

QUEENS COLLEGE  
MA in URBAN AFFAIRS

Graduate Student Handbook  
2018-2019

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### **How to Use this Handbook**

This handbook is a resource for current MA in Urban Affairs students of the Department of Urban Studies at Queens College, CUNY. Students should first consult the Handbook for the MA in Urban Affairs before asking questions of faculty and staff. Most information may also be found on the Department's website, <http://qcurban.org>.

The vast majority of questions fielded by the departmental Secretary and Director of Graduate Studies will be answered in the contents of this guide or the [Queens College Graduate Bulletin](#). For questions related to student affairs, forms, fees, and other general issues that are not covered in the Handbook, please contact Jeanne Chan and/or Arooj Malik. For questions about specific courses, requirements, or curricular matters, please contact Prof. Do Lee, Graduate Advisor. Students should not contact the Department Chair with questions unless specifically referred by Jeanne, Arooj, or Professor Lee.

### **Administration**

Dr. Tarry Hum  
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### **Program Advisement**

Student advisement for Masters students will be provided by the department's Graduate Advisor. You may make an appointment to discuss course selection, Final Project ideas, or any other issues during the regularly scheduled office hours of the Graduate Advisor, which will vary from semester to semester. Under certain circumstances, you may arrange to complete advisement through email or over the phone. Students are highly recommended, but not required, to consult with the Graduate Advisor once a semester to verify that they are on track to complete the program's requirements. Once a semester, when course offerings for the

following semester have been listed, the Graduate Advisor will offer one to two weeks of additional advisement hours to help students with course selection.

### **Core Faculty**

Dr. Dwayne Baker

[dwayne.baker@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:dwayne.baker@qc.cuny.edu)

Urban planning, transportation planning and policy, neighborhood and community development, GIS and spatial analysis

Dr. Melissa Checker

[melissa.checker@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:melissa.checker@qc.cuny.edu)

U.S. social movements, race, class and ethnicity in the U.S., urban environmentalism, environmental justice, climate justice

Dr. Martin Hanlon

[pesapesa@aol.com](mailto:pesapesa@aol.com)

Public management, workforce issues, transportation policy

Dr. Tarry Hum

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Urban planning, immigrant and transnational urbanism, community economic development, Asian American studies

Dr. Scott Larson

[scott.larson@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:scott.larson@qc.cuny.edu)

Urban geography, urbanism, gentrification

Dr. William Muraskin

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Social/urban history, health

Dr. Brian Rosa

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Urban redevelopment, socio-spatial theory, urban infrastructure, post-industrial cities

Dr. Alice Sardell

[alsard@optonline.net](mailto:alsard@optonline.net)

Health policy, public policy, urban and community politics

Dr. John Seley

[john.seley@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:john.seley@qc.cuny.edu)

Urban planning, public policy, geography

Dr. Stephen Steinberg

[ssteinberg1@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:ssteinberg1@qc.cuny.edu)

Race, ethnicity, and immigration, urban sociology, sociology of knowledge

Mr. James Vacca

[james.vacca@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:james.vacca@qc.cuny.edu)

New York City politics, public administration, community organizations, urban politics

Dr. Natalie Bump Vena

[natalie.vena@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:natalie.vena@qc.cuny.edu)

Environmental law and policy; citizen science; volunteerism

### **Queens College MA Requirements**

Students are responsible for meeting the degree requirements that are in place at the time of their first enrollment as matriculated students. Changes to the structure of a program will be applied in such a way as to avoid increasing the number of credits required of students who have started taking courses in the program. If degree requirements are changed following matriculation, the student may have the option of satisfying either the original or new requirements.

Students dismissed for academic reasons may be subject to new regulations, depending on how long after dismissal the student returns and such other factors as may be taken into account by the Graduate Scholastic Standards Committee.

