2026-27 Master of Public Policy (MPP)
Progressive Degree Program (PDP)
Application Directions and Requirements

Progressive Degree Program Requirements, Eligibility, and Financial Aid Eligibility

https://academicprograms.usc.edu/services/curriculum/progressive-degree-programs/
(The page covers the progressive degree program requirements, eligibility for progressive degrees, financial aid information, the typical application process, and MPP progressive course plan information).

2026-27 Progressive Degree Application

https://academicprograms.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/2026-Progressive-Degree-Application.pdf

USC Progressive Degree Program Offerings

https://academicprograms.usc.edu/services/curriculum/progressive-degree-programs/progressive-degree-program-offerings/

General MPP Progressive Course Plan

*(Applicants will have course plan variations depending on completed coursework and grades earned. After admission and completing the MPP program's course waiver review process, a final course plan will be determined with the Academic Program Administrator). *Please note that the MPP curriculum no longer includes a Management Elective and the updated USC catalog link is* ***https://catalogue.usc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=22&poid=32319&returnto=9159***

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 or senior year, but no later than the semester prior to beginning graduate work. All progressive students begin MPP coursework in the fall unless a student requires the completion of a summer term statistics prerequisite course.

- The established university minimum GPA for admission to a progressive degree program is a 3.0 or above. Schools and academic departments may raise their minimum preferred GPA. Due to MPP program rigor, *GPAs of 3.5 or higher are preferred.*

Application Deadlines

- **Fall:** December 15 is the deadline for scholarship consideration. March 1 is the deadline for standard admission consideration (if this date falls on a weekend, the deadline is the next business day).

- **Spring:** No admittance

- **Summer: No** admittance

Application Requirements

- Students must submit the USC Progressive Degree Program Application for Admission to be considered for admission to the MPP Progressive Degree program.

  Within this application, students complete a University Progressive Degree Proposed Course Plan. With the initial application submission, **no graduate coursework requirements should be listed when applying.** The course plan should be created with the applicant's undergraduate advisor(s) and list only their in-progress courses and remaining undergraduate degree requirements. The student is responsible for meeting with their undergraduate advisor(s) and requesting confirmation that **all remaining bachelor's degree requirements** are listed accurately on the course plan prior to meeting with the MPP Academic Program Administrator.

  - **Only the in-progress and remaining undergraduate course requirements should be noted on the MPP progressive application**.

  - **No advisor signature is required until after the student has been admitted into the program.** Your undergraduate advisor(s) will sign off on the final course plan once it has been determined, followed by the MPP Academic Program Administrator, after the course waiver review process has been completed.

  - Following MPP progressive degree program admission, and after a student's USC coursework has been reviewed, students will be asked to provide course waiver materials to the Academic Program Administrator for Program Director review.

  - Pending the Program Director's review, the full course plan (*including the MPP program requirements*) will be discussed and completed with the MPP Academic Program Administrator. Once the final course plan has been completed, signatures will be collected from the student's undergraduate advisor(s) reconfirming that all undergraduate course requirements are accurately listed. The undergraduate program(s) will sign first, the MPP program signatures will be second, and the student will sign last. Signatures will be obtained via Docusign.

MPP Progressive Degree Application Package Submission

- **Students should submit all 3 typed pages of the application (in fillable form format, allowing for advisor and Academic Program Administrator edits). Students should complete only the information on the first page and first portion of the second page. At the time the application is submitted, you should only list the remaining undergraduate degree requirements, as confirmed by your academic advisor.** (The MPP program will request signatures and the completion of other program fields once the applicant's official, MPP progressive requirements have been determined and added to the final course plan).

- An updated STARS report (Please include one for each major if the applicant is a double major).

- An updated resume

- A one-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 letters of recommendation from USC faculty supporting your MPP progressive degree admission. One letter should be from a faculty member within the student's major.
- Applicants should advise their recommenders to email official letters of recommendation directly to Suzanne Alexander, Academic Program Administrator for Graduate Programs in Public Policy at alexa1@usc.edu. Applicants ***should not use*** the recommendation forms in the application template. The MPP program will notify applicants when their letters of recommendation have been received.
- If desired, any supporting documents (which may include additional letters of recommendation).

MPP Progressive Degree Application Timeline

1. Applicants meet with their undergraduate advisor(s) to determine any outstanding undergraduate requirements and build the first course plan draft. It is helpful if applicants ask their advisors which (if any) courses need to be scheduled during a particular fall or spring semester based on course availability/offerings/prerequisites. Some courses are only offered once per year, which may be a consideration when completing the course plan.
2. Applicants locate 2 faculty recommenders to write letters of recommendation on your behalf. One faculty member must be from your undergraduate major. Provide your recommenders with the appropriate submission deadline and the email address where they should provide the letter of recommendation. All letters of recommendation should be received by the stated application deadline.
3. For scholarship consideration, applicants must submit their completed application package and letters of recommendation **no later than December 15**. For standard admission consideration, applicants must submit **no later than March 1** (if this date falls on a weekend, the deadline is the next business day).
4. By the stated application deadline, the applicant must submit their application materials. Application materials include: the first course plan draft, updated STARS report, updated resume, one-page essay, and any supporting documents (if applicable), in one PDF to Suzanne Alexander, Academic Program Administrator for Graduate Programs in Public Policy at alexa1@usc.edu. Incomplete applications are disqualified from admission review.
5. Applicants will receive an emailed notification stating that the completed application package has been received.
6. The highest-ranking December applicants are invited to interview with the Master of Public Policy Program Director and Academic Program Administrator in January. The highest-ranking March applicants are invited to interview in the month of March.

7. To determine official MPP course waivers, the Academic Program Administrator will identify appropriate upper division courses (300-400 level) on the STARS report, then reach out and ask the applicant to provide syllabi from the term the courses were completed. They may also identify any additional policy-related courses that they would like to have evaluated.

