

Postgraduate courses for public sector professionals



The University of Canberra offers a suite of tertiary-accredited courses designed specifically for public sector professionals seeking to strengthen their impact in a rapidly changing policy environment.

Our flagship courses are a set of three Graduate Certificate programs covering public policy, public administration and financial management;

- Graduate Certificate in Policy and Data
- Graduate Certificate in Public Administration
- Graduate Certificate in Public Policy and Finance

Developed in close consultation with government departments, these programs equip public servants with the practical skills, analytical tools and leadership capabilities needed to design, deliver and manage effective policies and programs.

Each program combines foundational knowledge with real-world application, ensuring participants can apply what they learn to current workplace challenges. There is a strong emphasis on collaboration and sharing experiences.

The University of Canberra also offers a range of short courses for government, ranging from AI for government to masterclasses on deliberative democracy and public participation.

By completing a Graduate Certificate, you will develop:

- Advanced skills in policy analysis, program design and evaluation
- Strong communication and strategic thinking capabilities
- Practical expertise in public sector finance and economic analysis
- Confidence in using data to inform decisions
- Leadership skills to drive reform and manage change
- A deeper understanding of ethics, integrity and accountability in government

You will graduate better equipped to tackle complex public policy challenges and contribute meaningfully to delivering high-quality outcomes for the Australian community.



OVERVIEW OF COURSES

Each of our Graduate Certificate programs runs over a year and is made up of four units:

- Graduate Certificate in Policy and Data (GCPD)
 - Public Policy
 - Public Administration
 - Data for Government (Understanding Government Statistics)
 - Economic Policy Analysis
- Graduate Certificate in Public Administration (GCPA)
 - Public Policy
 - Public Administration
 - Managing Government Finance
 - Leading and Managing Change
- Graduate Certificate in Public Policy and Finance (GCPPF)
 - Public Policy
 - Economic Policy Analysis
 - Managing Government Finance
 - Leading and Managing Change

Each unit is delivered in an intensive format with two three-day blocks (six days per unit). Units are convened and taught by a staff member at the University of Canberra, complemented by a mix of guest presenters.

Typically students start their program at the beginning of the calendar year, but we have flexible entry options which mean that you can start the program part-way through one calendar year and finish your course the following year.

The modules are designed for face-to-face teaching with plenty of student interaction, activities and guest presentations. Units are typically delivered in hybrid format, with the in-person classes being delivered on UC's main campus in Bruce, Canberra.

Each intake may include participants from a range of government departments and agencies. We are also happy to collaborate with individual departments and agencies to develop bespoke programs.

The availability of individual programs and units may vary from year to year depending on agency/student interests.

Illustrative program structure (Graduate Certificate in Public Policy and Finance for 2026) – format, dates and unit offerings may vary from year to year)

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Public Policy Convener: Dr. Jane Alver	Economic Policy Analysis Convener: Dr. John Hawkins	Managing Government Finance Convener: Professor Stephen Bartos	Leading and Managing Change Convener: Dr. Sam Johnson
Block 1 Wednesday, 4 March - Friday, 6 March	Block 1 Wednesday, 10 June - Friday, 12 June	Block 1 Wednesday, 5 August - Friday, 7 August	Block 1 Wednesday, 7 October - Friday, 9 October
Block 2 Wednesday, 18 March - Friday, 20 March	Block 2 Wednesday, 24 June - Friday, 26 June	Block 2 Wednesday, 19 August - Friday, 21 August	Block 2 Wednesday, 21 October - Friday, 23 October

WHY CHOOSE OUR GRADUATE CERTIFICATES

✓ Tailored for Public Sector Professionals

The programs are tailored to suit a wide range of public sector employees in both the Australian Public Service and State/Territory public services.

✓ High calibre teaching staff with practical experience

Our teaching team not only has strong expertise in research and adult learning but also brings a wealth of first-hand experience from prior careers in the public service.

✓ Graduate with a tertiary qualification

You'll graduate with a tertiary qualification that is highly regarded by employers and stakeholders. Your Graduate Certificate can be a stepping stone to further upgrade your professional skills, such as through a Graduate Diploma or Master of Public Policy.

✓ Capital-based with a national profile

Our location in Canberra enhances our capacity to tap into a range of guest presenters working in senior public service roles in the nation's capital, while our hybrid delivery options enable students to participate from around the country.

✓ Intensive Delivery Format

Allows you to immerse yourself in the learning experience while also building your networks with other professionals across different agencies.

✓ Apply learning directly to your work

Course activities and assessments are designed around real workplace challenges, boosting the relevance and impact of what you'll learn.

✓ A university that cares about you

At the University of Canberra we pride ourselves on taking an interest in our students and helping them to succeed in their studies. As well as support from unit conveners, you'll have access to a range of advice and resources from our Study Skills team and the Ngunnawal Centre, which supports First Nations students.

Who can apply:

The courses are only open to applicants who are currently employed in an Australian Commonwealth, State, or Territory government department/agency, generally within the APS6-EL2 range and new SES band 1 or equivalent, although we can offer bespoke programs for graduate cohorts. Applicants must have a degree or equivalent or hold two or more years of relevant work experience.

