

Master of Urban and Regional Planning Handbook



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HUMPHREY SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Master of Urban and Regional Planning

Program Handbook

2025-2026

This handbook is available in alternative formats upon request.

MURP Program Handbook

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Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program!

The MURP degree program offers a holistic, rigorous education in how to develop neighborhoods, cities, and regions to serve everyone who lives in them. We bring together experts from planning, sociology, engineering, law, architecture, social work, public health, landscape architecture, urban design, and other disciplines to build cities, tackle urban sprawl, upgrade housing, protect the environment, and promote resilient and inclusive communities and economies. Accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board, this degree program provides students technical and analytical skills needed to think strategically about developing and implementing plans at all levels.

The MURP Student Handbook serves as a guide to program requirements, policies, and procedures. The information in this handbook and other University catalogs, publications, or announcements is subject to change without notice. University offices can provide current information about possible changes.

Humphrey School History

The Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs was founded in 1977 as the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. The school chose its name in honor and recognition of U.S. Senator and Vice President Hubert Humphrey, a legislator and statesman recognized internationally for his contributions to improving the well-being of humanity. The Humphrey Institute grew out of the University of Minnesota's former School of Public Affairs (1968–77) and Public Administration Center (1936–68). It was renamed the Humphrey School of Public Affairs in 2011 to better reflect its academic mission. Like its predecessors, the Humphrey School continues to instill in our brightest leaders an understanding of leadership and public service in advancing the common good. Before his death, Hubert Humphrey sought to make the institution that would carry his name more than a college. He wanted a living memorial, one that would not only prepare future leaders, but also one that would be a forum for active debate on the policy issues of the day, and an academy that would produce the best research and non-partisan advocacy based on that research.

The Humphrey School is one of the top-ranked public policy and planning schools in the country where students acquire skills, expertise, and real-world experience to transform ideas into action. Faculty members are deeply engaged in interdisciplinary research and public affairs, and alumni are leading change in cities and nations around the world. The School offers six master's degrees, a doctoral degree, five certificates, four minors, a variety of dual degrees and professional development options, and several opportunities for undergraduates.

Structure and Leadership

Faculty

The Humphrey School of Public Affairs is fueled by world-class faculty who are actively engaged with students and deeply committed to public service and public affairs scholarship. They bring real-world experience into the classroom and offer connections to experiential learning locally and globally. Eight policy research centers at the Humphrey School make significant contributions to solutions on issues ranging from politics and governance to urban and regional planning, from early childhood policy to technology and environmental sustainability. A complete list with links to individual faculty pages can be found [here](#).

Humphrey School Leadership

[Dr. Nisha Botchwey](#) is the Dean of the Humphrey School with responsibility for all School programs and functions, including academic programs.

The Associate Dean for Faculty, [Yingling Fan](#), plays a crucial role in setting faculty recruitment and retention strategies, contributes to the strategic direction of the School, and represents the School within the University of Minnesota community.

The Associate Dean for Research, [Dr. Ryan Allen](#), acts as the point of contact for the Humphrey School's research faculty and center directors, and updates faculty on policies regarding research-related information.

[Diana Beck](#) is the Assistant Dean of Graduate Education, leading the development, implementation, and evaluation of our academic programs.

The School is organized into six substantive "areas" led by faculty chairs:

Global Public Policy – [Eric Schwartz](#)

Leadership and Management – [Yuan "Daniel" Cheng](#)

Politics and Governance – [Larry Jacobs](#)

Science, Technology, and the Environment – [Gabe Chan](#)

Social Policy and Policy Analysis – [Angie Fertig](#)

Urban and Regional Planning – [Nichola Lowe](#)

In addition, each degree program is led by a Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) who typically serves for a term of two to three years:

Master of Development Practice – [David Wilsey](#)

Master of Human Rights – [Tricia Olsen](#)

Master of Public Affairs – [Steve Kelley](#)

Master of Science in Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy – [Gabe Chan](#)

