

Joint BA/MS in Computational Analysis and Public Policy (Harris)

The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy in conjunction with the Department of Computer Science offers students an opportunity to begin their professional training in the growing field of civic technology and data science in public policy while still in the College, leading to the awarding of a four-year undergraduate degree in their declared major and a two-year master of science degree in computational analysis and public policy (MSCAPP) after five years of study at the University of Chicago.

The BA/MSCAPP is a professional degree program for students in the College who wish to gain rigorous training in the emerging and critical role of technologists fluent in public policy skills and issues. The policy piece of the core curriculum draws on a variety of disciplines and fields, including economics, statistics, sociology, political science, political economy, organizational theory, and program evaluation. These areas provide a foundation in critical analysis, reflecting Harris Public Policy's belief that mastering quantitative and analytical skills prepares students to be effective public policy leaders.

The computer science core curriculum augments the core policy training with courses in computer programming, data analytics and machine learning, and database management. The unique combination equips students with technical expertise that is useful for many aspects of society but increasingly in demand in the public sector. By combining the strengths of the two faculties, the program builds on the tradition of interdisciplinary teaching and research at the University.

Program Requirements

The BA/MSCAPP program assumes students have no formal computer science training or exposure to programming at the onset of admission to the program. Students from all majors are encouraged to apply.

Students selected to participate in the joint degree program must meet all BA requirements for their particular field of study, as well as all general education requirements. In addition, joint degree students in the BA/MSCAPP program must satisfy the following criteria:

1. Admission to the BA/MSCAPP program assumes no prior computer science course work or coding experience. Candidates are evaluated on the strength of their application, similar to the metrics used for admission to the BA/MPP program.
2. Students are encouraged to complete all BA requirements in their third year before beginning the MSCAPP degree program in the fourth year. Students with two or fewer courses remaining in the BA, excluding any thesis, research, or final paper requirements, are eligible for admission with approval from the MSCAPP program director. The final two courses can be double-counted toward the BA and the MS, but these courses must be graduate-level courses (course number 30000 or above). Students who wish to count these courses toward their undergraduate major must receive permission from their major's director of undergraduate studies. Students must complete all BA requirements before beginning the fifth year.
3. Applicants are expected to have an overall GPA of 3.25 or higher.
4. All majors are strongly encouraged to apply.
5. Students must have completed at least one course, at any level, in at least two of the following three areas in the College: microeconomics, statistics, or calculus. Examination credit will not be accepted for this requirement, i.e., AP credit.
6. Students must register for at least nine courses (900 units of credit) in their fifth year.
7. No courses taken in CMSC (Computer Science) or PPHA (Public Policy/Harris) prior to entering the BA/MSCAPP program will be allowed to count toward the requirements for the MSCAPP. If the courses taken before entering the program would have fulfilled MSCAPP requirements, students will be permitted to replace those courses with approved electives.
8. Students enter joint residence status during the three quarters prior to the anticipated date of College graduation, during which time they will be charged tuition at Harris's master's rates. During their fourth year of study students will still be eligible for College aid.
9. Students must complete all requirements of the MSCAPP program, as stated in the Graduate Announcements (<http://harrisannouncements.uchicago.edu/harrispublicpolicy/curriculum>), to receive the BA/MSCAPP degree.
10. The GRE is not required for admission to the BA/MSCAPP program for students who have taken at least two MATH (Mathematics) courses and received a B grade or higher. Applicants who have not taken MATH courses should submit a GRE as part of their application.

Application Procedures

Before beginning the application process with Harris Public Policy, students should make appointments during their second year to ensure that all College requirements are met. After reviewing with their College adviser, students should speak with the College joint degree adviser (Pete Segall, psegall@uchicago.edu) and Jenny Erikson, associate director of student recruitment at Harris (jerickson1@uchicago.edu) (harrisadmissions@uchicago.edu), early in the third year. Interested students should submit their formal application to the program by April 15 of their third year in the College:

<https://apply-harris.uchicago.edu/apply>. Please note that BA/MSCAP program applicants are exempt from the application fee.

For more information, please email Jenny Erikson, associate director of student recruitment at Harris at jerickson1@uchicago.edu.



Font Notice

This document should contain certain fonts with restrictive licenses. For this draft, substitutions were made using less legally restrictive fonts. Specifically:

Times was used instead of Trajan.

Times was used instead of Palatino.

The editor may contact Leepfrog for a draft with the correct fonts in place.