

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 the two-part Capstone. You can finish the coursework in one full-time academic year 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.

In areas 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

The curriculum of the MBDS program entails the completion of 9 Course Units (CUs) of graduate-level courses. The program includes five compulsory courses and four electives for graduation.

Code	Title	Course Units
Required		
BDS 5010	Behavioral Science: Theory and Application of Experimental Methods	1
BDS 5210	Judgments & Decisions	1
BDS 5997	Capstone: Consulting with Behavioral Science	0.5
BDS 5998	Capstone: Design Challenge	0.5
Applied Unit		1
Students must take at least one of the following: ¹		
BDS 5020	Norms and Nudges	
BDS 5250	Organizational Behavior	
BDS 5030	Behavioral Public Policy	
Quantitative Unit		1
Students will be assigned to one of the following: ²		
BDS 5220	Statistical Reasoning for Behavioral Science	
BDS 5160	Data Science and Quantitative Modeling	
4 Electives		4
Total Course Units		9

¹ In the professional applied unit, students must take at least one of the following three course options: (i) Norms and Nudges, (ii) Organizational Behavior, and (iii) Behavioral Public Policy.

² Based on an evaluation prior to the start of the program, you will be assigned to ONE of the following two quantitative courses: BDS 5220 Statistical Reasoning for Behavioral Science (intermediate-level taught in Fall), or BDS 5160 Data Science and Quantitative Modeling (advanced-level taught in Spring).

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 four courses from disciplines and schools across the University in relation to your academic and professional goals. A maximum of two courses can be taken outside of the School of Arts & Sciences. An advisor from the program works with you one-on-one to craft a successful curriculum.

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

The Capstone is the most important behavioral science training of the MBDS Program. This course consists of two semesters where students engage in a dialogue with industry and global organizations to understand the variety of applications of behavioral science and use the tools learned in MBDS courses to tackle specific industry/organization problems. Students must enroll in both BDS 5997 Capstone: Consulting

with Behavioral Science and BDS 5998 Capstone: Design Challenge, taught in Fall and Spring, respectively. Each of these courses counts for 0.5 CUs.

In the first semester (Fall), students engage in skill boot camps, discussion with industry leaders, and other training in three areas:

- a) how behavioral science is applied in organizations across several domains,
- b) why behavioral insights and tools are relevant in organizational settings, and
- c) what students can expect when they transition into the job market.

In the second semester (Spring), students embark on the Design Challenge. In this portion of the Capstone, teams of students apply behavioral science to solve questions brought by industry partners. The Design Challenge is a semester-long practice to prepare our students to engage with industry and global organizations even before they complete the program.

The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2023 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.
