

Is the MPP the right degree for me?



With so many options, learn how you can master the job market with a degree in public policy

By Wendy Hunter Barker | GPS News

Everywhere you turn, advances are occurring at lighting speeds. The Internet of Things is everywhere. 5G is on the horizon. Big data is changing the way we analyze and see the world around us.

In this ever-changing ethos, choosing the right graduate degree can be daunting. You want to ensure both maximum utility and flexibility while pursuing your passion. Is the Master of Public Policy (MPP) the right degree for you?

“The MPP degree is a rigorous, focused, skills-oriented program geared toward students who want to pursue a career in policy analysis. [It] is for students who want to analyze public problems and recommend improvements.”

- [Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration](#)

Skills Acquired

Public policy is the study of how laws, rules and regulations are created by government organizations. An MPP will equip you with the ability to deeply evaluate governments by analyzing their policies and examining their interactions with both the public and private sectors. A key differentiator between an MPP and a Master of Public Administration is that in an MPP program, you will focus on the design and evaluation of policy, as opposed to the implementation and management of it.

During your study, you will learn to craft and assess policy decisions within, and related to, governments at all levels - local, regional and federal agencies. You will prepare to make policy recommendations, taking into account the influence of other actors, such as industry, nonprofits and multinational organizations.

Courses will be drawn largely from the disciplines of economics, political science and management. You will explore finance and ethics. You will delve into the policymaking process, domestically and/or from an international perspective, and will learn both design process and evaluation strategies.

And perhaps most importantly, you will learn to write. The ability to create a well-crafted, analytically assessed, concise policy brief backed up with data will be one of your most marketable skills.



“I decided to do an MPP because I wanted to be able to address local social problems and look for global policy solutions. After completing the program, I can better analyze the policymaking process and apply the tools I have learned to generate change.”

- Valeria Andrea Buelna Sainz, MPP '19

Each graduate program offers a slightly different curriculum, accenting the strengths of that particular university or college. It is important to understand what ancillary skills and knowledge you want and pair your program to those goals. Are you most interested in climate-related issues? Or perhaps public and global health? Education policy, social justice issues or peace and security - all are possible areas of concentration in various programs.

Jobs Attained

Whether you plan to go into the public or private sector, the MPP can be a valuable asset, providing more flexibility than people normally associate with the degree.

Government and nonprofit positions are generally regarded as the career trajectory for those who earn an MPP. And it is easy to see why. A quick search of LinkedIn shows time and again that people with recent MPP degrees occupy positions such as policy analyst or government relations manager for a nonprofit, or legislative advisor or research manager in an academic or government institution.

But it should be noted that there are many opportunities in the private sector for MPP graduates as well, with titles such as lobbying advisor or policy strategist for large private corporations.

One of the most beneficial aspects of an MPP program for future employment is the training students receive during their capstone project. Often set up as client-based, students are gathered into teams to produce a report or analysis for a local agency or corporation. Students learn about teamwork, client management and producing deliverables. When combined with insights and analytical skills from their coursework, MPP graduates are ready to start their professional life.



“I chose the GPS program to learn about energy and climate policy. In the few short months since I began my first post-MPP job as an Energy and Climate Policy Analyst with a policy consulting practice in Seattle, I have used my GPS coursework in energy systems and quantitative analysis to help small innovative clean energy companies better understand state and national level climate policy benefits and constraints, thus hopefully furthering climate action by improving their ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

- Alicia Krueger, MPP '19

Learn more about the [MPP degree at GPS here](#).