

Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning and Public Policy

About This Program

The Doctor of Philosophy in Urban Planning and Public Policy (UPPP) integrates the academic disciplines of urban planning and public policy by training PhD students to conduct independent research that makes a substantive contribution to their chosen planning and policy subfields. The program prepares doctoral students for academic careers and for leadership in research positions in the public, private or nonprofit sectors. UPPP graduates have secured academic and research positions at research universities and institutes, think tanks, and public planning agencies nationally and internationally.

The UPPP PhD program requires a minimum of 48 credit hours beyond the master's degree, including 39 credit hours of coursework and a minimum of 9 dissertation credit hours. The 39 credit hours of coursework include: 6 hours of leveling courses, 9 hours in the required core of urban planning and public policy, 12 hours of methods courses and 12 hours of elected field area courses. Qualified applicants hold a master's degree in planning or in another discipline or are in the process of completing the degree. Depending on the master's degree, admission might be contingent on taking leveling courses that provide the necessary background.

UPPP Field Areas:

- Urban Planning and Policy
- Physical Planning, Development and Urban Design
- Land Use/Transportation Analysis, Planning and Policy
- Environmental Planning Policy/Sustainability

Competencies

1. Upon completion, students will be able to synthesize relevant literature, from which they will formulate public administration and/or policy-based research questions.
2. Upon completion, students will be able to formulate and analyze discipline relevant research questions.
3. Upon completion, students will demonstrate knowledge of applicable research methods.
4. Upon completion, students will be able to present findings effectively in both verbal and written formats to academic and non-academic audiences.

Admissions Criteria

Along with the Office of Graduate Studies application requirements, a complete application includes:

1. Official transcripts from colleges and universities attended. Information about submitting transcripts is available in the Graduate Catalog.
2. Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and, for international applicants, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) official test scores.
3. Three letters of recommendation attesting to the applicant's ability to do doctoral-level work and complete the dissertation. Letters from professors or supervisors who hold a Ph.D. degree are strongly preferred.
4. Essay by applicant (minimum 500 words, maximum 1000 words). The essay is considered both for its content and writing quality. The essay should discuss: (1) tentative research topic, (2) how your undergraduate and graduate studies have prepared you for doctoral study in Urban Planning and Public Policy; (3) identify your desired field area (see field areas, below) and identify potential Planning faculty whose area relates to your research interests; and (4) the reasons for wanting to earn the doctoral degree.
5. Samples of applicant's written work (e.g., thesis, publication, professional report) that demonstrates graduate level English writing proficiency as compared to the writing proficiency of students who have successfully completed the program.
6. Applicant's CV.

Official transcripts and test scores must be sent directly to the Office of Graduate Admissions by the issuing institution and testing agency respectively.

Letters of recommendation and personal essay should be sent directly via email to cappa.advising@uta.edu (%20cappa.advising@uta.edu) or by postal service, to: CAPPa Program - PhD in Urban Planning and Policy (UPPP), Box 19108, Arlington TX 76019.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all application materials are received by the application deadline. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline could be deferred.

CAPPa primarily admits UPPP doctoral students for Fall semester. Spring admissions are rare and there are no summer admissions. The Fall application deadline is February 1st.

The Doctoral Admission Committee determines admission based on the applicant's academic record, commitment to scholarly research, and overall fit with the program.

UNCONDITIONAL ADMISSION

Applicants are typically admitted unconditionally with a graduate GPA of 3.6, a Verbal GRE score of at least 153 and a Quantitative GRE score of at least 144. GRE requirements are applied flexibly as different areas of study vary in the relative importance of quantitative and verbal analysis. GRE scores must be from a test taken in the past 5 years. In no case will standardized test performance be the sole or primary determinant of admissibility. Strength of letters of recommendation, quality of personal statement and master's degree field of study are also considered carefully.

International applicants are required to have a minimum score of 6.5 on the IELTS, or a minimum TOEFL iBT total score of 79. Further, when the TOEFL iBT is taken, sectional scores of at least 22 on the Writing section, 21 on the Speaking section, 20 on the Reading section, and 16 on the Listening section are preferred.