Master of Urban and Regional Affairs - [Nichola Lowe](#)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Public Affairs – [Judy Temple](#)

MURP Program Administration

Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

[Nichola Lowe](#), nlowe@umn.edu

The DGS is the faculty member primarily responsible for representing the graduate program in Public Affairs, both within and outside the University. In this capacity, the DGS exercises leadership in the organization and planning of graduate studies in the program; acts as liaison between graduate students and faculty; conveys the policies, interests, and views of the graduate program to the Graduate School, as well as to prospective students and the public at large. Routine decisions and information about departmental policy can be secured from the DGS and the Program Coordinator.

Program Coordinator

[Anne L'Herault](#), alherau@umn.edu

The Program Coordinator supports program development and operation through orientation, student progress, and implementation of policies, procedures, and forms; maintains student records; and supports students and faculty by addressing personal and academic challenges. The Program Coordinator is your best source of information about School and University policies and requirements that apply to the MURP program and can help you navigate them.

Faculty Advisor

MURP students are assigned a faculty advisor before the start of their first semester. The faculty advisor is the person who seems at the time you matriculate to be best suited to guide you in selecting concentration and elective courses and career planning. Most students remain with their initial advisor through completion of the program, but some students change advisors because their interests change or because both the student and faculty member agree another faculty member is better suited to serve in that role.

Students may request a change of faculty advisor at any time by securing written consent from the faculty member who will serve as the new faculty advisor. The written consent must be emailed to the Program Coordinator to make the change.

Helpful information about maintaining a productive relationship with your faculty advisor can be found [here](#). You can see guidance provided to faculty advisors from the Humphrey School [here](#).

Staff

Many staff work to support the mission of the School and assist the faculty and students in their endeavors. Staff with whom you may interact:

Rachel Leatham

Director, Career and Student Success

rleatham@umn.edu

Responsible for: managing career and advising functions as well as student engagement and retention

Amber Bieneck

Assistant Director, Career and Student Success

biene015@umn.edu

Responsible for: career and professional development through appointments and programming

Abbe Holmgren

Graduate Program Coordinator

alholmgr@umn.edu

Responsible for: supporting various aspects of all master's programs and certificates

Mary Mullen

Administrative Specialist

mullenm@umn.edu

Responsible for: supporting career-related functions in CSS office

Graduate Student Services and Progress (GSSP)

GSSP is a central University office housed in One Stop Student Services that advises faculty and students concerning graduate education and University policies and procedures. GSSP manages graduate student milestone requirements, strictly enforcing policies and procedures. For example, failure to meet deadlines for filing certain forms and online processes can delay the degree conferral process. GSSP is located in 333 Bruininks Hall (just across the bridge to the East Bank). Contact information:

gssp@umn.edu or 612-625-3490.

Communication

Email

All official communication from University sources is sent to your @umn.edu email account. You are responsible for checking this email regularly and when requested, respond in a timely manner.

Email Lists

The Humphrey School has several student email lists that you are on. Some allow students to unsubscribe while others do not. A couple are described here:

MURP Student email list - This list includes only MURP students and is used by the DGS and Program Coordinator to share important information such as deadlines or changes in University requirements; opportunities for professional development, fellowship applications, or award nominations; and invitations to academic events.

Humphrey Students personal - This list includes all Humphrey students and is used to share information about social activities, opportunities for housing, and other matters that are not necessarily official University business.

Academic Year

The official academic year calendar can be found on One Stop's website [here](#). Additionally, please note One Stop's [Drop/Add and Refund deadlines](#), which highlight when students can add and drop courses and the refunds associated with these actions throughout each semester. Keep in mind that as long as you remain within the Humphrey tuition band (6-15 credits), your tuition will not be impacted by adds or drops.

The MURP Program

Mission, Vision, and Goals

The mission, vision, and goals of the MURP program are publicly available in the [MURP Strategic Plan document](#) linked on the [MURP program website](#). The document also details strategies and performance measures for each goal. The document is regularly updated to show up-to-date data on performance measures.

