Texas A&M International University
College of Arts & Sciences
Department of Social Sciences

Master of Public Administration
Guidelines

Contact:
Dr. Mohamed Ben-Ruwin
Chair, Department of Social Sciences
LBVSC 312 E
Tel.: (956) 326-2632
Fax: (956) 326-2464

Dr. Peter Haruna
MPA Program Director
LBVSC 321
Tel.: (956) 326-2613
Message from the Department Chair

Dear Students and Friends:

Thank you for considering our MPA Program. I would like to point out three characteristics of our program that I hope you will take into account as you make the choice of graduate education.

- We have full time faculty who are nationally and internationally recognized, committed to improving the quality of public service, and yet remain attentive to student needs.

- Our university is situated in the heart of South Texas along the US-Mexico common border that offers immense opportunities for international, comparative, and developmental studies.

- Because most of our students work while they attend school, we offer courses at night during weekdays and on Saturdays throughout the academic year.

It is indeed for these reasons and several others that employers, alumni, and students believe our MPA Program truly contributes to a successful and satisfying public service career.

Feel free to email, call, or come personally and talk to MPA Faculty about our program. We are proud of the educational opportunity that awaits you at Texas A&M International University.

Mohamed Ben-Ruwin, Chair
Department of Social Sciences
Mission

The MPA Program at Texas A&M International University serves regional, state, national, and international needs both by preparing you for positions in the public and nonprofit sectors and by advancing research in discovering and applying knowledge of public administration. In keeping with this mission, we provide professional education for leadership and management roles in the public service through core courses, elective specialization, and internship and project requirements.

Our faculty has considerable professional public service experience and we are deeply committed to teaching and providing continuing education and professional development for you, facilitating discourse on public service related issues, contributing to public administration scholarship, and fostering future generations of scholars and practitioners.

Program Background

Our degree program is an integral part of the multi-disciplinary Department of Social Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences. Our program is young but vibrant, having admitted our first cohort of students in 1999. We are a NASPAA-member program with the potential for national accreditation. Over fifty students are currently actively enrolled. We are located in LBV 312 D on the 3rd floor of the exquisitely designed and constructed Lamar Bruni Vergara Science Center, the newest building on our campus. Our program provides you with a congenial and welcoming environment to develop yourself fully as a skilled and conscientious public service professional. We have an excellent group of alumni, career professionals, contributing to society in different capacities.

Our program involves in-depth study in an interdisciplinary core that provides you with a basic understanding of the field of public administration and the knowledge, skills and abilities in areas such as communication, administrative ethics, advanced research methods, budgeting and financial management, policy analysis, and program evaluation. You may also select two (6 SCH) of any 5000 level course offerings to compliment your professional goals. Students enrolling in the program beginning Fall 09 are required to begin the program by enrolling in PADM 5375 and PSCI 5321 (cross–listed w/ SOCI 5321) and will be required to take PSCI 5322 as an elective during the Spring semester. Because PADM 5375 and PSCI 5321 are offered in the Fall semester only, no new students will be admitted into the program during the Spring semester. Our student-faculty ratio is low, which facilitates more individualized consultation and advisement, as well as closer working cooperation between faculty and students.

As you make the important decision to invest your time and resources in a graduate education, consider the following: 1) we are a professional graduate program that prepares you for leadership and management roles in the public and nonprofit sectors; 2) we offer a wide variety of classes covering both theory-based and skill-oriented courses; 3) we have full time faculty that are nationally and internationally recognized in their respective areas of research and teaching and yet remain highly accessible to and interested in your professional development; and 4) we have an active student organization and an alumni association that offer opportunities for networking and contributing in diverse ways to community and public service.
Admission Requirements

General admission requirements for our MPA degree are described clearly in the current Texas A&M International University Catalog available from the Admissions Office, Texas A&M International University, 5201 University Boulevard, Killam Library Building Room 155.

Our program is open to all students who hold any baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution and meet the requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences for graduate admission.

Leveling courses (stem work) are generally not required other than those necessary to pass the language proficiency test. However, students not having taken an undergraduate research methods course are strongly encouraged to do. You may also contact the Office of Graduate Studies and Research for advisement in and guidance on all issues related to graduate studies in TAMIU. Our degree requirements are also available online: (www.tamiu.edu/coas/dss/masterpubadmin).

