

Rice University

Master of Social Policy Evaluation

Student Handbook
2025-2026

This handbook provides general guidelines for Master of Social Policy Evaluation students. All degree plans and graduate student matters must conform to the Rice University General Announcements and be approved by the Master of Social Policy Evaluation Faculty Director. In addition, it is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the contents of this handbook and to comply with all regulations, policies, procedures and deadlines, including the university honor code.

Overview

Welcome to the Rice University's Master of Social Policy Evaluation! This handbook contains important information on your degree requirements, program policies, and university guidelines for your time at Rice.

Rice University Honor Code

All incoming Rice students agree to abide by the Rice University honor system. The honor system, one of the oldest and proudest traditions at Rice, is administered by the Honor Council, whose student members are elected each year by the student body. Adopted by a student vote in 1916, the honor system has remained essentially the same since that time but for changes in the procedures and membership of the Honor Council.

Students take all written examinations and complete any specifically designated assignments under the honor system. By committing themselves to the honor system, all students accept responsibility for assuring the integrity of the examinations and assignments conducted under it. More information can be found at <http://ga.rice.edu>.

Department Partners

Master of Social Policy Evaluation students are welcome to ask for assistance when needed. Please review the information below to contact the appropriate person.

Faculty Director:

Rachel Kimbro, Ph.D.

Faculty Director

(713) 348-3699

stein@rice.edu

Staff:

Abbey Godley

Assistant Dean for Student Programs

215 Kraft Hall

(713) 348-2367

agodley@rice.edu

Mecia Lockwood Emale

Assistant Director- Employer Relations

209 Kraft Hall

713-348-2181

Email:

Before You Arrive

Please review required information at
<https://graduate.rice.edu/applicants/after-admission/you-arrive>.

Transcripts

In order to create your student record, which includes your student ID number, NetID, and Rice University email address, the Master of Social Policy Evaluation program ***needs to receive an official transcript from the university in which you completed your undergraduate degree***. Please have these mailed or emailed directly to the program's office. Final transcripts with your conferred degree date are required by October 1. If you fail to meet this deadline a \$75 late fee will be assessed.

Health Data Form

All new graduate students are required to submit a properly completed HDF to Student Health. All students under the age of 22 years, regardless of classification, must provide documentation of vaccination against meningococcal disease. See health.rice.edu for more information.

Health Insurance

All students are required to have health insurance coverage. That coverage can be provided by Rice University, or you may waive that requirement by providing proof of comparable insurance coverage. Register for or waive Rice Student health insurance by August 28 (<https://studenthealthinsurance.rice.edu/>).

International Student Health Information: All Rice-sponsored F-1 and J-1 international students must enroll in either 1) Aetna (Rice's Student Health Insurance Plan) or 2) SAS (Rice's Approved Alternate

Health Insurance Plan for Internationals). Visit http://oiss.rice.edu/student_health/ for more information.

Required Training

- Sexual Harassment Prevention training (<https://catalog.rice.edu/browse/eeo/courses/lasting-choices>)
- Responsible Conduct of Research Training (<https://compliance.rice.edu/rcr/citi-training/>) need to be completed by October 1 in order to prevent a \$75 late fee. Please be sure to complete the Social and Behavioral module that is required for the School of Social Sciences, and save a copy of your completion certificate.

Orientation

In addition to the general graduate student orientation and international student orientation, Master of Social Policy Evaluation students are required to attend all elements of the program orientation. Students will be notified upon acceptance of the general dates and a final schedule will be circulated in early August.

Attendance

Students are required to attend all scheduled activities for all of the classes for which they are registered during the entire course of the academic semester for which they are enrolled. Students with a legitimate reason to be absent from a class must specifically request permission from the professor in charge, or explain at the next available opportunity why an unforeseen event prevented them from attending.

The MSPE follows the Rice University Academic Calendar for normal class days, recesses, and holidays. Supplementary workshops and activities may be scheduled on other days, including recesses,

holidays, and weekends. Opportunities like these are optional, but students should consider their availability carefully prior to RSVPing to ensure their full participation.

