be completed in tandem with the applicant's undergraduate advisor). The student is responsible for ensuring their undergraduate advisor has confirmed all remaining requirements are listed on the course plan submitted with their application materials. Only the undergraduate courses need to be listed. No signatures are required until after a student has been admitted into the program.

(The MPP coursework will be discussed and outlined in the course plan with the MPP program administrator *after* the student is admitted into the MPP progressive program and after all course waivers have been finalized).

- Current STARS report
- Current resume
- One (1) page essay addressing the following:
 - Why are you interested in pursuing the MPP progressive degree?
 - What is the area of policy that interests you most and why?
 - What are your short and long-term career objectives?
- Two (2) letters of recommendation from USC faculty supporting your admission to the progressive degree.
- Letters of recommendation can be mailed directly to Suzanne Alexander, MPP program administrator, USC Price School of Public Policy, 650 Childs Way, RGL 238, Los Angeles, CA 90089, or provided with the application materials. ***If the campus is still operating virtually as of January 1, 2021, please submit all application materials via email in one PDF to alexa1@usc.edu. All letters of recommendation should be emailed directly to Suzanne Alexander at alexa1@usc.edu.**
- Any additional supporting documents (which may include additional letters of recommendation)
- The highest ranking applicants will be invited to interview with the Department of Public Policy vice chair and program administrator.
- Admission decisions will be provided via letter, emailed to the applicant's USC email address.

Deadlines

- **Spring:** No Admittance
- **Fall:** February 1 (If this date falls on a weekend, the deadline is the next business day).
- **Summer:** No Admittance

Additional Information

- Once a student has completed 144 units (including transfer units from another college or university), the student will be considered a graduate student. This status change will affect your financial aid package. Please visit/contact the Office of Financial Services (JHH Lobby) for more information and to determine how admission to the MPP progressive degree will impact your financial aid package. If you are a scholarship student, please contact your scholarship coordinator to discuss the impact the progressive degree program may have on your scholarship.
- Submission of an application to the progressive degree does not constitute automatic admission. Students must be accepted in order to pursue the progressive degree objective.

Application Submission

- Submit your completed application in person to Suzanne Alexander, Program Administrator, Graduate Programs in Public Policy, located in Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall (RGL) 238 between 7:30am and 4:30pm. ***If the campus is still operating virtually as of January 1, 2021, please submit all materials via email in one PDF to alexa1@usc.edu. All letters of recommendation should be emailed directly to Suzanne Alexander at alexa1@usc.edu.**
- Please submit all documents at the same time. Incomplete applications will be disqualified from admission review.
- Applicants will receive an emailed notification stating that your completed application package has been received.

Required Master of Public Policy Course Sequencing (32-48 unit maximum for progressive students)

1st Semester Fall

PPD 503 Economics for Public Policy	4 units (fall only)
PPD 554 Foundations of Policy Analysis	4 units (fall only)
PPD 558 Multivariate Statistical Analysis	4 units (fall or spring)

2nd Semester Spring

PPD 555 Public Policy Formulation and Implementation	4 units (spring only)
PPD 560 Methods for Policy Analysis	4 units (spring only)
(Management, Analytic or Specialization elective)	4 units

3rd Semester Fall

PPD 561a Policy Analysis Practicum	1 unit (fall 2 nd year only)
(Management, Analytic or Specialization electives)	12 units

4th Semester Spring

PPD 561b Policy Analysis Practicum	3 units (spring 2 nd year only)
(Management, Analytic or Specialization electives)	8 units

*Progressive degree students typically intersperse undergraduate courses within their MPP course sequencing until their bachelor's degree has been completed. Students must complete their bachelor's degree **before** their MPP degree. **MPP coursework highlighted in cardinal must be taken in the aforementioned sequence, adhering to course prerequisites.** MPP electives are not required during a particular semester.

**MPP course waivers (up to 16 units) may be granted on the basis of the successful completion of relevant upper-division, undergraduate coursework. For example, a waiver for PPD 503 may be granted for students who have earned a grade of B+ or better in an intermediate microeconomics course.

*** Due to the number of MPP core course prerequisites required prior to PPD 561ab, the MPP degree cannot be completed in a one-year time frame, as some other progressive degrees can. Depending on the number of course waivers, some semesters may require less MPP units than the traditional unit load.