If you hold a baccalaureate degree in the social sciences, arts and humanities, public health, public or business administration, urban planning, urban studies, social work, or related fields from accredited institutions, you are generally an excellent candidate for admission into our program. However, if you have the physical sciences background, you are equally eligible, although it might be to your advantage to consider taking a few bridge-up courses to better prepare yourself. Thus our degree program admission requirement is based more on past academic work and performance, as well as evidence of potential to perform satisfactorily.

Admission Process

Your application package is initially submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research that does the preliminary screening to ensure compliance with university and graduate school policies. Your application should include a completed application form, documented GRE scores, undergraduate GPA, and a written statement. Where documentation is incomplete, you may register for up to six credit hours with an option of extension, if this is deemed necessary. GRE scores are waived, if you are pursuing the MPA as a second degree.

Our department has a standing admissions committee that receives and considers new applications from the Office of Graduate Studies and Research on a regular basis. This committee meets at least twice a year to consider and provide full review to all applications for fall. As mentioned above, new students will not be admitted for the spring semester due to the non-availability of PADM 5375 and PSCI 5321 during the spring semester. Upon review of your application package, the committee issues a written notice that grants you full admission and clears you to enroll full-time, if you satisfy all the admission criteria and if you show promise to perform up to the level of graduate study.

However, the admissions committee may deny admission or recommend provisional admission, if in their professional judgment you do not satisfactorily meet all of the admissions criteria. In that case, the admissions committee issues a written notice of justification for their decision.

Before you enroll full-time, make sure you have proof of admission into our degree program or at least show evidence of permission from the Office of Graduate Studies and Research to enroll on a provisional basis. Our MPA Director is initially responsible for MPA advisement and registration until you are assigned to a program advisory committee.

Program Advisory Committee

On being admitted to the program, you will be assigned to a Program Advisory Committee (hereafter PAC) consisting of three faculty members who agree to guide your studies. Both you and faculty are notified of this assignment normally during the first semester in the program. It is expected that a cordial and professional relationship between you and members of your PAC will emerge. However, you are free to change your PAC membership as you deem necessary.
PAC membership will normally include faculty researching and teaching courses in your major area of study or to provide other program advice. The PAC will advise you, jointly with the MPA Program Director, to approve your program of study, and monitor your progress. The MPA Program Advisory Committee Form (p. 11) may be used for this purpose. The PAC works with you until after comprehensive exams have been completed and you have been cleared for graduation. Once constituted and approved, the PAC will be your official advisor; prior to the approval of the PAC, the MPA Program Director will advise you in consultation with the Department Chair.

During the first semester of study, students will be expected to file (with the MPA Program Director) approved forms establishing their PACs. The selection of a PAC involves the advice of the MPA Program Director, the agreement of a full-time faculty to serve as Chair and two other faculties as members, and the completion of a PAC appointment form.

Typically, the PAC Chair will have an appointment in the Department of Social Sciences and a majority of the voting members of the PAC must be full-time graduate faculty from Texas A&M International University.

The PAC may meet at least once each academic year to review the student’s progress and may decide to report their findings to the Department Chair via the MPA Program Director. It is your responsibility to arrange such a meeting whenever necessary.

Prior to each scheduled comprehensive examination, the PAC will meet and determine if you are ready to take the exam or not. They will also provide guidance on how to prepare for the comps.

The PAC Chair convenes the meeting as soon as possible to prepare a formal plan outlining your program of study, which identifies all course work to be completed, scheduled over a reasonable period of time. The program of study may be amended as circumstances warrant, subject to approval of the PAC and the MPA Program Director.

