



Master of Science in Urban Studies Student Handbook

Academic Year 2021-2022

**School of Public Administration
College of Public Affairs & Community Service**

The University of Nebraska at Omaha shall not discriminate based upon age, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender-identity, sex, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran's status, marital status, religion, or political affiliation.

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Welcome

Urban Studies at UNO equips students with the skills and understanding to address many of the most pressing issues facing society today, and most of them are urban in nature. We offer a set of core classes building a twin foundation of urban analysis and community engagement. However, because of our belief in an interdisciplinary approach to learning, and our partnership with academic units across campus, students can develop a deeper grasp of a specific aspect of the urban environment, including but not limited to geography, history, sociology, political science, or economics. Finally, and maybe most importantly, MSUS students have the opportunity to apply skills and energy to meeting community needs and issues. Our students, faculty, and graduates work in public agencies and a wide range of community-based organizations in the metro region. Clearly, Urban Studies at UNO is Connected, Engaged and Dynamic!

During this 37 credit hour program students are exposed to numerous aspects of cities and towns from problems facing local neighborhoods to exploring the complexities associated with rapidly emerging global urban centers. Experiential activities are an integral part of the program, providing the opportunity for students to explore and address first-hand the challenges facing the contemporary urban environment such as developing affordable housing, neighborhood redevelopment and building local economies.

Daniel Scheller, Ph.D.
Chair, Urban Studies Program

Preface

The MSUS Handbook is produced once each academic year to provide details on program requirements and expectations. The handbook addresses important information necessary for the successful pursuit of the MSUS degree. For more general information on the school's mission, history, research, teaching, and public service initiatives, please visit our website at spa.unomaha.edu.

Please note that the curriculum requirements provided in the edition of this handbook apply to all students admitted as of the fall semester 2021 and spring semester 2022. This MSUS Handbook should be used in conjunction with the UNO Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.unomaha.edu/graduate/>), which describes policies and procedures for graduate study at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Applicable UNO policies are incorporated in this handbook by reference.

No handbook or website can answer all students' questions, and certainly cannot replace contact with the faculty advisors who are ready, able, and willing to provide assistance in dealing with the MSUS program and its requirements. Your assigned faculty advisor is always your best source for information; however, the following faculty/staff and University personnel may be helpful in answering student questions or providing assistance.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (CPACS BUILDING, SUITE 111):

Daniel Scheller, Ph.D., Urban Studies Program Chair

Email: dscheller@unomaha.edu

Phone: 402-554-2864

Ciera Mosley, MS., Academic Program Coordinator

Email: cmosley@unomaha.edu

Phone: 402-554-4874

Sue Troester, Office Manager

Email: sdmstroester@unomaha.edu

Phone: 402-554-2625

OTHER UNO OFFICES:

James Shaw, Reference Librarian	402-554-2225
Office of Graduate Studies Registrar's	402-554-2341
Financial Aid	402-554-2327
UNO HELP Desk	402-554-4357

Note: This student guide is subject to revision; updates will be attached as an addendum, with a full revision issued at the start of each new academic year.

Program Procedures

Admissions Requirements

Applications for this program are accepted on a rolling basis. All materials must be submitted prior to the beginning of the semester in which the student has elected to begin coursework. We recommend that prospective students submit application materials 3-4 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester for which they seek to enroll to ensure time for application processing, review, and communication of decisions.

- The general prerequisite for admission to the Urban Studies program is a four-year bachelors' degree with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 in the junior and senior years combined (last 50-60 credit hours). Under extenuating circumstances, an average below 3.0 will be considered. Please contact the chair of the Urban Studies program for more information.
- International applicants who do not have a baccalaureate or equivalent degree from an English-speaking institution of higher education in the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, English-speaking Africa, Australia, Ireland, or New Zealand are required to submit TOEFL and GRE scores.
 - The minimum TOEFL requirement is 550 (written) or 213 (computer-based), or an IELTS with a score of 6.5 or better, or a PTE with a score of 53 or better.
- Submit a Resume including work history in Adobe PDF format.
- Submit a Statement of Purpose (Essay) in Adobe PDF format (double-spaced, 2 to 4 pages) and answer the following questions:
 - Please tell us about the factors in your background that will help us understand your interest in a profession in urban studies.
 - What are your professional goals? Ten years from now, what do you hope to be doing professionally?
 - How can a Master in Urban Studies from UNO help you to achieve these goals?
- Submit Two letters of recommendation. Please provide the names and email addresses of two individuals who can address your qualifications for graduate study. The recommenders will be sent an online recommendation form to complete. Please inform each of them to expect this correspondence from the UNO Graduate Studies Office.