U.S. students, with a master's degree from an accredited U.S. institution in Urban Planning, Public Administration, Public Policy or in a closely related field, or a master's in Architecture or Landscape Architecture and several years of increasing responsibilities on the job, are not required to submit GRE scores. The Admissions Committee may require written samples demonstrating graduate level English proficiency.

The UPPP PhD Admissions Committee will consider other types of admission decisions for applicants who do not meet all unconditional admission requirements:

PROBATIONARY ADMISSION

Applicants with a 3.0 graduate GPA or better and based on the strength of admission requirements (personal statement, letters of recommendation and scores on standardized tests). Under Probationary Admission, special course requirements or other conditions may be imposed by the Admissions Committee (e.g., applicants who meet all the standards for Unconditional Admission, except for required Writing GRE score, will be considered for Probationary Admission conditioned on completing an approved writing course).

Foreign applicants with low TOEFL or IELTS scores may be accepted probationary on the condition of successfully completing the [Pathway Admission Program](https://catalog.uta.edu/archives/2025-2026/academicregulations/admissions/graduate/) (<https://catalog.uta.edu/archives/2025-2026/academicregulations/admissions/graduate/>).

DEFERRED ADMISSION

Applicants who are unable to supply required application materials, or who must complete additional preparatory work before their admissibility can be determined, may be deferred until records are complete.

PROVISIONAL ADMISSION

Applicants who are unable to supply all required documentation prior to the admission deadline, but who otherwise appear to meet admission requirements may be granted Provisional Admission pending submission of complete and satisfactory credentials before the end of the semester in which they have registered in a provisional status.

DENIED ADMISSION

Applicants who fail to meet more than one of the admission requirements and for whom the UPPP PhD Admission Committee finds there is insufficient basis to justify any other kind of admission. GRE performance will not be the sole factor leading to a decision to deny admission. As the admission process is competitive, applicants meeting basic admission requirements who are less well qualified than other applicants may also be denied admission.

CONTINUOUS ENROLLMENT AND READMISSION

UTA Continuous Enrollment Policy requires students to remain enrolled throughout the duration of their studies. UPPP students must comply with this policy by enrolling in at least three or six credit hours each fall and spring semester, depending on the stage in their program of studies. Enrollment in summer sessions is not required.

Students who are unable to continue their PhD studies due to legitimate reasons can petition a leave of absence by following [university policies](https://www.uta.edu/records/graduate/leave-of-absence-loa.php) (<https://www.uta.edu/records/graduate/leave-of-absence-loa.php>). Students who are granted a leave of absence are subject to the university's policy on readmission.

READMISSION

Students who have been absent without approval of leave of absence, but wish to resume their graduate work, will need to follow the [university's readmission policy](http://catalog.uta.edu/academicregulations/admissions/graduate/) (<http://catalog.uta.edu/academicregulations/admissions/graduate/>).

Students who have been absent from the program for four or more long semesters will, in addition to the university policies, be subject to the program's admission criteria and the program's new procedures, guidelines, curriculum and degree requirements existing at the time of the readmission application. UPPP readmission policy and application instructions can be obtained from the UPPP graduate advisor.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Applicants who wish to be considered for graduate teaching/research assistant positions or other financial assistance, must submit their applications by their first week in February for full consideration. Only complete applications (including GRE scores and letters) will be considered for financial assistance. Students must also complete the university application for financial aid in [Mav ScholarShop \(https://uta.academicworks.com/opportunities/\)](https://uta.academicworks.com/opportunities/).

Curriculum

PhD students who do not complete all requirements for the doctoral degree within four years after passing the field examination will accrue 1 deficiency point per year beyond the four-year mark.