Mission

The University of Minnesota's Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program promotes equitable, racially just, inclusive, and ethical planning through education and research to advance the common good in a diverse world.

Vision

We aspire for the MURP program to be a leader in the advancement of planning education and research that contributes to improved human well-being, ecological health and community-driven action that yields resilient and just communities. Acting from within a school of public affairs and rooted in a set of values that prioritizes equity, racial and social justice, sustainability, inclusion, community engagement, and ethical practice, we expect students and faculty members to participate in tackling the most urgent planning challenges faced by cities and regions.

Goals

Goal 1

The MURP program matriculates a student body that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. and includes a robust population of international students.

Goal 2

Students graduate from the MURP program with the skills and knowledge necessary to address planning challenges.

Goal 3

Scholars in the MURP program produce high quality, visible research that influences planning theory, policymaking and practice.

Goal 4

Faculty members and students in the MURP program participate in meaningful collaborations with public and nonprofit organizations and community-based groups to address planning challenges.

Goal 5

The research and teaching in the MURP program is integrated where appropriate with other degree programs at the Humphrey School and other areas of the University of Minnesota.

University, Humphrey School, and Program Requirements

As a MURP student, three different organizational units at the University of Minnesota set requirements pertaining to your degree completion:

1. University-Wide Graduate Education Requirements, as enforced by Graduate Student Services and Progress (GSSP) on behalf of the University's Graduate School.
2. Humphrey School of Public Affairs (the "college" in University terminology)
3. MURP Program (the "program" or "department" in University terminology)

The requirements include expectations regarding student conduct, coursework, and other aspects. All program requirements are in compliance with University-wide requirements regarding graduate education. Some program requirements, as allowed in University-wide policies, are more specific or strict than University-wide requirements.

University-Wide Graduate Education Requirements

The Graduate School, in wide consultation with colleges, schools, and programs, holds the responsibility for maintaining and updating requirements about University-wide graduate education. Graduate Student Services and Progress (GSSP) implements policies and requirements and serves as a gatekeeper for University-wide graduate education policies and tracking of graduate milestones. These requirements are non-negotiable but tend to be basic and achievable. The full policies are available via the UMN Policy Library under the heading "Graduate Students" found [here](#) and are summarized below.

Active Status

Students must maintain active status (i.e. be registered for courses) each fall and spring semester until their degree is granted unless a leave of absence is taken.

Time Limit

Students have five academic years to earn their MURP degree. Students who do not complete the degree within five years must petition for an extension no less than six months before their time will expire. The extension request form is found [here](#).

Cumulative GPA

Students must maintain a cumulative GPA of a 2.8.

Transfer Credits

- Graduate credits taken before the award of a baccalaureate degree may not be counted toward a graduate degree.
- The number of transfer credits allowed is determined by the graduate program (e.g., the MURP program). The University requires that no fewer than 20 credits must be earned while enrolled as a degree-seeking student in a University graduate program and those credits cannot be applied to any other degree. This policy is detailed in Section 2b on [this page](#) in the University Policy Library.
- Graduate course credits earned while enrolled in one University graduate program may be applied to another University graduate program.
- Graduate course credits from other accredited institutions may be transferred. To use credits from non-U.S. institutions, courses must be deemed “comparable” to a course from an accredited U.S.-based institution, as vetted by the advisor, DGS, and Graduate School.
- Master’s Plan C students must take a minimum of 20 course credits at the University. Master’s Plan A student must take a minimum of 12 course credits and 10 thesis credits at the University.
- Transfer of thesis credits into the University is not allowed.

Minimum Grade Requirements

Only courses with grades of A, B, C (including C-) and S (if course is taken S/N) may be counted toward the degree. Audited courses are not permitted to be counted towards degree progress.