Enrolment currently takes place via nominations submitted by government departments. There are two main ways to apply:

- Your department or agency may put out a call for nominations for a group of students to join the program; or
- You can ask your department or agency if they would be willing to sponsor you as part of your professional development, and they will then reach out to us.



Some of the participants in the Graduate Certificate of Public Policy and Finance 2026 cohort with convener Jane Alver (second from right) and lecturer Kath MacKie (right). [Photo: Jonathan Pickering]

MEET OUR TEAM

Our team, based in the Faculty of Business, Government and Law, brings a wealth of expertise as both academics and practitioners. Unit Conveners lead and lecture for individual units, supported by in-house lecturers and guest presenters, while the Program Director and Operations Coordinator handle the overall organisation of the Graduate Certificates program.



Dr Jane Alver

Unit Convener: Public Policy

Jane is a gender and civil society specialist with legal and public sector experience, including roles with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Australian Council for International Development, and across the Pacific. She was recognised in the 2018 100 Women of Influence and was an ACT Woman of the Year Award finalist in 2021.



Professor Stephen Bartos

Unit Convener: Managing Government Finance

As an expert in public sector governance, finance, strategy and risk, Stephen previously worked in the Commonwealth Government for some 25 years, including as a Deputy Secretary in the Finance department and head of Budget Group.



Dr John Hawkins

Unit Convener: Economic Policy Analysis

John is an expert in economics and public policy, with a focus on monetary policy. Previously he headed the economics division at the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and has been a senior economist with the Reserve Bank of Australia, Bank for International Settlements and Australian Treasury and secretary to the Senate Economics Committee.



Dr Sam Johnson

Unit Convener: Leading and Managing Change

Sam is an expert in leadership with a PhD in Management (Organisational Behaviour). She began developing employee training programs for the Australian Public Service in 2000 and has worked with a range of departments including DFAT, Customs and Border Protection, the Department of Environment and the Department of Finance.



Professor Jacki Schirmer

Unit Convener: Data for Government

Jackie is an expert in natural resource management, wellbeing, resilience and rural communities. She is Director of the University of Canberra's Centre for Environmental Governance and lead of the WellRes Unit in the Health Research Institute. She is a member of the ACT Climate Change Council and was previously Director of the Forest Stewardship Council Australia.



Associate Professor Kath Mackie

Lecturer: Public Policy

Kath has 25 years' Australian Public Service experience in environment, energy, employment and Indigenous policy, including as a Senior Executive in the Department of Environment. Before joining the University of Canberra in 2023, she was CEO of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, a non-government organisation working in the Western Desert of Australia with Martu Indigenous people.



Mr Paul Stewart

Lecturer: Leading and Managing Change

Paul is an expert in human resources, organisational change and leadership, and has taught extensively in these fields. From 2010-2019 he was Director Human Resources at the National Library of Australia.



Associate Professor Jonathan Pickering

Program Director

Jonathan leads the overall Graduate Certificates program. He is an expert on climate, sustainability and energy policy, and has engaged extensively with policy-makers through this work. Before beginning his academic career in 2009, he worked for five years in the Australian Public Service at AusAID.



Mr Justin Wilson

Operations Coordinator

Justin coordinates the logistics and enrolments for the Graduate Certificates program. He has worked for the University of Canberra for over 20 years in a range of roles, including supporting students from the APS and ACT Public Service for much of this period.

UNIT OFFERINGS

Each course consists of 4 units from the following 6 options:

PUBLIC POLICY

Offered in: GCPD, GCPPF

Policy innovation, reform and change contribute to a better Australia. This unit aims to deepen your knowledge of the theory and practice of public policymaking in Australia. It includes a strong focus on the importance of crafting evidence-based policy, while keeping the reality of the political context firmly in view. It guides you through how to design effective public policies using economic, behavioural and community engagement tools. This first unit develops in students three sets of skills:

- Awareness of the political and client contexts of policymaking (the capability to see like a minister and like the end recipient of a policy).
- The ability to develop quality strategic advice and write a succinct new policy proposal.
- Communication skills in presenting policies to different audiences.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Offered in: GCPD, GCPA

This unit supports you to efficiently, effectively and respectfully deliver policies, services, programs and legislation to the benefit of the Australian public. To achieve that, the unit explores the evolution of public administration in Australia, our structure of government, and the values, ethics, integrity, accountability, human resource management, leadership skills in the doing of public administration. Throughout this unit a key focus is what APS administrative reforms are required now to address the needs of Australian citizens.

ECONOMIC POLICY ANALYSIS

Offered in: GCPD, GCPPF

Economic policy analysis can be described as the systematic evaluation of the economic impacts, efficiency, and effectiveness of public policies and programs. Government officials frequently interact with economists including in policy debates, evaluations and agreeing policy costings. This unit aims to prepare you for this interaction by developing the language, tools and skills necessary to become a critical consumer of economic thinking and a respected participant in policy processes.

The Unit explores economic policy issues central to the work of government. It covers how governments intervene in the Australian economy through taxing, spending, monetary policy and legislation); economic incentives, economic policy analysis tools; and principles of cost-benefit analysis.