8. Following the aforementioned steps, applicants receive a letter of admission or declination via USC email. December applicants who have been extended a Price scholarship will also be notified.

9. The MPP program highly recommends that all applicants communicate with the Financial Aid department to fully understand the financial implications of starting a progressive degree ***prior*** to accepting an offer of admission. Starting a graduate program and the timing of undergraduate course completion affect financial aid loan packages or Pell Grants and can also affect other undergraduate scholarship awards.

10. Once all course waiver requests have been reviewed and students have been notified of the results, students who have extended an offer of admission will be asked to confirm their interest in starting the MPP progressive program in fall 2027.

Additional Information

- Contact the Office of Financial Services (JHH Lobby) or https://financialaid.usc.edu/ for more information or to determine how admission to the MPP progressive degree will impact your financial aid package.

- If you are the recipient of an undergraduate scholarship, please contact your scholarship coordinator to discuss the impact that the progressive degree program may have on your scholarship.

- Submission of an application to the MPP progressive degree does not constitute automatic admission. Students must be accepted to pursue the MPP progressive degree objective.

- Students should only officially apply to **one** USC progressive degree program.

MPP 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:*

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

2. Completion of the PPD 504 Essential Statistics for Public Management course. If an applicant has not completed a college-level statistics course with a grade of “B” or better within three years of progressive degree admission, due to MPP course prerequisites, the student will require PPD 504 Essential Statistics for Public Management (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.

Mandatory Pre-semester MPP Labs in August (one week prior to start of the fall semester)

The MPP Professional Fundamentals and Statistics (Stata software) Lab provide an introduction to the program and help to create a genuine camaraderie within the first-year student cohort. MPP progressive degree students are required to participate in the Professional Fundamentals Lab as well as the Statistics (Stata software) Lab. The labs typically meet the week prior to the start of the fall semester. Students are expected to plan their return to Los Angeles around these dates.

Foundational Stata software knowledge is essential for academic success in PPD 558 Multivariate Statistical Analysis. The Statistics Lab will provide foundational Stata commands and software practice. If a student plans on taking 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 progressive student maximum, *50 unit maximum if PPD 504 is required)

1st Semester Fall

PPD 503 Economics for Public Policy	4 units
PPD 554 Foundations of Policy Analysis	4 units
PPD 558 Multivariate Statistical Analysis *(PPD 504 prerequisite)*	4 units

2nd Semester Spring

PPD 555 Public Policy Formulation and Implementation	4 units
PPD 560 Methods for Policy Analysis *(PPD 503 and PPD 504 prerequisites)*	4 units
(Analytic elective)	4 units

3rd Semester Fall

PPD 561a Policy Analysis Practicum *(PPD 503, 554, 555, 558 & 560 prerequisites)*	1 unit
(Analytic or Specialization electives)	12 units

4th Semester Spring

PPD 561b Policy Analysis Practicum	3 units
(Analytic or Specialization electives)	8 units

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

**MPP course waivers (up to 16 units) may be granted based on 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. Students may waive or substitute up to 8 units of MPP core or analytic elective coursework. The remaining waivers must be specialization electives.

*** 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 receives and due to the number of remaining bachelor's requirements, some semesters may require less MPP units than the traditional undergraduate unit load. MPP progressive students are **limited to a total**

number of units per semester when a combination of MPP and undergraduate coursework is completed. These details will be worked out when your final course plan is created.

Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

Can I meet with the MPP Academic 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** to the MPP progressive degree program. The MPP progressive degree information session takes place during each fall semester, offering an opportunity for students to obtain program details as well as engage in Q &A. Students may feel free to email the Academic Program Administrator with any specific questions at alexa1@usc.edu. If a student misses the session, the recorded session link will be provided as well as any distributed materials throughout the academic year.

If a prospective applicant would like to know if they will earn any course waivers using their completed *upper division (300-400 level)* coursework, they may email an updated STARS Report along with a request to the Academic Program Administrator at alexa1@usc.edu. As collaboration with the program director is required, please allow a 2-week turnaround time. Please note that some submissions will yield a return request for course syllabi or request additional clarification prior to a determination of the final course waivers.

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 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. The prior coursework must have included essential topics in descriptive and inferential statistics such as measures of central tendency and precision, confidence intervals, and hypothesis testing. 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 MPP program labs in August (the week prior to the fall semester). There are also required courses that have prerequisites.

When will I be notified if I have been accepted to the progressive degree?
All applicants will be notified of their admissions status via email, approximately 3 weeks after the 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 Academic Program Administrator upon program acceptance. Students may register for their fall courses once the final course plan has been created, all required signatures have been obtained, the course plan is loaded onto the student's record, and the plan is approved by the University. At that time, the student will be eligible for graduate course d-clearance and course registration. *This process can take several weeks*. Preemptive d-clearance entry may be obtained from the MPP Academic Program Administrator, reserving a seat in the fall semester MPP course sequence.

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

USC policy states that the combined time limit for completing the undergraduate and graduate degree is 12 semesters (6 years). The undergraduate degree must be completed prior to or during the same term as the master's degree. The time limit starts with the student's *first semester* as a college student (including transferred community college coursework 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 vary each year. The MPP program is looking to admit top tier, high-performing, undergraduate students.

How are the overlapping units determined for a progressive degree student?
Units for progressive degrees *cannot* "overlap" or apply to both degrees. A course requirement 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 available 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 Academic 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 Academic Program Administrator to create a new course plan.

If the student doesn't know which electives they are going to complete for their master's program, how are they listed on the course plan?
Course plans may include the placeholder "undergraduate electives" for the number of elective units required by the undergraduate program. The same is true for the MPP analytic or specialization electives.