Incompletes

Students may request an incomplete in a course if they meet certain requirements as outlined in the [Incomplete policy](#). The University requires a “written agreement” between the instructor and the student. The Humphrey School uses the [HHH Incomplete Contract](#). To stay in good academic standing, students are allowed no more than 6 incomplete credits at any time.

Progress Review

Programs must review the progress of each master’s student at least once per year. Students deemed not to be in good standing must be informed of the results of the review in writing, with a copy to the student’s faculty advisor. The MURP program conducts reviews after grades are posted for each semester.

To remain in good academic standing, students must:

- Maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.8 or higher
- Have 6 credits or fewer of outstanding incomplete coursework

When a student falls below satisfactory academic standing, the faculty advisor works with the student to set up a plan to regain academic compliance. The DGS and/or Program Coordinator may also participate in this process.

The Program may place a hold on the student’s record that restricts registration for future semesters. In addition, the student’s future enrollment may be cancelled or the student may be permanently discontinued from the program.

Humphrey School (“College”) Requirements

The Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota houses the MURP program. As such, the Associate Dean and the College Coordinator oversee and verify several aspects of a student’s progress towards graduation. Other than overseeing and reinforcing the University-wide graduate education policies, the Humphrey School does not specify any additional policies or requirements. For most practical matters, including day-to-day administration of program requirements, the Associate Dean and College Coordinator have delegated authority and responsibility to the MURP Program DGS and the Program Coordinator.

Program Requirements for MURP

The MURP program has several requirements for students in addition to University-wide graduate education requirements. ***It is crucial that students talk with their faculty advisor before registration each semester to ensure they are meeting requirements and expectations.*** Requirements are also available on websites or via the Program Coordinator or DGS. Carefully review the following section to become familiar with all requirements for the MURP program. Please also refer to the [MURP Program Planning Worksheet](#).

MURP Curriculum

The MURP program requires a minimum of 48 credits comprised of:

Required core courses (21.5 credits)

- PA 5004 Introduction to Planning (3 credits)
- PA 5013 Law and Urban Land Use (1.5 credits)
- PA 5042 Urban and Regional Economics (2 credits)
- PA 5043 Economic and Demographic Data Analysis (2 credits) **OR** PA 5929 Data Visualization (2 credits)
- PA 5145 Civic Participation in Public Affairs (3 credits)
- PA 5205 Statistics for Planning (4 credits)
 - Note: Students may be able to fulfill this requirement by obtaining DGS and instructor approval to register for PA 5031 Statistics for Public Affairs (4 credits) or PA 5045 Statistics for Public Affairs, Accelerated (4 credits) instead of PA 5205.
- PA 5206 The City of White Supremacy (3 credits)
- PA 5211 Land Use Planning (3 credits)

Concentration (minimum 12 credits)

Students must select one area of [concentration](#):

- Environmental Planning
- Housing and Community Development
- Land Use & Urban Design
- Transportation Planning
- Self-Designed

Capstone Project (4 credits)

- PA 5080 Capstone Preparation Workshop (1 credit)
- PA 8081 Capstone Workshop (3 credits)

Electives (to bring total degree credits to at least 48)

Electives can be selected from courses offered in the Humphrey School or in other departments throughout the University in consultation with the faculty advisor.

Sample two-year course plan

Here is a [sample two-year course planning guide](#). Please note this is intended as a sample and does not have to be adhered to exactly.

Other MURP Requirements

Grading Option

Required coursework offered on both the A-F and S/N grade basis must be taken A-F.

GIS Proficiency

Students must demonstrate proficiency in the use and application of GIS or take a graduate-level course that can be counted toward the 48-credit requirement.

Professional Internship

A 200-hour professional internship is required. Internship options identified through consultation with the Humphrey School's Career and Student Success Office are usually completed during the summer after the second semester of the MURP program but can be completed any time between the start of the program and graduation.

[General Internship Information](#)

[Internship Documentation Process](#)

[Internship Postings](#)

[Internship Grant Opportunities](#) – Funding support is available through the Humphrey School for students working unpaid internships during the summer.