**Program of Study**

The MPA consists of 42 hours of graduate credit. Students will take 36 of these hours in 12 “core classes” in the Department of Social Sciences and 6 hours (2 classes) of “elective courses,” which may include courses offered elsewhere in our university. The general outline is as follows:

**Required Core Courses:** 36 hours
- PADM 5332 Program Evaluation
- PADM 5334 Administrative Law
- PADM 5342 Organization Theory
- PADM 5344 Communication for Public Administrators
- PADM 5362 Administrative Ethics
- PADM 5375 Survey of Public Administration and Public Affairs
- PADM 5378 Human Resources Management in Public Administration
- PADM 5380 Principles and Politics of Public Budgeting
- PADM 5382 Public Policy Development and Implementation
- PSCI 5321 Social Inquiry
- PSCI 5322 Advanced Quantitative Methods

One course chosen from:
- PADM 5395 Project (for those with at least 2 years experience in the public sector)
- PADM 5396 Internship (for those with less than 2 years experience in the public sector)

**Elective Courses:** 6 hours
- **Any** two 5000 level courses chosen from university catalogue.

You should seek faculty advice to gain a better understanding of our program structure and to identify the most appropriate courses to include in your program of study. You should note, in particular, that most of
the core courses are offered in specific semesters only or as specified in the university's current Schedule of Classes.

Course Sequence

Beginning in Fall 2009 and onwards, we have adopted a strict guideline that emphasizes particular course sequence. We require the students to begin our program with the foundational courses (PADM 5375 & PSCI 5321) which should be followed by the theory courses (PADM 5342 and PADM 5362). These courses will provide the foundational knowledge, logic, and tools for gaining sound understanding of and appreciation for public administration. Some of the other courses have pre-requisites (you have to successfully complete PSCI 5321 and PSCI 5322 before you take PADM 5332 (program evaluation)). The course sequencing is based on how these courses fit together and build on each other. Core courses taken in the proper sequence will help you prepare most efficiently for the comprehensive exam and will enable you to derive most benefit from our program. You cannot take the comprehensive exam before you successfully complete the core requirements. Core courses cannot be substituted.
Academic Standards

You are expected to maintain a high level of academic integrity. Academic dishonesty of any sort will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from our program. The relevant University policies are summarized in the current Catalog. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Submission of an assignment that is the work of another person in whole or part.
- Failure to cite the work of others appropriately, whether published or unpublished, print or non-print.
- Unauthorized copying of materials, including computer programs.
- Providing another student with information or receiving information from another student during examinations or class sessions, unless authorized by the instructor.
- Observing or assisting other students in their work unless authorized by the instructor.
- Conduct of any sort, which violates the integrity of examinations and other assignments.
- Cooperating with other persons involved in academic dishonesty.

Grading Philosophy

Our MPA grading philosophy reflects our belief that grades should communicate to students, future employers, and graduate schools how our students have performed with reference to the national standards of the field. In general, grades in our MPA courses should be expected to mean the following:

A: All assignments and expectations met. All work exceeds expectations and reflects excellence and creativity. Performance is well above the expected level of competence for graduate study.

B: All assignments and expectations met. Performance reflects the average level of competence for graduate study.

C: Passing but not acceptable. This performance is below expectations on a significant portion of work. Only up to six credits of "C" may be counted toward graduation, providing the overall GPA remains 3.00 or better. A student who accumulates more than six credits of "C" and whose average falls below 3.00 is not likely to be in good standing in our program.

D: This is failing and treated as "F" grade.

I (incomplete): The College policy for “Incompletes” discourages them. They are appropriate, however, when the following requirements are met:

The student cannot complete the class because of a severe illness to self or immediate family member at the very end of the semester (after the date for withdrawal from class) or because of a traumatic event in the student’s life (e.g., death of or serious injury or illness to an immediate family member) at the end of the semester, AND

The student is passing the class at the time he or she cannot complete the semester, AND

The student has completed either 85-90% of the course requirements or is missing only major assignments due after the final date for withdrawal from class and after the onset of the illness or traumatic event (e.g., assignments such as the final exam for the course or a research paper), AND, finally,

The faculty member must have the approval of the department chair before giving an Incomplete.
Comprehensive Examinations
A four-hour in-class MPA Comprehensive Examination (hereafter COMPS) is designed to test the student's knowledge and understanding of the field and discipline, and not class material.

Because the COMPS serve as the means for conducting annual assessments of our program, they are prepared and graded collectively by all MPA Faculty. You are expected to answer three questions, including knowledge and history of the field, theory, and practical tools and skills.