**Minimum Grade-Point Average of B (3.0):** All programs must be completed with a minimum average of at least B (3.0). At the completion of the total credits allotted to a program, if a student does not have a 3.0 average and wishes to register for additional courses in order to attempt to raise the grade-point average, permission to do so must be obtained from the appropriate academic dean. Such courses must be taken at Queens College. For information on probationary status and dismissal, see the section on Scholastic Standards in the Graduate Bulletin.

### **Current Degree Requirements**

#### **Accelerated MA in Urban Affairs**

The Accelerated MA program will operate as follows:

1. The program will be available to Urban Studies majors (and, on a case-by-case basis, majors in other social science disciplines) with an overall GPA of 3.0 and a GPA of 3.0 or greater (a GPA of 3.5 is strongly recommended) in Urban Studies courses, or courses in their major if they are not Urban Studies majors. They must maintain a 3.0 GPA in their graduate courses in order to receive the MA degree.
2. Students must apply to the Accelerated MA program in their upper sophomore or lower junior year [45-75 credits]. They should submit two letters of recommendation, a personal statement, and an unofficial transcript to the Graduate Advisor.
3. After acceptance to the Accelerated MA program, students may take up to four 3-credit graduate-level Urban Studies elective courses while they are still undergraduates. They must attain a minimum grade of *B-* in these courses, and they must achieve an overall GPA in these four courses of at least 3.0 if they are to continue into the remainder of the program.
4. Students in the program may take the required graduate courses (see below) only after completing their undergraduate program. Thus, the typical student in the Accelerated MA program will take four elective graduate courses during their junior and/or senior year(s) and, during the fifth year, will take four required graduate courses (URBST 705, two of URBST 706,

718, or 724, and one of URBST 725, 732, or 751) and two graduate electives, for a total of 18 credits.

5. It is generally expected that Accelerated MA students will complete their graduate studies within one year after completing their undergraduate requirements.

### ***MA in Urban Affairs***

The MA program in Urban Affairs is designed to prepare the student for professional work and career advancement in the areas of urban and public administration, social policy, community advocacy, and the management of community-based organizations. Graduates of the program work in government agencies, community-based and nonprofit organizations, health care and education institutions, and private enterprises such as metropolitan real estate firms. Studying with faculty who have extensive knowledge and experience in contemporary urban affairs, students gain training and expertise in the design and administration of programs addressing issues of social and urban policy.

#### *Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree*

30 credits are required for the MA degree, including four required courses (12 credits). Students must also complete a writing requirement and a final project based on original research.

#### *Required Courses (12 credits)*

URBST 705. The Just City in Theory and Practice

*plus two of three governance/policy courses:*

URBST 718. Governing the City

URBST 724. Public Policy Analysis

URBST 706. Non-Profits in the 21st-Century Metropolis

*plus one of the three methods courses:*

URBST 725. Urban Research Methods

URBST 732. Researching New York City

URBST 751. Critical Perspectives on Urban Research

*Electives (18 credits):* Students are free to choose from among any of the department's MA-level nonrequired courses.

*Writing Requirement:* Students must demonstrate competence in urban research writing by passing an evaluation (usually in URBST 705) or by taking URBST 620, Urban Research Writing. Accelerated MA students are exempt from fulfilling the writing requirement.

*Final Project:* Students must complete a final project based on original, community or studio research and presented in the form of a report or paper, or as a video, art, or web exhibition. See more below.

#### *Fieldwork (3–6 credits)*

Field placements may be in areas of urban activity of interest to the student. Students can be placed in an outside organization or participate in a group project or workshop organized by the

department. The department will assist students in finding field placements. Students should enroll in courses related to the field placement to receive maximum benefit from the experience. Fieldwork will be under the direction of a Faculty Advisor, who shall hold regular conferences with students. Papers on fieldwork are required. Fieldwork courses are URBST 780 and 781.

#### *Thesis or Capstone Paper (3 credits)*

Students may prepare a thesis or capstone paper, which are more in-depth than a typical Final Project. A thesis generally involves primary research in which the students complete an original field project. A capstone paper typically consists of a critical review of an existing body of knowledge on a topic related to social or urban policy, planning, or society. Students have the option of enrolling in a 3-credit tutorial while working on the thesis/capstone paper. Each student works with a faculty advisor, and the final product is subject to the approval of the thesis advisor and the Graduate Advisor.