Degree Audit

When a student receives official notification of admission to the MSUS program from the Dean of Graduate Studies, the student's individual degree plan will be included in the admission packet. This plan is based on the concentration identified by the student during the application process and includes any provisions of admission, as well as requirements for graduation. The degree plan is integrated with the UNO Mavlink student information system (mavlink.nebraska.edu). The plan is updated as students complete degree requirements. This individual degree plan can be accessed at any time by the student by viewing DegreeWorks through the Mavlink system. It is highly recommended that each student review their degree audit at the end of each semester to ensure that they are on track to complete the degree requirements for their concentration.

Transfer of Credits

A student may transfer up to nine (9) hours of graduate credit from outside the University of Nebraska and use those credits toward the MSUS degree requirements. Core courses may not be transferred. Transferred courses require approval of the MSUS Graduate Program Committee. Students should discuss potential transfer courses with the School's Academic Program Coordinator or the MSUS Chair as soon as possible. The request for a transfer of credit should be made to the Urban Studies Chair, and must include a letter of

explanation from the student and a copy of the course syllabus.

Advisement

The MSUS program has an academic advisor. The role of the academic advisor is two-fold: (1) to be the point of contact program and curriculum questions. The academic advisor is the connector for students to faculty, staff, and university resources; and (2) to provide academic support for students as they progress through their program. Together, the academic advisor and the student clarify required courses and electives while mapping the course sequence towards graduation.

All students are required to meet with the academic advisor once during the Fall semester and once during the Spring semester, prior to enrolling in courses for the upcoming semester. These meetings will take place in October (during Fall semester) and in March (during the Spring semester). Each meeting should last approximately 30 minutes.

Program Structure

Master of Science in Urban Studies (MSUS) Program Overview

The mission of the MSUS Program is to lead and engage communities to improve the quality of life in urban environments.

The MSUS degree program requires 37 hours of coursework in four primary areas:

- Core required courses (12 credit hours)
- Completion of the Tools courses (10 credit hours)
- Track courses (9 credit hours)
- Elective courses (6 credit hours)

Core Courses

(12 credit hours)

The core requirements for the MSUS degree include the following courses:

UBNS 8000 Seminar in Urban Studies	3
UBNS 8020 Race, Ethnicity & American Urban Culture	3
PA 8010 The Public Economy	3
PA 8990 Capstone Project	3

Tools Courses

(10 credit hours)

The tools requirements for the MSUS degree include the following courses:

UBNS 8200 Community Organizing & Development	3
PA 8120 Analysis & Decision Making	3
GEOG 8056 Geographic Information Systems I	4

Track Courses: Students pick one of three tracks (Human Community, Built Environment, or Natural Systems) to pursue in their program of study (9 credit hours) *Track course list is not exhaustive.*

All nine (9) credit hours must be from one track.

Human Community Track | 9 credits

Students will increase their understanding of how social, economic and political factors impact individual

lives and how people live and interact in urban areas. Students will learn about the processes by which institutional actors influence patterns of human interaction for the purpose of improving the quality of life.

Required Course

PSCI 8015 Urban Politics 3

Track Course Options | Select Two**

CACT 8650 Writing Across Differences	3	PHHB 8360 Community Health	3
GEOG 8210 Cultural Geography	3	SOC 8100 Social Inequality	3
PA 8090 Organization Theory and Behavior	3	SOC 8106 The Community	3
PA 8520 Seminar In Grant Writing	3	SOC 8200 Society & Health	3
PA 8550 Introduction to The Non-Profit Sector	3	SOC 8316 Sociology Of Sexualities	3
PA 8710 Fund Raising	3	SOC 8746 Social Justice & Social Change	3
PA 8740 Health Care Policy	3	SOC 8146 Urban Sociology	3
PA 8896 Food Systems	3	SOWK 8090 Social Welfare Policy	3
PA 8896 Social Policy	3		3

** This list is not exhaustive. Other courses may apply with approval of program chair.

Built Environment Track | 9 credits

Students will increase their understanding of how social, economic and political factors impact how cities are built and developed over time. Students will increase their understanding of the process by which institutional actors influence the development of cities for the purpose of improving the quality of life.

