



# Subject Benchmark Statement: Public Policy and Public Administration

## The Basics

This summary is designed to provide a short and accessible overview of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Public Policy and Public Administration for students, employers and academics. It is not intended to replace or alter the Statement, which should be referred to in the design and approval of courses and when any further detail is required.

Subject Benchmark Statements describe the nature of study and the benchmark academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas, and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their course or programme.

Subject Benchmark Statements are presented in four sections. Section 1 outlines the contextual information - providing the operational landscape, and boundaries, of subject discipline. This includes consideration of the ways in which the discipline addresses wider social goals, specifically in relation to: equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI); accessibility and the needs of disabled students; education for sustainable development (ESD); enterprise and entrepreneurship; and the impact of generative artificial intelligence on the subject practice.

Section 2 covers distinctive features of the course, including curriculum design, partnership arrangements, flexibility of delivery, progression and ongoing monitoring processes. Section 3 explains any features relevant to teaching, learning and assessment activities for the subject. Section 4 describes the benchmark standards of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's degree with honours in the subject, with some subjects also including achievement at master's level.



## Why study a degree in Public Policy and Public Administration?

Public Policy and Public Administration courses investigate the systems, processes, governance and management of public decision-making across all dimensions of society and tiers of government in both democratic and non-democratic countries. Students in Public Policy and Public Administration develop advanced levels of understanding of theories and concepts relating to governance, Public Policy, Public Administration, and public management as well as knowledge and skills in the formulation and implementation of public policies and the delivery of public services. This also includes the evaluation of impacts that governmental decisions, strategies, instruments and regulations have on citizens, and the drawing of lessons for practice and future public action.

Through a focus on governmental decision making, the study of Public Policy and/or Public Administration is concerned with policies and practices that impact citizens and society generally, as well as the economy, public institutions and public agencies. Through its interest in the delivery of government decisions, it is concerned with how public resources are best organised and deployed to meet changing societal needs and preferences. This requires an appreciation of politics and policy, as well as an understanding of the craft of management and leadership that has a positive impact on broader society. Its field of study involves local, regional, national and international levels of enquiry.



## What are the main teaching and learning approaches in Public Policy and Public Administration?

The learning and teaching environments developed by different providers will reflect their respective approaches to Public Policy and/or Public Administration, and that may emphasise different types of ethos, context, skill sets and analytical approaches. Qualifications may be conventionally academic, or combine theory with practice-based

elements. Learning and teaching methods are designed to best fit the subject matter at hand and the learning outcomes set, considering the needs of different learners. Learning and teaching methods embrace principles of sustainability, inclusion and diversity, accessibility, and enterprise and entrepreneurship. They take account of the diverse learning and teaching cultures that students may have experienced and provide opportunities for students to understand and appreciate the global context in which they will be operating. Learning approaches may include a range of modes, including, but not limited to, in-person, digital, blended, block release, hybrid, experiential, full-time, part-time, synchronous and asynchronous. As far as possible, providers will ensure digital inclusivity for students.

Public Policy and/or Public Administration students will experience a range of learning environments, methods and activities that combine to develop ability to advance their cognitive and life skills, their knowledge base and to identify enterprising and entrepreneurial solutions to social challenges. Independent of mode of delivery, learning in Public Policy and/or Public Administration degrees typically includes some combination of:

- lectures - ranging from traditional 'chalk and talk' style to interactive and 'flipped' formats
- seminars and workshops
- case studies
- inquiry problem-based exercises, roleplays, simulations/games, experiments
- work-based learning, internships, placements
- independent learning and guided activities
- talks and workshops from practitioner speakers
- field work and study trips.



## How are students assessed?

Courses in Public Policy and/or Public Administration typically draw on a range of diverse assessment methods. Such a varied approach to assessments enhances student experience and employability, caters for a diverse student body, and mitigates effects of essay mills and advances in generative artificial intelligence.

Assessment and feedback help students to deeply engage with Public Policy and/or Public Administration and showcase their understanding, analytical ability, insights and skills. A course's assessment strategy will reflect the knowledge, skills and understanding developed within its curriculum and align with its preferred methods of learning and teaching. Assessment as, and for, learning (as opposed to only assessment of learning) is promoted and developed. Assessment is linked to the specific learning outcomes of degrees and enables students to demonstrate progressive levels of attainment. It also enables the development of specific skills related to employability, professional practice and personal development.

Plurality in assessment allows students to display and develop a wide range of skills and is appropriate for the diverse range of educational backgrounds of students taking Public Policy and/or Public Administration degrees. Providers design assessments to ensure that the overall assessment burden is considered, including the impact on well-being and accessibility. Where individual students are disadvantaged by particular assessment methods, reasonable adjustments to those assessments are considered in discussion with the student concerned, while ensuring fairness across the full cohort.



## Benchmark Standards

The minimum threshold and excellent standards that a student will have demonstrated when they are awarded an honours or master's degree in Public Policy and/or Public Administration are outlined on **pages 17-19** of the Subject Benchmark Statement. The vast majority of students will perform significantly better than the minimum threshold standards. Each higher education provider has its own method of determining what appropriate evidence of this achievement will be and should refer to [Annex D in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#). This Annex sets out common descriptions of the four main degree outcome classifications for bachelor's degrees with honours - 1st, 2.1, 2.2 and 3rd.

The full statement was developed by subject experts drawn from across the sector. Details of the Advisory Group can be found on **page 23** of the Statement.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as an expert quality body on behalf of the higher education sector.

### Read the full Subject Benchmark Statement

The [full Subject Benchmark Statement](#) is available on the QAA website.

Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector.

Published - 10 April 2025

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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