Leveling Courses

PLAN 6303	PLANNING HISTORY, THEORY AND ETHICS	3
PLAN 6310	PLANNING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE	3

Foundations

PAPP 6307	URBAN GEOGRAPHY	3
PLAN 6300	ADVANCED URBAN THEORY	3
PLAN 6311	SPATIAL THEORY AND POLICY: URBAN FORM AND STRUCTURE	3

Methods

PLAN 6317	INTERMEDIATE DATA ANALYSIS	3
PLAN 6301	RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS AND Ph.D. WORKSHOP	3
PLAN 6346	ADVANCED DATA ANALYSIS IN URBAN AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS	3
PLAN 6347	QUALITATIVE METHODS	3

Urban Planning and Public Policy Field

Select 12 hours of courses in a specific planning/policy field in consultation with the diagnostic/supervisory committee. 12

For Urban Planning and Policy, select courses such as:

PAPP 5309	LOCAL POLITICS IN THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL SETTING
PLAN 5308	METROPOLITAN SUSTAINABILITY AND PLAN MAKING
PAPP 6305	ADVANCED THEORIES OF URBAN SOCIETY
PAPP 6311	ADVANCED PUBLIC POLICY FORMATION AND ANALYSIS
PAPP 5312	ECONOMIC POLICY
PLAN 6322	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND POLICY

For Physical Planning, Development and Urban Design, select courses such as:

PLAN 6306	URBAN REVITALIZATION
PLAN 6313	URBAN GROWTH POLICIES
PLAN 6315	LAND USE, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
PLAN 6340	GIS AND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS
ARCH 5306	URBAN DESIGN
PLAN 6321	ELEMENTS OF URBAN DESIGN
PLAN 6358	INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS (ITS) AND PLANNING
LARC 5382	URBAN DESIGN SEMINAR

For Land Use/Transportation Analysis, Planning and Policy, select courses such as:

PLAN 6313	URBAN GROWTH POLICIES
PLAN 6345	PLANNING AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT
REAE 5350	QUANTITATIVE METHODS FOR REAL ESTATE
REAE 6390	SEMINAR IN SPECIAL TOPICS IN REAL ESTATE

For Environmental Planning Policy/ Sustainability, select courses such as:

LARC 5301	SITE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES
PLAN 5341	ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS: LAWS AND PLANNING
PLAN 5351	TECHNIQUES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
PLAN 5342	ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY
PLAN 6340	GIS AND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS
PLAN 6350	ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Dissertation

Complete at least 9 hours in the following:

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PAPP 6399	DISSERTATION
PAPP 6699	DISSERTATION
PAPP 6999	DISSERTATION
PAPP 7399	DOCTORAL DEGREE COMPLETION

Total Hours**48****SUGGESTED PLAN OF STUDY****First Year**

Summer Semester	Hours	First Semester	Hours	Second Semester	Hours
Leveling or Field Course ¹		3 PLAN 6310		3 PLAN 6303	3
		PLAN 6311		3 PAPP 6307	3
		Leveling or Field Course ¹		3 PLAN 6347	3
	3		9		9

Second Year

	Hours	First Semester	Hours	Second Semester	Hours
		PLAN 6300		3 PLAN 6346	3
		PLAN 6301		3 Field Course ¹	3
		PLAN 6317		3 Field Course ¹	3
	9		9		

Third Year

	Hours	First Semester	Hours	Second Semester	Hours
		PLAN 6399, 6699, or 6999		3-9 PLAN 6399, 6699, or 6999	3-9
	3-9		3-9		

Fourth Year

	Hours	First Semester	Hours
		PLAN 6399, 6699, 6999, or 7399	3-9
	3-9		

Total Hours: 48-66

¹ Leveling or Field Courses must be determined in consultation with the student's diagnostic chair and/or committee.

² Students must complete a minimum of 9 hours of dissertation and/or PLAN 7399 (Final Dissertation) which must be taken in the final graduating semester.

Program Completion**Advising Resources**

The College of Architecture, Planning and Public Affairs (CAPPA) at UT Arlington equips students with skills and knowledge to address real-world challenges in design, public policy, and research. Our Advising Office supports academic and career success. Explore our Future Students page to connect with an Academic Advisor and shape your future.

Location:

203 CAPPA Building

Email:

cappa.advising@uta.edu

Phone:

817-272-2801

Web:General advising (<https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/cappa/general-advising/>)Future students (<https://www.uta.edu/academics/schools-colleges/cappa/admissions/>)