#### **Summer Session**

The college offers several Summer Sessions in a given year. Graduate courses are scheduled during two six-week sessions, and also may be given during the four-week session. Some are in a traditional classroom setting and others are taught online. All of the college's academic, recreational, and cultural facilities are available during this period. For graduate courses and other information, please visit the Summer Session website ([www.qc.cuny.edu/summer](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/summer)). Limited Urban Affairs graduate courses are offered in the Summer Session.

#### **Courses**

For a full list of courses and descriptions, visit <http://qcurban.org>

#### **Registering for, Dropping and Switching Classes**

Students in their first semester will need to register for classes through Jeanne Chan, Secretary of the Urban Studies Department. After the first semester, students should be able to register for classes online through the [CUNYfirst](#) system.

Course registration generally occurs around the middle of the preceding semester. Students are highly encouraged to register for classes early, as they may occasionally fill up if they are too full or be dropped if they are under-enrolled. Generally speaking, you may drop, add, or switch classes up to the day before a semester begins. After this point, students may still drop, add, or switch classes, but may incur a fee. After the first weeks of the semester, any dropping or adding of courses requires the approval of the Graduate Advisor.

If a student is told that they have a hold on their account, they will not be able to register for classes until it is resolved, and they will need to get in touch with the Registrar.

#### **Final Project Guidelines**

As part of the graduation requirements for anyone who started the MA in Urban Studies during or after the Fall of 2016, students are required to complete a Final Project. This may take the form of a traditional research paper, a policy report, or other academic paper, or it may take the form of a website showcasing research, a podcast, a documentary film, a documentary photography project, or another form of creative output. Students must turn in a final project proposal by the end of the semester BEFORE they intend to graduate. This proposal should be submitted by email to the Graduate Advisor, and students may expect to make revisions before they begin their project. Final projects should be submitted in the middle of the semester when

students are expecting to graduate, at which point they will be reviewed by the Graduate Advisor or another faculty member in the Urban Studies Department. Students may then be asked to make revisions before the Final Project is approved.

### **Exemption Guidelines**

In certain circumstances, students may waive a degree requirement or substitute a required class. This is determined on a case-by-case basis and will be at the discretion of the Graduate Advisor.

### **Taking a Semester Off**

Situations may arise when students need to take a leave from their studies. When doing so, to remain active students at Queens College, they must Complete a Maintenance of Matriculation form and pay a fee, which varies depending on whether a student is from in-state or out-of-state. Students may access this form and seek further information by contacting the Office of the Registrar at Queens College.

### **Transferring in Completed Masters-Level Course Credit**

Students may be able to transfer in up to 12 Masters-level course credits from other programs within or outside the CUNY system . Eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis and is at the discretion of the Graduate Advisor. While these forms may be completed once a student has begun their degree, it is best to have this completed within the first semester of a student's study. To have previously-completed courses considered, students should submit an unofficial transcript to the Graduate Advisor, and whenever possible, a syllabus of the course as well. These documents should be submitted to the DSG with an Advanced Standing Evaluation Form, which may be acquired from the Graduate Admissions Office at Queens College.

Matriculated students seeking transfer credit for graduate work taken at another institution must submit the request for evaluation of such credit no later than the end of their second semester in attendance. The credits to be transferred must have been taken before the student matriculated at Queens College.

Only the following grades will be accepted for transfer credit: A+, A, A–, B+, and B.

### **Non-Matriculated Students**

If a student enters the Urban Affairs MA program as a non-matriculated student, they can take a total of 12 credits before they will be required to apply for matriculation. The application process is the same as the regular MA application process, except students will not need to submit new letters of recommendation. In most cases, for a non-matriculated student to be formally accepted into the program they must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA in their Masters-level Urban Affairs classes. For questions regarding applications for matriculation, please contact Prof. William Muraskin at [muraskin@yahoo.com](mailto:muraskin@yahoo.com).