Required Course

UBNS 8060 Introduction to Urban Planning 3

Track Course Options | Select Two**

CACT 8650 Writing Across Differences	3
GEOG 8120 Urban Geography	3
GEOG 8166 Urban Sustainability	3
GEOG 8650 Land Use	3
PA 8896 Food Systems	3
PA 8436 Municipal Administration	3
PSCI 8015 Urban Politics	3
SOC 8766 Environmental Sociology	3

** This list is not exhaustive. Other courses may apply with approval of program chair.

Natural Systems Track | 9 credits

Students will increase their understanding of how cities can protect the natural environment through efforts to reduce pollution, introduce renewable energy sources and conserve urban ecosystems.

Required Course

PA 8826 Environmental Law & Regulations 3

Track Course Options | Select Two**

CACT 8326 Ecological Sustainability & Health	3
CACT 8650 Writing Across Differences	3
ENVN 8316 Our Energy Future	3
GEOG 8016 Conservation of Natural Resources	3
GEOG 8166 Urban Sustainability	3
GEOG 8346 Water Resources	3
GEOG 8616 Environmental Assessment	3
PA 8896 Food Systems	3
PSCI 8276 Global Environmental Politics	3
SOC 8766 Environmental Sociology	3

** This list is not exhaustive. Other courses may apply with approval of program chair.

Elective Courses

(6 credit hours)

Six (6) credit hours of elective courses must be completed in consultation with the student's advisor.

Capstone

(3 credit hours)

In addition to degree requirements listed above, students enrolled in the MSUS program must complete the Capstone Project Course prior to being awarded their degree (unless the Thesis option is chosen; see below).

The course may be taken upon completion of **30 credit hours** and requires permission of the instructor. Requests to take Capstone with less than 30 credit hours completed will be considered only in extenuating circumstances and require approval of the MSUS Chair. The project can focus on any of a variety of applied urban issues, but it must address a significant urban concern and incorporate significant file work, observation, or data collection. The student will work under the supervision of the Capstone Project course instructor and will be expected to work with other faculty teaching in their area of focus. Upon completion, the Capstone Project paper will be read by faculty and presented as a part of a public service colloquium.

Students should work with their advisor and MSUS program Chair in developing a proposal for the Capstone Project course well in advance of the semester in which they would like to enroll for the course. Additional information regarding this course is available on the School web site (<https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-public-affairs-and-community-service/public-administration/courses/PA8990.php>).

Thesis Option

(6 credit hours)

A thesis option is available for students entering the MSUS program prior to the 2021-2022 catalog year (admitted before Fall 2021 semester). Students choosing the thesis option do not take PA 8990, the capstone seminar, but instead take 6 credit hours of UBNS 8980 (Thesis), engaging in a major research project. This results in an additional 3 credit hours to the student's overall program to 40 credit hours. Please contact the chair of the Urban Studies program for more information.

Internship

Students who have not had at least two years full-time professional experience in the public or nonprofit sector will complete an internship. Students with military or veteran status will have their internship requirement waived, pending appropriate documentation of service. The internship is given as a supervised course of three credit hours (either UBNS 8940 or PA 8030) which can count towards the 37 hours required in the Urban Studies program. The internship is taken following completion of preparatory coursework as determined by the Chair of the Urban Studies program.

Graduate Studies Rules for Courses Ending in "0", "5", & "6"

Graduate Studies at UNO has rules and regulations on the types of courses students can pursue in their program of study. Courses ending with a "5" or a "6" contain undergraduate students and Graduate Studies restricts the number of these courses graduate students can take in their program of study. The Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.unomaha.edu/graduate/>) has all rules and regulations. Of note is that at least half of a student's course credits must come from graduate-only courses, or courses ending in "0" (eg. UBNS 8060). Since the MSUS degree is a 37-credit hour program, at least 19 credit hours must come from courses labeled "8XX0." This translates to usually 7 courses at the "8XX0" level. Additionally,

students cannot take more than 2 courses ending in “5” (8XX5) in their program of study. There is no limit to the number of courses ending in “6” (8XX6), as long as a student has at least half of their program of study of courses ending in “0” (8XX0). Restrictions for Special Topics courses (eg. PA 8896) do apply – see below.

