

BEHAVIORAL AND DECISION SCIENCES, MBDS

Penn's Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences (MBDS) is informed by contemporary theories and research methods of behavioral economics, decision sciences, network analysis and public policy. Our program equips students with theoretical and practical tools to address a variety of real-life problems, putting you ahead of the curve in a growing field of study. The interdisciplinary degree prepares you to understand how individuals and groups make decisions, and how to affect those decisions. Our world-renowned faculty and researchers are also leading practitioners in their fields. With their expertise, you are guided to apply what you learn to real-life problems in areas such as social and public policy, law, education, business and medicine.

For more information: <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mbds> (<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/graduate/mbds/>)

Curriculum

Curriculum structure

To fulfill the requirements for this degree program, you must complete nine courses including a capstone research project. You can finish the coursework in one full-time academic year, using the summer to complete the capstone research project, or at a part-time flexible pace.

During your studies, you establish a theoretical, methodological and quantitative foundation in the field with a common core covering behavioral economics, psychology, social norms and public policy. You learn to model how individuals and groups make decisions, the behavioral and neural foundations of decision-making, and have the opportunity to design lab and field experiments to test your hypotheses. You are taught to create and analyze computational models of social emergence, and use network analysis to understand how behavior can spread or dissolve.

You may select a concentration in an area such as social science, public health, neuroscience, education, or social and public policy. Students interested in real-world applications can work with faculty members who employ their research in fields like social and public policy, education, law, business and medicine.

Our interdisciplinary curriculum allows students to take elective classes from:

- The School of Arts and Sciences (<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/frd/departments/>)
- The School of Social Policy & Practice (<https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/>)
- The Wharton School (<https://www.wharton.upenn.edu/>)
- Penn Law (<https://www.law.upenn.edu/>)
- Penn Graduate School of Education (<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/>)
- Annenberg School for Communication (<https://www.asc.upenn.edu/>)
- Penn Nursing (<http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/>)
- Perelman School of Medicine (<http://www.med.upenn.edu/>)

Required courses

All students are expected to take five core classes, three elective courses and one dedicated capstone research project to earn the nine course units required for the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences.

Code	Title	Course Units
Required		
BDS 501	Behavioral Science: Theory and Application of Experimental Methods	1
BDS 502	Norms and Nudges	1
BDS 503	Behavioral Public Policy	1
BDS 521	Judgments & Decisions	1
Select one of the following: ¹		1
BDS 522	Statistical Reasoning for Behavioral Science	
BDS 516	Data Science and Quantitative Modeling	
Select 3 elective courses		3
Select 1 dedicated capstone research course		1
Total Course Units		9

¹ If you take more than one course from the Quantitative core, it will serve as an elective course.

Electives and concentrations

The goal of the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences is to equip students with practical tools for applications and a focused academic portfolio. You can select three courses from disciplines and schools across the University in relation to your academic and professional goals. An advisor from the program works with you one-on-one to craft a successful curriculum.

Elective concentrations include:

- Public health
- Psychology/Neuroscience
- Education policy
- Social and public policy
- Economics/Neuroeconomics
- Sociology/Networks
- Computational systems

Prerequisites

The program has two prerequisite courses:

1. introductory statistics and
2. microeconomics/game theory

For students who lack sufficient background in one or all areas, the prerequisite courses are offered through the College of Liberal and Professional Studies during the summer prior to the start of the program in the fall term.

Capstone experience

The final capstone research project for the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences is an independent study experience. Throughout the process, you connect with faculty members in your area of concentration to determine appropriate final projects or ways to participate in applying research, such as completing an internship or conducting fieldwork.

The capstone schedule allows for incremental deadlines and feedback from professors. The requirement for the capstone is a final project that contributes to your future career path. The paper is expected to:

- Present a position that is unique, original and directly applies to your experience
- Use primary sources or apply to a primary organization/agency
- Conform to the style and format of excellent academic writing
- Analyze empirical research data that is collected by you or that has already been collected
- Allow you to demonstrate the competencies gained in the master's program

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2020 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.