### **Permits for Taking Classes at Other Universities**

Currently enrolled matriculants who wish to take courses at another institution must first file for an official permit through the Office of the Registrar prior to taking the course. The permit acts as an agreement to allow the student to receive credit for one or more courses completed at another institution. Permits must be filed during the registration period for the term in which the course is to be taken. Retroactive permits will not be issued.

There are two types of permit:

1. CUNY permits (E-Permits), for courses taken at another CUNY institution, are filed online by logging on to CUNYfirst. Effective Fall 2004, students receive both a grade and credit for courses taken through E-Permit.

2. Non-CUNY permits, for courses taken at institutions unaffiliated with CUNY, are filed by submitting a Non-CUNY Permit request form to the Office of the Registrar. The form must be signed by the Graduate Advisor to indicate departmental permission for the courses to be taken, and must be processed by the Office of the Registrar. Forms are available online at [www.qc.cuny.edu/registrar](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/registrar).

Courses taken with a non-CUNY permit receive credit only; grades for such courses are not included in the student's GPA.

To be eligible for a permit to enroll outside Queens College in a course or courses pertaining to a graduate degree or certificate program, a student must first:

1. be matriculated in a graduate degree or certificate program at the college;
2. have obtained the approval of the departmental graduate advisor for the permit; and
3. have registered for and completed with a passing grade at least one undergraduate prerequisite course or one graduate course as part of the graduate program at Queens College—except that, if the student is in the first semester of attendance, he/she must register in at least one graduate or undergraduate course at Queens while simultaneously registering elsewhere for the permit course(s).

Students who have taken an entire semester's program on permit at an institution other than a CUNY college must pay a reentry fee and file a graduate reentry application.

Transfer credit grades and grades earned on permit at a non-CUNY institution will not be counted into the cumulative grade-point average (GPA); only the course equivalent or elective credits are posted to the student's record at the college. A minimum grade of B– must be earned in order to receive credit for the course toward the degree. It is the responsibility of the student to have an official transcript sent to the Office of the Registrar once the course is completed. No advanced standing or transfer credit may be posted to a student's Queens College record unless an official transcript certifying to the completion of the work has been submitted.

Important note: As of the Fall 2004 semester, grades earned for coursework completed on permit at a CUNY institution other than Queens College will be posted to the student's record and will be counted into the student's GPA. Queens College will now secure the grade from the host college on the student's behalf.

### **Applying for Graduation**

Students may graduate at the end of the Fall, Summer, and Spring semesters. In a student's last semester, they should apply for graduation through the CUNYfirst system. Additionally, students must have turned in their Final Projects to the Graduate Advisor and completed any required revisions by the end of the semester when they intend to graduate. If students have completed all of their coursework but have not turned in their Final Projects by the end of the semester in which they intend to graduate, they will be required to pay a Maintenance of Matriculation fee and wait until the end of the following semester to graduate. There can be no exemptions to this CUNY-wide rule.



## **Eligibility for Graduation**

To be eligible to graduate, students must have completed 30 Masters-level credits, all course requirements, and their Final Project. Furthermore, students must have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA to graduate. In some circumstances, this may mean that students need to complete more than 30 credits until they bring up their overall GPA to above a 3.0.

## **Urban Studies Circular**

All students will be added to the Urban Studies Circular email list, where faculty, staff, and students may post interesting events and opportunities related to urban studies. If you are not receiving Circular emails, please contact the Graduate Advisor.

## **Queens College Government, Student Affairs, Services & Facilities**

For information on all of the campus offices, services and facilities, parking, as well as library and ID cards and IT issues, students may consult the Queens College Graduate Bulletin, which is updated annually and may be found at <http://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/pages/collegebulletins.aspx>. It is recommended that all students review this document.

## **Admission, Retention & Graduation, Tuition; Fees & Financial Aid**

Please consult the [Graduate Bulletin](#).