The questions test your ability to synthesize themes and issues, analyze complex ideas, and write clearly and logically. They also test your ability to apply the tools and skills in solving practical public problems. An acceptable response would be one that thoughtfully addresses all aspects of the questions, connects them logically, and accurately cites the relevant literature.

Remember, you have to complete your core courses (except for project or internship) before you take your comprehensive exam. MPA COMPS are offered once each in the fall and spring semesters as indicated in the University calendar, and students must pass to be certified for graduation. The students have to formally notify the Department Chair the time they wish to take the exam.

COMPS should be taken after a suitable period of reading and preparation and students should carefully plan their course work and examination scheduling in consultation with their PACs because they take the COMPS only when their PACs agree that they are ready.

As part of the preparation, the MPA Program Director in consultation with the MPA Faculty will arrange a 2-3-hour COMPS seminar at a date and time to be mutually agreed upon. Detailed guidance for and expectations of performance will be provided during the seminar. You are required to attend the seminar and seek clarification for all COMPS related issues.

The grading rubric developed by all MPA Faculty includes as follows:
- **Exemplary** (passing): demonstrates vivid understanding of public administration, addresses all aspects of the questions, has few spelling or no grammatical errors, connects and presents ideas logically, and cites the relevant literature to support arguments.

- **Passing**: demonstrates clear understanding of public administration, addresses most aspects of the questions, has minor omissions, grammar, and spelling errors, and cites some of the relevant literature to support arguments.

- **Conditional Passing**: fails to address a question or parts of a question satisfactorily; because students must pass in all three questions to be successful, MPA Faculty reserve the option to examine such students in all aspects of the COMPS that they do not do well.

- **Failing**: fails to address most aspects of the questions, uses poor grammar, spelling, and syntax, has factual errors, and is poorly organized. Failure will result in re-taking the exam but failure to pass on the third try will necessitate complete withdrawal from the program. COMPS results will be communicated in writing to each student within three weeks of your exam.

Tips for the COMPS
- **Know your material well**: The comprehensive exam is geared to test your knowledge of the field of Public Administration. You have to possess a thorough understanding about the concepts, and also the connections and contradictions between and among the major ideas of Public Administration. One good way is to go back to the major thinkers and find out their perceptions about key issues (for example, politics/administration dichotomy, decision-making, leadership, accountability and discretion).
• **Save all papers, exams, notes, from all the classes:** You should keep a copy of all the assignments, papers, exams you have done in any course during your degree program. This will be a tremendous help during your preparation. A good source of references and bibliography are essential to locate major themes and key contributors without panic attack.

• **Collect classic and contemporary articles:** Start collecting articles that might be helpful later. The “Classics of Public Administration” by Shafritz and Hyde is a good source of significant articles. Take a look at the latest editions of PAR (Public Administration Review) to read current themes of interest. Photocopy articles, news clips and such items that you think can be helpful later.

• **Arrange your ideas according to major topics:** During each semester break, go over your notes, paper, collected articles and arrange them in a way that makes sense to you. You could have all the articles, commentaries by Waldo in one file. Or you could have all the papers about reinventing government in one place. You should know how they are arranged and where they are. To keep up with the issues, your notes need to be in your fingertips as well.

• **Start preparing essays on major topics:** You would have to write papers for a lot of courses. Take a look at the paper, see what and who is missing, and keep on adding to these. Soon, you will have your own little summaries of the field and sub-fields.

• **Work in groups:** Different study styles are appropriate for different people. Even if group work is not suited for you, meet with your cohorts and discuss about topics, preparation, probable questions. You can exchange books and articles and find out about what you are missing from your colleagues.

• **Utilize faculty:** Pick the brains of your professors. Talk to them; ask them for suggestions, reading lists and anything you can think of. Each and every one of the faculty has gone through the grueling process, their insights might help you a great deal.

### Professional Development

You will be encouraged to participate in research and scholarly activities, such as conference presentations and publication. TAMIU has initiated an annual conference, which offers you the opportunity to present your research work to the university community. In past two years, MPA students have won the award for the best graduate paper.

Panel opportunities exist for you to present at the Public Administration Theory Network (PATNET), American Society of Public Administration (ASPA), as well as Conference of Minority Public Administrators (COMPA) national conferences. In 2005, three MPA students presented at the Conference of Minority Public Administrators held in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Our MPA Faculty is willing and in the past has assisted students in developing presentations. Your term papers are viable sources for initiating possible conference presentations.