Registration & ESTHER

New graduate students register during Orientation Week prior to the start of classes. Registration is performed using the Rice University student and faculty self-service system called ESTHER. ESTHER can be accessed at <https://esther.rice.edu>.

Courses can be added after the first week. A course can be added for free until the end of the second week. Classes can be dropped until the seventh week of the semester. The schedule established in the first week can be adjusted, but the semester is only 15 weeks long.

MSPE students may take courses outside of the required SOPE classes as an auditor. In most cases, students will need to request instructor permission to take a course using the Graduate Special Registration Form. Courses at the Jones Graduate School of Business are not open to MSPE students.

Visit http://registrar.rice.edu/students/esther_FAQs/ for information about how to use ESTHER.

Graduate Studies Form Library

Graduate Studies keeps a very useful library of commonly needed forms for everything from leaves of absence to candidacy petition to thesis submission. Visit <http://graduate.rice.edu/forms> for more information.

International Student Information

International students are responsible for maintaining their individual status. By signing your immigration documents, you are indicating you have read and agreed to comply with the terms and conditions

of your admission and those of any extension as specified by the institution.

The Office of International Students (OISS) is located on the second floor of Lovett Hall, Entrance A. Appointments for securing necessary documents and advising can be made directly to oiss@rice.edu

The OISS Newsletter can be found at <http://oiss.rice.edu/news/>

Rice University Student Services

- **Rice Counseling Center**
<https://wellbeing.rice.edu/counselingcenter>; (713) 348-4867
 - Consultation and individual and group mental health counseling for Rice students
- **Student Health Services** <http://health.rice.edu/>; (713) 348-4966
 - Preventive and outpatient medical care for Rice students
- **Student Wellbeing Office**
<https://wellbeing.rice.edu/studentwellbeing>; (713) 348-3311
 - Advice for students with wellbeing concerns, including tools for managing conflict and academic challenges
- **Women's Resource Center** <http://women.rice.edu/>
 - Works to increase awareness of and sensitivity to gender issues
- **Center for Academic and Professional Communication**
<https://pwc.rice.edu/center-academic-and-professional-communication>; (713) 348-4932
 - Help with writing papers and theses, presentation skills through individual consultations and workshops
- **Graduate Student Association (GSA)** <http://gsa.rice.edu/>
 - Hosts community-building events and represents graduate student interests to the University administration; housing, quality of life resources, and other tips for new graduate students

Parking & Transportation

Students may register for a Rice University parking permit via their ESTHER account. Rates for campus lots and garages may be found at <http://parking.rice.edu>

The Rice University Shuttle system is available to all students. Rice shuttles can be tracked at <http://bus.rice.edu>. Shuttles are available from all campus parking lots and are also available to and from all Rice University graduate apartments.

Rice also provides 24/7 access to Zipcars parked on campus. Reservations and availability can be found at <http://transportation.rice.edu>.

Computing

Information Technology (IT) is Rice's centralized computing, networking and telecommunications service organization. Further information can be viewed on the web (www.rice.edu/IT/) or call the Help Desk at 713-348-HELP (x4357).

Computing and Networking

For educational computing needs, students have access to a computing environment that provides email services, computer labs, specialized software, data storage, and network access. Working on their own computer or in a campus lab, students can fulfill coursework requirements, store their academic data, print, browse the web, create web pages, and communicate with professors, classmates, friends, and family.

Student-owned Computers

Students are welcome to bring their own computers. Rice does not have specific computer requirements. Information about educational discounts is also available on [this site](#).

Students living off campus can access the Rice network with a dial-up account for free. Students who are customers of an outside Internet service provider can also set up their computers to securely access the Rice network and available resources.

Wireless zones on campus allow students to connect to the campus network. Information about connecting to the network in all of these ways is available online.

Using Rice's Computers

Computer labs are located across campus. Most labs are available 24 hours a day with a Rice ID and proper authorization. Some labs are limited to hours of operations for the building or may be used as classrooms during posted times. Most labs have printers available for student usage at a minimal fee. Some specialized printers (for color printouts, posters, transparencies, theses or resumes) are also available in a centralized location on a fee basis.

