What makes the MAS-IA degree right for me

Explore what makes the executive international affairs degree the right choice for professionals looking to enhance their careers

Are you a seasoned professional with five or more years of work experience? Interested in an executive international affairs degree to enhance your career? The Master of Advanced Studies in International Affairs (MAS-IA) degree may be the perfect option for you.

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) stands among the world’s top graduate schools of international relations and public policy and is the established leader in its focus on Asia and the Americas. GPS offers a number of globally-focused degrees, with an integrated faculty from the fields of international affairs, political science and economics.

But what makes the MAS-IA degree stand out?

It is our leading executive international affairs degree, designed for students who
want to dig deeply into the study of international relations, international political economy, public policy, environmental sustainability and Asia-Pacific security.

On campus, you will work with professors who are leading experts in their fields. Selecting one of five specialized career tracks, as well as a regional specialization, you are able to connect academic work with the leadership roles post-graduation.

The MAS-IA degree is also perfectly situated for members of the U.S. military to advance their professional careers. UC San Diego is an approved civilian institution for the Navy’s Political-Military National Security/International Relations and Diplomacy 2000 Subspecialty 680 curriculum; the Security of the Asia-Pacific track fulfills these curricular Education Service Agreements.

‘The MAS-IA was exactly what I needed to take my career to the next level’

Samuel Lau, a 2020 MAS-IA graduate, first learned about the programs on offer at GPS when he was an undergraduate at UC San Diego.

Samuel Lau, MAS-IA ’20

“I was very interested in pursuing a master’s degree at GPS after I graduated with my B.A. in 2011,” Lau said. “However, I decided to get some professional work experience first under my belt before I pursued a master’s, and next thing I know, I’ve worked for seven years before I decided to start graduate school.”

Lau said he conducted extensive research into a wide range of graduate programs across the U.S. and overseas before choosing GPS as his top choice.

“I was seeking a program that had the right balance of a top-notch faculty, proven global impact and a curriculum that was not only academically rigorous but could
also provide me with practical knowledge and skills that I could apply in my profession,” Lau said. “GPS ended up being the obvious choice for me because it checked all of these boxes, and there were also several specific aspects of the school and the MAS-IA program that made it a perfect fit for me.”

Lau said he had a keen interest in strategic security studies as well as the Asia-Pacific, fitting in perfectly with the MAS-IA program’s Security of the Asia-Pacific career track. GPS also offers a part-time option for working professionals in the MAS-IA program, which allowed him to earn his degree while keeping his job.

“As I searched for a graduate program, I was looking for one that did not focus on teaching the technical skills that I had already learned but rather a program that would enable me to develop a deep awareness of emerging strategic geopolitical risks and trends, understand the drivers of the most significant and uncertain geopolitical issues of our time, and think critically about how the future may evolve,” Lau said. “After studying the curriculum closely before I applied to GPS, I determined that the MAS-IA was exactly what I needed to take my career to the next level.”

During his time at GPS, the staff, fellow students and a number of professors — such as professors Tai Ming Cheung, Jesse Driscoll and Barbara Walter — made Lau’s experience a rewarding one. Lau now works at Snap Inc. as a manager in intelligence and risk analysis, managing a team of security analysts that helps keep their company’s employees, assets and operations safe so the company can safely and securely achieve its strategic objectives.

“I can confidently say that without my MAS-IA degree, I would not be where I am today,” Lau said. “My education at GPS made me a more well-rounded global security professional by instilling in me a range of strategic geopolitical concepts, analytical frameworks and critical thinking skills that have enabled me to confidently engage with senior business leaders and mentor junior security and intelligence professionals.”

**Learn about the MAS-IA program**

In December, we will host two prospective student information sessions focused on the MAS-IA program.
On Dec. 6, MAS-IA admissions expert Janaye Barker will review the nuts and bolts of applying for the program, as well as how the program can aid your career in solving the world’s most critical challenges.

On Dec. 15, our information session will explore what it’s like to live in sunny San Diego, with its idyllic climate, 70 miles of pristine beaches and a dazzling array of world-class family attractions, while also attending one of the world’s leading public research universities.

Register for these virtual chats today to help you chart a path to take your career to the next level! And be sure to view all admissions events.