MURP Options

Minors

Students may choose to complete a minor that complements their MURP program. Minors can be selected from within the Humphrey School or from another department within the University. Consult the University catalog, your faculty advisor, and/or the program coordinator for options. [This link](#) is already filtered to only show graduate minors.

University policy requires a minimum of 6 credits for a masters-level minor but specific course and credit requirements are set by the department that houses the minor. Minors can be declared or removed using [this form](#). Some departments require additional steps to declare a minor so students should always

contact the Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) for the minor they're interested in completing. If you're not able to identify who the GPC is, ask the MURP program coordinator for assistance.

Declaring a minor will give students access to register for courses that may be limited to students pursuing that minor without having to request permission numbers.

Certificates

Students may also choose to complete a certificate program within the University that complements their MURP program. Certificates are more substantial than minors so may require additional time and/or tuition to complete. Also note that certificates require a separate application for admission.

[This link](#) is filtered to only show post-baccalaureate certificates.

Some MURP student have completed the [Metropolitan Design Postbaccalaureate Certificate](#), which can partially overlap with coursework in the MURP program's Land Use & Urban Design concentration.

Dual Degrees

MURP students have the option to complete a dual degree. The MURP program has established dual degrees with the following programs: Civil Engineering (MSCE), Public Health (MPH), Landscape Architecture (MLA), Law (JD), and Social Work (MSW). Typically, students can earn both degrees in one year less than if they pursued the degrees independently.

In collaboration with the other programs, we have developed guides to help clarify dual degree requirements and how both degrees can be completed in a shorter amount of time than if completed separately.

- [MURP/MSCE dual degree guide](#)
- [MURP/MPH dual degree guide](#)
- [MLA/MURP dual degree guide](#)
- [JD/MURP dual degree guide](#)
- MSW/MURP dual degree guide – in development

Students must apply and be admitted to each degree program separately. The JD program requires students spend their first year in that program. The MPH program requires students spend their first year in the MURP program. MSCE, MLA, and MSW dual degree students may start in either program. Regardless of dual degree program, it is recommended but not required to be admitted to both programs before starting either. Admission to the second program is not guaranteed simply by virtue of already being enrolled in one program.

Thesis (Plan A)

MURP students have the option to complete the program under Plan A requirements. Students should be aware this is an option that is infrequently selected and requires a great deal of advanced planning.

By the end of their first Spring semester, students planning to pursue Plan A must have a thesis advisor lined up and have the thesis topic developed. If these steps are not completed on this timeline, students must opt for Plan C (capstone project).

Students enrolled in Plan A have slightly different coursework requirements than those identified in the “MURP Requirements” section above. Requirements **not** detailed below remain the same.

Plan A students:

1. Must complete 10 credits of PA 8777 Thesis Credits: Master’s, usually 5 credits each semester of the second year.
2. Do not take PA 5080 Capstone Preparation Workshop and PA 8081 Capstone Workshop.
3. Have a concentration requirement of 6 credits rather than the usual 12 credits.

Additional information regarding thesis requirements at the University level can be found at the following links:

- [Final Examination Committee and Final Examination](#)
- [Plan A Degree Completion Steps](#)
- [Thesis Submission](#)
- [Examination Committees](#)

Other Helpful Information

Registration

Students are assigned a [registration time](#) for each semester. This time can be found in MyU once assigned.

Instructions on how to register can be found on One Stop’s website [here](#).

End-of-Year Awards

Every year, the Humphrey community selects students to receive various awards. The full list of awards, including information about criteria, prize, and nominations/applications is [here](#).

Awards that may be of particular interest to MURP students:

- AICP Award (MURP only)
- Bolan Award (MURP only)
- Lukermann Award (MURP only)
- Student Leadership Award
- TA of the Year Award
- Edward A. Burdick Legislative Award
- Diversity Paper Award

- Robert Einsweiler Award (MURP only)
- Jernberg Award
- Lloyd B. Short Award
- Student Commencement Speaker