Key analytical tools used in budgeting and finance are explored so that participants gain a working knowledge of the budgetary processes in Australia. You leave this Unit with a set of economic policy analysis tools and concepts that are the bread and butter of much of the work in the Australian Public Service and State and Territory Governments.

MANAGING GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Offered in: GCPA, GCPPF

This unit imparts essential knowledge of financial management in the public sector. Core topics covered include the political, economic and legislative contexts of financial management, Australia's financial management system, the purpose of budgets and their impacts, how to read the budget papers, how decisions are made on fiscal and budget matters, working with Finance to develop new policy proposals, intergovernmental financial relations, and gender, participatory and well-being budgeting.

The unit provides the analytical skills needed to understand the linkages between budgeting and the macro-fiscal framework, the political decision-making process, the interests of citizens, and the creation of public value.

The aim of the Unit is to critically examine public budgeting and expenditure management in Australia by comparing theory and practice both here in Australia and overseas. It is designed for generalists, rather than finance specialists. It equips students with the language and tools to understand how government finances are managed.



DATA FOR GOVERNMENT

(Understanding, Utilising and Evaluating Government Statistics)

Offered in: GCPD

This unit aims to teach you data skills needed by public servants. The unit is tailored for students that may not have a statistics background. Support is given throughout the unit to build confidence in working with data. This unit takes you on a journey through the data lifecycle, from collection and evaluation to analysis, visualization, and storytelling. We explore how data transforms from raw information into powerful insights that drive decision-making.

You will build skills in:

- How to critically evaluate the quality, reliability and integrity of different data sets.
- How to access and use common data sets used across government agencies.
- Understanding and applying principles of data ethics including Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
- Undertaking descriptive analysis and visualisation of data using Microsoft Excel.
- Newer methods for data analysis and visualisation including big data analysis.

LEADING AND MANAGING CHANGE

Offered in: GCPD, GCPPF

This unit caps off the Graduate Certificate course by strengthening your confidence in your leadership skills. The unit explores the dynamics of exercising leadership on complex problems. It goes beyond looking at technical or management processes, to build an in-depth understanding about the nature of leadership during periods of change and the many ways in which change is avoided and resisted.

The unit emphasises leadership as shared learning – requiring the full engagement of stakeholders and opposing groups. The unit prepares you for working in complex environments characterised by uncertainty and competing interest. It emphasises that progress in achieving change relies on expanding our problem-solving capacity, rather than leaping to solving a pre-defined problem.

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to articulate an adaptive leadership challenge of importance to you and your workplace. For that challenge you learn to identify and explore partners and allies, generate difficult conversations in environments full of competing interests and values, and explore creative actions to make progress.

You will complete this unit with a leadership framework to support you with the interpersonal and strategic skills to be a respected change leader.



FACULTY OF BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT AND LAW

Working with Governments and for Society

The Faculty of Business, Government and Law works closely with government to address real policy and service delivery challenges. We bring together expertise in law, business and public policy to support evidence-based decision making and practical reform. Our teaching and research are strongly connected to the public sector. We collaborate with agencies at all levels of government on partnerships that deliver measurable impact across areas such as healthcare access, regional resilience, democratic integrity and gender equality. We also embed government perspectives directly into our programs, working with public sector partners to shape curriculum, provide applied learning opportunities, and ensure graduates are job-ready with a strong understanding of how government operates. At our core, we focus on helping government tackle complex problems, build capability, and achieve better outcomes for communities.

Hear from past students

"This course expanded my understanding of public policy beyond an operational lens and reinforced that while policy intent matters, it is the quality of implementation that ultimately determines success."

"The Unit Convenor was great at facilitating our learning. The structure was thoughtfully designed to allow time to process the concepts and demonstrate our learning in discussions and assignments."

"Thank you for being an awesome lecturer in Public Policy. The class and I learned so much, and you set a high bar for the remaining lecturers in the other modules."



A photograph of two women sitting at a table in a meeting. The woman on the right is seen in profile, facing left, with her dark hair tied back. The woman on the left is partially visible, wearing a white shirt. The background is a blue wall with a subtle pattern. Three light blue circular callouts are overlaid on the image, containing text.

“We all appreciated your passion for teaching, We couldn’t have asked for a better lecturer. The lectures and activities were very interesting and insightful. Now we know how to write a New Policy Proposal, how inflation works and how to read and make sense of Budget Papers.”

“Fabulous... lots of interesting topics and new ways of thinking. The course was positive and so were the people.”

“It was quite serendipitous – the very next week after our lesson on using the ABS website, I was asked to update a brief to the minister with the most recent youth unemployment statistics. I knew exactly where to find it. My team was surprised that I didn’t need to be shown how to do it.”



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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Program Director – APS Graduate Certificates

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Graduate Certificate Website:

<https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/faculties/busgovlaw/school-of-government-and-policy/graduate-certificate-programs-for-public-sector-professionals>

If you are more interested in self-paced online learning in public policy, check out our online Masters and Graduate Certificate programs in public policy. You can also ask us about the range of short courses and training sessions that we offer for public sector professionals