Help

Students can obtain computing assistance via the Help Desk by calling extension HELP (x4357), dropping by Mudd 103, emailing helpdesk@rice.edu, or submit a request online.

Title IX

Rice encourages any student who has experienced an incident of sexual, relationship, or other interpersonal violence, harassment or gender discrimination to seek support.

There are many options available both on and off campus for all graduate students, regardless of whether the perpetrator was a fellow student, a staff or faculty member, or someone not affiliated with the university. Students should be aware when seeking support on campus that most employees are required by Title IX to disclose all incidents of non-consensual interpersonal behaviors to Title IX

professionals on campus who can act to support that student and meet their needs. The therapists at the Rice Counseling Center and the doctors at Student Health Services are confidential, meaning that Rice will not be informed about the incident if a student discloses to one of these Rice staff members. Rice prioritizes student privacy and safety, and only shares disclosed information on a need-to-know basis.

If you are in need of assistance or simply would like to talk to someone, please call Rice Wellbeing and Counseling Center, which includes Title IX Support at 3311 / (713) 348-3311.

Policies, including the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Student Code of Conduct, and more information regarding Title IX can be found at safe.rice.edu.

Rice Recreation Center & Athletics

Recreation Center

Membership to the Barbara and David Gibbs Recreation Center is available for purchase for all graduate students and their spouses/domestic partners. Applications for membership may be completed at the main desk inside the rec center. Please visit <http://recreation.rice.edu> for more information and current rates.

Athletics

Students may receive free entry to any Rice University home game by showing their student ID at the entry gate. Family members may purchase tickets at regular posted prices. For a full schedule of Rice Athletics events, please visit: <http://riceowls.com>

General Announcements

Rice University publishes its “General Announcements” each year. These are the official rules of the university and include the honor

code that every student agrees to abide by, as well as forms and research information. They can be found at <http://ga.rice.edu>.

Degree Requirements

The MSPE program is a 13-month, 30 credit, non-thesis master's program. The coursework consists of 3 courses in the fall semester and four courses plus a lab in the spring semester, totaling 24 credits, and a 6 credit practicum completed over two six-week sessions in the summer.

Semester	Coursework	Credit Hours
Fall	MSPE 501: Introduction to Public Policy MSPE 503: Quantitative Methods for Program Evaluation + Lab MSPE 505: Microeconomics for Policy Evaluation	11
Spring	(Choice of 4 Courses from 502,504,506,508,510) - MSPE 502: Applications of Program Evaluation - Criminal Justice - MSPE 504: Applications of Program Evaluation - Labor Markets - MSPE 506: Applications of Program Evaluation – Health - MSPE 508: Applications of Program Evaluation - Early Childhood Education - MSPE 510: Developing Research-Practice Partnerships MSPE 512: Laboratory – Coding, Software, Data Collection Methods	13
Summer	MSPE 513: Practicum I MSPE 514: Practicum II	6
TOTAL		30

Practicum

The applied Social Policy Evaluation Practicum is offered in two summer sessions (MSPE 513 and MSPE 514). Students will be actively

engaged in a current Texas Policy Lab or other university research center project to gain real-world, applied experience. The MSPE curriculum is specifically aligned with TPL major policy areas: criminal justice, health, early childhood and youth development, and labor markets. Students will summarize their experience in a final paper presented to practicum partners.

Grades and Academic Status

MSPE students must maintain a grade point average above the 2.67 minimal institutional threshold for any given semester.

Instructors are required to report a grade for all students whose names appear on the class roster. They grade their students using the following conventional symbols: A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, F.

Time to Degree Completion

All master's students are required to complete their program within five years of initial enrollment. This time boundary includes any period in which the student was not enrolled or enrolled part time, for whatever reason. Failure to meet any university time to degree deadline may result in the student not being able to continue in their degree program.

Leave of Absence

A leave of absence is granted only by the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies on the recommendation of the Faculty Director and only to graduate students in good standing with the university. Students must obtain approval for a leave before the academic semester in question. These requests, approved by the department, must be received in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies prior to the first day of classes.

