

REQUEST FOR DECISION

Committee Name: Academic Programs Committee, University Council

Date: January 29, 2026

Presented by: Paul Jones, Chair, Academic Programs Committee

Subject: PhD in Public Policy Admission Qualification Changes

MOTION

It is recommended by the Academic Programs Committee that Council approve the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy Admission Qualification change, effective for the 2027-2028 admission cycle.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is recommending approval of admission requirement changes for the PhD in Public Policy. The change involves removing a “personal statement addressing 4 specified areas” to simply a “personal statement” but indicating that the statement should follow guidelines provided on the recruitment website. The proposed changes aim to simplify the admission requirement by providing detailed guidelines on the program’s recruitment page on what the admissions committee expects.

Applicants will have more flexibility to present their academic and research background in a way that best reflects their strengths. By outlining guiding questions on the program webpage, the College can ensure transparency and support applicants in preparing a strong, well-structured statement. This approach aligns with their Master of Public Policy admissions requirement.

In addition, this change allows the admissions committee to update or refine the guiding questions annually to reflect evolving research priorities and committee expectations without requiring a full university-level review and approval process. This flexibility ensures that the application process remains relevant and responsive to both applicant needs and program goals.

Overall, the change is expected to improve the applicant experience, encourage more competitive and well-prepared submissions, and provide the committee with richer information for making informed admission decisions.

CONSULTATION

The Graduate Programs Committee reviewed the proposal at their meeting on November 17, 2025, and approved the proposal.

The College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies submitted its proposal to the Academic Programs Committee (APC) on January 7, 2026. The Committee reviewed the submission and voted in favor of the requested changes, subject to a few minor revisions, which were completed on January 16, 2026. University Council has the authority to approve changes to admission qualifications. Senate confirmation of the decision is required before the changes can take effect.

ATTACHMENTS

1. **PhD in Public Policy Admission Qualification Changes**

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Changes to Graduate Program Admission Requirements

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Program: PhD in Public Policy	
Academic Unit (unit offering the program): JSGS	Proposed date for implementation: May 2027
Contact person name Amy Hassett	Email amy.hassett@usask.ca

Admission requirements are made up of several factors including admission qualifications and selection criteria which are governed under the [Policy on Admission to Degree Programs](#).

Please select the area in which you are proposing to change/create:

Admission Qualifications

These are the credentials that an applicant must present in order to establish eligibility for admission. They include but are not restricted to objective qualifications such as post-secondary standing, minimum averages, English proficiency, and minimum scores on standardized tests. Qualifications may vary for some admission categories. Admission Qualifications become part of your “Admission Requirements” for applicants.

Admission category

Admission categories are approved at a university wide level and are a way to differentiate and compare applicants with similar qualifications (i.e. Regular Admission, Special Admission, Indigenous Specific Seats, Provisional Admission, etc.). Note: If the admission category requires applicants to adhere to a different set of admission qualifications this would then require Senate approval.

Enrolment Management

Changes to the capacity of seats available for new admits if different from the college/school strategic enrolment plan.

RATIONALE

Describe the change being made to the admission requirements and the rationale for the admission change.

We are seeking to change the current admission requirement:

- a personal statement that answers the following four questions:
 - Why do you want to pursue a PhD focusing on public policy?
 - Briefly describe your research background and preparation for policy-related research, including both scholarly and practical experience.
 - Describe what you hope to achieve in your research. Briefly describe the problem you want to investigate and identify any specific theories or methods you want to use.
 - Have you approached any of the faculty at the school? If so, please name them.

To simply:

- a personal statement

The PhD in Public policy program page (<https://grad.usask.ca/programs/public-policy.php>) will be updated each admission cycle to provide clear guidelines for applicant regarding what should be addressed in the personal statement. A link to the guidelines will be added to the admission requirements.

This revision of simplifying the admission requirement and providing detailed guidelines on the program's recruitment page will help to provide clear guidance on what the admissions committee expects. Applicants will have more flexibility to present their academic and research background in a way that best reflects their strengths. By outlining guiding questions on the program webpage, we ensure transparency and support applicants in preparing a strong, well-structured statement. This approach aligns with our Master of Public Policy admissions requirement.

In addition, this change allows the admissions committee to update or refine the guiding questions annually to reflect evolving research priorities and committee expectations without requiring a full university-level review and approval process. This flexibility ensures that the application process remains relevant and responsive to both applicant needs and program goals.

Overall, the change is expected to improve the applicant experience, encourage more competitive and well-prepared submissions, and provide the committee with richer information for making informed admission decisions.

Sample guidelines for program page:

The PhD is a research degree and is the highest degree awarded in Public Policy. It denotes an advanced level of competence in scholarly research and communication. Your personal statement offers you the opportunity to describe to the admissions committee your interests and to clearly detail your background and preparation, the ideas and methods that you bring to public policy, and to indicate the particular areas of interest in public policy. Please clearly address each of the following within 1,500 words.

- Why do you want to pursue a PhD focusing on public policy?
- What is your research background and preparation in policy-related research, including scholarly and practical experience?
- Describe one or more general areas within public policy in which you would like to do research. Please provide some examples of specific topics you consider interesting and researchable within this area.
- What type of theories and methods do you want to use or explore?
- Please provide an example that demonstrates your ability to define a topic, apply theoretical concepts to it, cite existing key literature, and propose ways to create new scholarly knowledge on that topic. This example might relate to one of the sample topics you identified in (3) above.
- Have you approached any of the faculty at our school regarding your application? If so, please provide their names and briefly describe the nature of your interactions.

This change will not impact selection criteria (how applicants are ranked and selected), nor will it impact program enrolment.

CATALOGUE ENTRY

Public Policy

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Admission Requirements

- Language Proficiency Requirements: Proof of English proficiency may be required for international applicants and for applicants whose first language is not English. A minimum overall TOEFL score of 86 is required with a minimum score of 20 in each area, or a minimum overall IELTS score of 6.5 with a minimum score of 6.0 in each area, or another approved test as outlined in the College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Academic Policies.
- Master's degree, or equivalent, from a recognized university in a relevant academic discipline
- a cumulative weighted average of at least a 75% (U of S grade system equivalent) in the last two years of study (i.e. coursework required in Master's program)
- a personal statement *(as outlined in the guidelines*) that answers the following four questions:*
 - o Why do you want to pursue a PhD focusing on public policy?*
 - o Briefly describe your research background and preparation for policy related research, including both scholarly and practical experience.*
 - o Describe what you hope to achieve in your research. Briefly describe the problem you want to investigate and identify any specific theories or methods you want to use.*
 - o Have you approached any of the faculty at the school? If so, please name them.*

As you answer these questions, please keep in mind the Admissions Committee is assessing your ability to write in a clear, coherent, and professional manner; your personal statement should be free of spelling and grammatical errors and properly referenced (if applicable). Please limit your response to each of the questions to no more than 200 words.
- Three letters of reference

**guidelines are posted [here](#)*

Consultation with the Registrar (CWR) – Proposal Highlights

Title of Proposal: Ph.D. in Public Policy – Admission Requirement Revisions

General Description: The proposal seeks to modify the personal statement requirement for admission. The personal statement will continue to be an admission requirement; however, the four specific questions outlined in the Catalogue will no longer be required components.

Degree College: College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

College Approval: Graduate Programs Committee approval, December 15, 2025

Effective Term: 2027-28 Admission Intake period

Course implications

- No course deletions or changes are involved in this proposal.

Registration and classes

- N/A

Convocation

- N/A

Financial and Budget

- Deputy Provost and Strategic Finance Office are aware of the proposal.

Admission and Student Mobility

- See above.