The Department of Social Sciences has a collection of videos and laptop computers, which are very useful for research and scholarly work.

As well, Texas A&M International University has excellent facilities to support both research and scholarship. Killam Library has over 250,000 volumes and subscribes to about 39 professional journals in political science and public administration. Patrons can and usually do have access, through interlibrary loans, for those materials unavailable locally.

The library is also a repository for government documents and provides computer research services. In addition to the University library, students may also take advantage of the Public Library whose main
facility is located at the intersection of Calton and McPherson Roads.

With the guidance of Faculty, students of the department have established organizations and clubs for promoting professional development. In fact, informal associations of majors exist and meet from time to time with faculty teaching in those programs.

Field trips and participation in national professional meetings are organized and facilitated by these professional student groups. The Public Administration & Urban Studies Students Association (PAUSSA) was formed to build a community of faculty, alumni, and MPA students.

Both freshmen and continuing MPA students are encouraged to join and participate actively in these activities. Copies of the PAUSSA constitution are available in the departmental office.

Our MPA annual fall orientation is another excellent forum for students, alumni, and faculty to meet, get to know each other informally, and build the sense of community in our field.
MPA Program Advisory Committee Form

Student: _____________________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________________________

Committee Members:

Faculty Chair: _______________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________________________

Faculty Member: ______________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________________________

Faculty Member: ______________________

Signature: ___________________________ Date: _________________________________
Mohamed Ben-Ruwin, Professor and Chair  
Department of Social Sciences  
Texas A&M International University  
5201 University Boulevard  
Laredo, Texas 78041-1900

(RE: Request to take Comprehensive Examination in the <Semester, Year>, for <Student’s Name>, <Degree-Major/Minor>, <Social Security Number>)

Dear Dr. Ben-Ruwin,

I am respectfully notifying the Department of Social Sciences that I, <Student’s Name>, will be completing my requirements for the <Degree-Major/Minor> program during the <Semester, Year>. It is my intention to be scheduled to take the comprehensive examination in order to satisfy the requirements for graduation.

I am enclosing an “unofficial” graduate transcript which indicates the courses I have completed, and the courses I am currently enrolled in. I have also included the name of the professor who taught each of these courses. The chair of my committee is Dr. <Professor’s Name> and my advisory committee members are Drs. <Professor’s Name> and <Professor’s Name>.

I am enclosing a verified degree audit as performed by the Registrar’s Degree Audit Specialist.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at home <(Area Code) Phone Number>, at work <(Area Code) Phone Number> or through e-mail at <JohnJoe@email.com>.

Sincerely,

{ Signature Area }

{ Student Initials-Typed }
MPA Faculty:

Dr. Ben-Ruwin, Mohamed A., Associate Professor, Chair, Dept. of Social Sciences (Associate Professor and Chair, Dept. of Social Sciences. (Program Evaluation, Urban Planning, Comparative Politics, American Government, and Middle-Eastern Politics)

Dr. Haruna, Peter F., Associate Professor and Associate Dean of COAS, (Public Budgeting and Financial Management, Administrative Law, Public Leadership, and Governance Structures)

Dr. Lawrence, Christopher, Assistant Professor, Research Methods, Public Policy, and Political Behavior, Political Institutions)

Dr. Manganaro, Lynne, Assistant Professor, (Research Methods, Organizational Theory, Public Policy and Human Resources)

Dr. Momen, Mehnaaz, Associate Professor, (Survey of Public Administration, Communication for Public Administrators, and Women and Gender Studies)

Dr. Norris, James, Associate Professor, (Research Methods in Social Sciences, International Relations, American Government)

Dr. Riggs, William W., Associate Professor, Director of Bi-National Center for Leadership, Education, and Research in Public Service and MPA Director (Policy Development, Analysis, and Implementation, Organization Theory, and International Law & International Organizations)

Mr. Mercurio Martinez, adjunct faculty (County Government)
Mr. Rodolfo Rincon, adjunct faculty (Health Administration)
Ms. Susan Jones, adjunct faculty (Health Administration)