Special Topics Courses

Students are limited to 6 credit hours of Special Topics (PA 8896 or PA 8906) courses in their program of study.

Directed Research in Urban Studies (UBNS 8940)

This is an independent course of study designed for advanced graduate students who want to pursue a specialized aspect of a core or concentration course. Generally, students need to have completed 24 hours in the program to qualify for UNBS 8940 unless they seek to take the course in conjunction with a project for a community organization as part of the internship requirement.

Students wanting to take either course should contact their advisor, a faculty member who has expertise in the area, or a faculty member with whom they are interested in working. This process may take some time, so students must start early. Working with the faculty supervisor/mentor, students will define an area of reading/research. Once the work is outlined, the faculty member will create a syllabus containing course expectations.

Waiver Requests

A student may request a waiver of particular degree requirements by showing the requirement is fulfilled in a manner other than that specified in the program description. Typical requests include waiver of elective due to previous course work. A waiver request should be submitted in writing with appropriate documents (e.g. course syllabus) to the Urban Studies Chair for appropriate action.

Quality of Work Standards

Graduate students are expected to do work of high caliber. Failure to do so will result in probation or dismissal from the program or from graduate standing.

- Provisional students will be dismissed from the program or placed on probation if they receive a grade of “C+” or below in any course during the first 12 hours of graduate study.
- Students with unconditional or provisional admission will automatically be dismissed from the program if they receive a grade of “C-” or below in any course in the plan of study.

Also, any of the following will result in either dismissal or probation:

- Failure to maintain a 3.2 GPA in graduate urban studies/public administration courses for the first 12 hours of the MSUS program.
- Failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA in all graduate work taken as part of the degree program beyond 12 hours.
- Receiving at least nine hours of graduate credit with the grade of “C+” or “C” regardless of the overall GPA.

A student who has been dismissed for failure to meet Quality of Work Standards may petition the MSUS Program Committee for any of the following:

Unconditional reinstatement to the degree program (if appropriate).

- Reinstatement with Unclassified status in order to retake specific courses, with possible readmission

to the MSUS degree program.

The MSUS Graduate Program Committee makes recommendations to the Dean of Graduate Studies regarding probation and reinstatement. The Dean of Graduate Studies makes the final decision. The student will be informed by the Office of Graduate Studies of the Dean's decision.

Incomplete Grade

The grade "I" (Incomplete) is used by an instructor at the end of a semester or summer session to designate incomplete registered credit coursework, by a student due to:

- Illness
- Military service
- Hardship
- Death in the immediate family

An "incomplete" should only be given if the student has already substantially completed (defined as 80%) the major requirements of the course. Instructors must judge each situation as to whether an "I" is appropriate. Students are discouraged from accumulating multiple Incompletes as students should be considered making good progress towards degree completion. Students accumulating multiple Incompletes may be recommended to finish Incomplete requirements before registering for future courses.

Removal of an Incomplete

Normally there is no time limit for graduate students to remove a grade of "incomplete". However, the instructor does have the option of determining the requirements for completing the course and requisite date for removal of incompletes. It is helpful to have these requirements in writing to ensure there is no miscommunication between the instructor and student.

Time Off from Program of Study

Due to a variety of circumstances and life situations, students may need to take time off from their program of study and not take courses in one or more semesters. Students may take time off without reapplying to the program if they plan to return within four years. If time off is needed, the first step is to inform the MSUS Chair and Advisor of the decision. The Chair and Advisor will inform Graduate Studies of the student's decision and to not disenroll the student from the program. The student should remain in contact with the MSUS Chair and Advisor during the interim and inform them of their plan to return to study. Per Graduate Studies regulations, a student who has not been enrolled as a graduate student at UNO for four years or more must apply as a new graduate student and submit the graduate application, the required non-refundable application fee, and all other required credentials.

Academic Integrity

As a University unit dedicated to the pursuit and advancement of knowledge, the School of Public Administration expects that each student is worthy of trust and that each student has the right to study in an environment free from the inconveniences and injustices caused by dishonorable conduct. As a part of this belief, the School of Public Administration expects that each student will submit only his/her own work and that no student will knowingly aid another student in any act of academic dishonesty as defined in the UNO Student Handbook.

