

# Master of Public Policy Progressive Degree Application and Admission Process

## USC Progressive Degree Website, including FAQs:

<https://undergrad.usc.edu/programs/progressive/requirements/>  
<https://arr.usc.edu/services/degree-progress/pdfaq.html>

## Progressive Degree Eligibility Criteria

- MPP progressive degree applicants must have completed a minimum of 64 units of undergraduate course work. (AP units, IB units, and college course work taken prior to high school graduation are excluded). You may apply in your junior year (recommended) or senior year, but no later than the semester prior to beginning graduate course work.
- The established university minimum GPA for admission to a progressive degree program is a 3.0 or above. Schools and academic departments can raise this standard for their applicants. Due to MPP program rigor, *GPA's of 3.5 or higher are preferred.*

## Application Package and Instructions

### Application Requirements

- Students must complete an Application for Admission to a Progressive Master's Degree Program. Within this application, students complete a University Progressive Degree Proposed Course Plan (to be completed in tandem with the applicant's undergraduate advisor). The student is responsible for meeting with the undergraduate advisor requesting confirmation that all remaining bachelor's degree requirements are accurately listed on the course plan. *On the MPP progressive application, only the remaining undergraduate courses should be listed. No signatures are required until after the student has been admitted into the program and the full course plan (including MPP requirements) has been completed in tandem with the MPP program administrator.*

(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).

- 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.
- 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. One letter should be from a faculty member within the student's major.
- All letters of recommendation should be emailed directly to Suzanne Alexander, MPP program administrator at [alexa1@usc.edu](mailto: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) or <https://financialaid.usc.edu/> 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.
- The Price School does offer a graduate scholarship for deserving applicants.

### **Application Submission**

- Submit all application materials via email in one PDF to Suzanne Alexander, Program Administrator, Graduate Programs in Public Policy at [alexa1@usc.edu](mailto:alexa1@usc.edu).
- All letters of recommendation should be emailed directly to Suzanne Alexander at [alexa1@usc.edu](mailto: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 the completed application package was received.

## 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:*

- Completion of a college-level statistics or econometrics course with a grade of “B” or better within three years of progressive degree admission.
- 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 progressive degree admission, the student will require PPD 504 (2 units), during the summer term 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 Lab 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 Professional Fundamentals Lab as well as the Professional Fundamentals Lab. The labs typically meet week prior to the start of the fall semester AND on the first Friday of the semester. Foundational knowledge of STATA software is essential for academic 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 Lab will be required the week prior to the start of the spring semester.

## 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
PPD 554 Foundations of Policy Analysis	4 units
PPD 558 Multivariate Statistical Analysis	4 units

### 2nd Semester Spring

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

### 3rd Semester Fall

PPD 561a Policy Analysis Practicum	1 unit (fall 2 <sup>nd</sup> year only)
(Analytic or Specialization electives)	12 units

### 4th Semester Spring

PPD 561b Policy Analysis Practicum	3 units (spring 2 <sup>nd</sup> year only)
(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**

**forementioned 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 course offerings as well as 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 a student received and due to the number of remaining bachelor's requirements, some semesters may require less MPP units than the traditional unit load.

## Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

### **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 email the program administrator with any specific questions at [alexa1@usc.edu](mailto:alexa1@usc.edu).

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 the program administrator at [alexa1@usc.edu](mailto: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.

### **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.

### **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 in August. There are also many required courses which have prerequisites.

**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, approximately 2 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 to register for graduate courses. 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 *16-unit maximum* while taking any graduate courses. Any exceptions must be requested via departmental petition. MPP students traditionally complete 12 units per semester during the first year, and 13/11 units during the second year.

**How many semesters do I have to complete my bachelor and the MPP degree?**

USC policy states that the time limit for completing the undergraduate and graduate degree is 12 semesters (6 years) and complete the undergraduate degree prior to or during the same term as the master's degree. 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.

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

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

**How many units can an MPP progressive master's degree be reduced by**

The progressive master's degree can be reduced by one-third. For example, the 48-unit program can be reduced to 32 units, with applicable, policy-related course work.

**How are the overlapping units determined for a progressive degree student?**

Units for progressive degrees cannot actually "overlap" or apply to both degrees. A course must be taken at the undergraduate or the graduate level, but not both. The "overlap" refers to a reduction in the total number of units that may be required for the graduate degree.

**Can a course be used for both undergraduate and graduate credit?**

No. The course plan must clearly indicate whether each course will count for undergraduate OR graduate credit. If a student uses a graduate-level course in the undergraduate program, but the catalogue specifies it as a requirement for the graduate program, a Subject Credit waiver must be granted to fulfill the course requirement in the graduate program. This information will be confirmed by the program administrator, following admission.

**Can a course plan be changed for a progressive degree student?**

Yes. To revise the previously approved course plan, a progressive degree student must work with their undergraduate advisor and/or MPP program administrator in order to create a submit a new course plan. The STARS report cannot be updated to reflect program changes without the revised course plan.

**If the student doesn't know which electives they are going to complete for his or her master's program, can a generic "graduate elective" be entered on the course plan?**

Yes. Course plans may include the placeholder "graduate degree electives" for the number of elective units allowed by the graduate program.

**Does a progressive degree student need to complete only the courses on his or her course plan?**

Students must complete the courses specified by their course plan AND the course requirements specified by the catalogue for the graduate program. Often these overlap. If appropriate, the department may waive or substitute course requirements specified in the catalogue. The limits on waivers and substitutions still apply to progressive degrees.