## **Grade Policies**

The grading scales are as follow:

A+ 97–100

A 93–96

A– 90–92

B+ 87–89

B 83–86

B– 80–82

C+ 77–79

C 73–76

C– 70–72

F 0–69

The following special grades are also used. Please see the section below for all procedures for dropping or withdrawing from courses:

*W (Withdrawn Passing)*: Given when a student withdraws formally from the fourth week through 60% of the calendar days of the session, or after the 60% point in time with a passing grade in the coursework completed.

*WF (Withdrawn Failing)*: Given when a student withdraws formally after 60% of the calendar days of the session, with a failing grade in the coursework completed. WF is equivalent to failure.

*WU (Withdrawn Unofficially)*: Given when the student ceases to attend classes without formally withdrawing from the course. WU is equivalent to a failure.

*WA (Administrative Withdrawal)*: Given when the student fails to comply with New York State Public Health Laws #2165 and #2167 (Immunization).

*P* is a passing grade that is valid only in those few courses that are designated as permitting this grade.

*Z* is a temporary grade assigned when an instructor does not submit a grade.

### **Withdrawal Procedures**

In the Graduate Division at Queens College, course withdrawals are allowable up to the official last day of classes. Withdrawal may have implications for federal financial aid. Students are advised to contact the Financial Aid Office prior to withdrawal. The procedure and outcome for a drop or withdrawal vary by the following four time periods. For more information, consult the [Graduate Bulletin](#).

### **Incomplete Work**

Incomplete (Inc.): This grade, which must be requested by the student prior to the end of the semester, is given by the instructor to indicate a student has made a satisfactory record in coursework but, for good and sufficient reason, is unable to complete the course.

A graduate student receiving this grade must complete the work of the course by the end of the next two regular semesters. Requests for extensions of time may be addressed to the appropriate academic dean. If the work for the course is not completed, the grade remains on the transcript without penalty. Students preparing to complete a course in which the grade is Incomplete must not register for the course a second time.

### **Attendance**

By registering in a course, the student assumes the obligation to fulfill the requirements set for that course by its instructor. Although absence *in and of itself* shall not affect a student's grade, students are responsible for such activities as participation in class discussions, field trips, etc.; the preparation of papers and reports; and the taking of quizzes and examinations—any or all of which may constitute a component in the student's final grade for the course. In addition to observing the regulation regarding withdrawal from a course, students are expected as a normal courtesy to inform the instructor of any prolonged absence or withdrawal. Being as many instructors evaluate class participation as part of a grade, repeated absences can still impact a grade.

### **Student Appeals Process**

A student who believes he/she has received an inappropriate grade must take the following steps:

1. Consult with the instructor.
2. If no satisfactory resolution can be reached with the instructor, consult with the department chair and then, if necessary, the appropriate academic dean. The chair or dean may convene a faculty committee to review the appeal.
3. If there is still no satisfactory resolution, appeal to the Office of the Provost for a further review. The appeal must be in writing, and must detail the reasons the grade is felt to be inappropriate.
4. Appeals from the decisions of the Office of the Provost may be directed in writing to the GSSC.

At the department level, a grade appeal may be based on the academic quality of the student's work. The only basis for an appeal to the Office of the Provost and the GSSC is that the student feels he/she has been treated in an arbitrary and capricious manner by the instructor. To make such an appeal, the student must be prepared to demonstrate that the grade was assigned punitively, unfairly, or on a basis other than impartial academic evaluation.

Once a grade has been posted on the record, it may not be changed without the Office of the Provost.

### **Applying for Graduation**

In their final semester, students can apply for graduation through the CUNYfirst system. Their graduation will then be scheduled for the end of that semester, pending their completion of their last classes and their submission of their Final Project (with revisions if necessary).

### **FAQs**

Is there a difference between Urban Affairs and Urban Studies?

In short, no. The MA in Urban Affairs is a degree offered by the Urban Studies department, but the terms “urban affairs” and “urban studies” may be used more-or-less interchangeably.