Any student found responsible for violating the policy on Academic Integrity may be subject to both academic and disciplinary sanctions. Violations of the policy on Academic Integrity include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cheating. Copying or attempting to copy from an academic test or examination of another student; using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices for an academic test, examination or exercise; engaging or attempting to engage the assistance of

another individual in misrepresenting the academic performance of a student; or communicating information in an unauthorized manner to another person for an academic test, examination or exercise

- Fabrication and falsification. Falsifying or fabricating any information or citation in any academic exercise, work, speech, test or examination. Falsification is the alteration of information, while fabrication is the invention or counterfeiting of information.
- Plagiarism. Presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting examinations, theses, reports, speeches, drawings, laboratory notes or other academic work in whole or in part as one's own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person. Materials covered by this prohibition include, but are not limited to, text, video, audio, images, photographs, websites, electronic and online materials, and other intellectual property.
- Abuse of academic materials and/or equipment. Destroying, defacing, stealing, or making inaccessible library or other academic resource material.
- Complicity in academic dishonesty. Helping or attempting to help another student to commit an act of academic dishonesty..
- Falsifying grade reports. Changing or destroying grades, scores or markings on an examination or in an instructor's records.
- Misrepresentation to avoid academic work. Misrepresentation by fabricating an otherwise justifiable excuse such as illness, injury, accident, etc., in order to avoid timely submission of academic work or to avoid or delay the taking of a test or examination.
- Originality. Misrepresenting work as newly created original work, when the work already has been submitted for another assignment or course without substantial revision.
- Other. Academic units or members of the faculty may prescribe and give students prior notice of additional standards of conduct for academic honesty in a particular course, and violation of any such standard of conduct shall constitute misconduct under Sanctionable Conduct and the University Disciplinary Procedures.

In cases of accused academic dishonesty, the policies and procedures of the University as stated in the UNO Student Handbook will be utilized.

In cases where guilt is established, or admitted, the instructor may take action as severe as giving the offending student a grade of "F" for the course. A graduate student who receives a failing grade is automatically expelled from the program. A student who is expelled may petition for reinstatement. In no case, however, does the School of Public Administration have the obligation to readmit a student who has been expelled from the program for academic dishonesty.

Miscellaneous Procedures

E-mail Accounts

Upon enrollment, MSUS students are assigned an email account by UNO's Information Technology Services (ITS). This account is used by the University and the School of Public Administration for all official correspondence. Students must check and maintain their UNO email account to ensure timely delivery and receipt of all email.

Proficiency in Computers

Students must have proficiency in basic computer applications (e.g. Internet, spreadsheet applications and word processing).

Grade Appeals

Students or faculty members may notify the Urban Studies Director if a dispute occurs. Both parties are urged to resolve the difference before an appeal occurs.

Should an appeal be made, the student must do so in writing to the Urban Studies Director. The student is strongly encouraged to discuss the issue with the Urban Studies Director prior to making a formal appeal to make sure that they understand the process. The appeal must be based on the criteria listed in the Graduate Catalog. Grade appeals should be based on criteria such as the following:

- Was the grade given in the course arbitrary or handled differently than for other students?
- Were the criteria used to evaluate the student's work different from criteria used to evaluate other students' work in the course?
- Were any assignments for course credit made outside the syllabus?
- Were the criteria used to evaluate the student's work not clearly explained in the syllabus or orally during the course?

Both faculty and students affected by the appeal are asked to document their position. Where possible, written material used to evaluate the student's work is also requested.

Based on the above information the MSUS Graduate Program Committee will either recommend a change or sustain the decision of the faculty member. Both faculty and students have the right to appeal this decision to the UNO Graduate Council. The decision is binding if not appealed. Students should consult the UNO Graduate Catalog for further information.

Career Services

The School of Public Administration and MSUS Program work closely with the UNO Academic and Career Development Center. Numerous professional workshops, conferences and other development experiences are made available to the MSUS community each year. In addition, internship experiences, job shadowing and mentoring experiences are available to UNO MSUS students. Involvement in these activities, student organization activities, and professional networks in your own community of practice will assist you in advancing your public service career and service to society.

Financial Aid

There are a variety of sources of financial aid available to graduate students. Most students utilize FASFA. One possibility is a tuition waiver administered by the Graduate Studies Office. In addition, graduate students have previously been awarded fellowships or have received Foundation support. Further information is available at the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of Financial Aid. Government employees should check with their personnel office for possible financial support. The NASA Space Grant Program, located within the Aviation Institute of the School, also provides research fellowship opportunities.

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