Leaves are not granted after the first day of class in a given semester. Normally, students may take a leave of absence for no more than two consecutive semesters. The semesters that a student is on leave do count against the time to degree. Students may be required to pay a reinstatement fee upon return.

Withdrawals

Students who drop out of graduate school either before the term begins or during the term should inform their department in writing. The department should complete the Withdrawal Form (available at <http://graduate.rice.edu/forms>) and forward it, with the student's letter, to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

IF the student does not withdraw in writing, the student will be marked as "Did Not Return" after the second week classes in the semester. Students who later wish to resume study must reapply to the university. Readmission requires the recommendation of the Faculty Director and the approval of Graduate Studies. Accepted students must pay a readmission fee of \$350.

When a Withdrawal Form and a letter are submitted to GPS, the Admissions and Enrollment Manager sends an e-mail to the appropriate administrative offices, stating that the student has withdrawn. The Registrar inactivates the student's record and the University Cashier handles any refunds to which the student is entitled.

Medical Withdrawals

Graduate students may request a medical withdrawal from the university by applying in writing to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at any time during the semester, up until the last day of classes.

Graduate students who wish to seek readmission following a medical withdrawal must submit to the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies a written petition for readmission no later than July 1 (June 1

for international students) for the fall semester and November 1 (October 1 for international students) for the spring semester after the medical withdrawal. This petition must include documentation of treatment provided, and students may be required to interview with the director of the Rice Counseling Center or Student Health Services or their designees. The petition also must include an academic plan devised in consultation with the student's advisor, advising committee, or director of graduate studies (depending upon the graduate program's advising structure) and approved by the Faculty Director.

Students who withdraw for psychological reasons within the last 5 weeks of either the fall or spring semester will not be eligible to apply for immediate readmission. Students who withdraw for psychological reasons while enrolled during the summer session are not eligible to apply for immediate readmission in the fall; they must wait to reapply for readmission for the spring semester.

Readmission requires the approval of the dean of graduate and postdoctoral studies, and readmitted students must pay a readmission fee of \$350.

Readmission

Students who later wish to resume study after a voluntary withdrawal must reapply to the university. Readmission requires the recommendation of the Faculty Director and the approval of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral studies. Readmitted students must pay a readmission fee of \$350.

Petitions and Appeals

Graduate students may petition for exceptions to academic requirements, regulations, and judgments. A course requirement is an example of an academic requirement. Allowed time to degree is an example of an academic regulation. Course grades and

dismissals from programs are examples of academic judgments. If a petition is denied, one level of appeal is allowed.

More information regarding the process for petitions and appeals can be found at: http://ga.rice.edu/GR_disputes/

Grievances

A grievance is a complaint regarding inappropriate conduct by other students, faculty members, or staff. Inappropriate conduct encompasses both inappropriate personal conduct, such as sexual harassment, and inappropriate official conduct, such as violation of University policies. Specific policies exist to address grievances based on discrimination or sexual harassment, and those policies must be followed in situations involving such issues.

Grievances against another student may be raised with the Assistant Dean of Student Judicial Programs and addressed under the Code of Student Conduct. In other cases, a student may present a grievance in writing at the lowest appropriate level, typically the department or school. If a satisfactory resolution is not obtained at that level, the student may appeal the outcome of the grievance by presenting the problem at the next administrative level, such as the school, Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Provost, or President. Grievances against non-faculty staff members may also be brought to the Employee Relations Director in Rice's Human Resources office.

The procedures for handling grievances are analogous to those for handling petitions and appeals. Students submitting grievances must so indicate in their submissions.

Problem Resolution

During the course of graduate studies, problems that do not fall under the category of grievances, described above, may arise in the

relationship between a graduate student and his/her program or his/her advisor. Students should attempt to resolve such problems by informing the appropriate faculty members and working together to resolve the problem. When attempts to resolve the problem informally are unsuccessful, the following problem-resolution procedure will be used:

1. The student will submit the problem in writing to the department's Associate Director, who will then attempt to resolve it, consulting with the Faculty Director when necessary.
2. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be presented to the department Graduate Committee for resolution. Both the student and the Associate Director will submit a written record of their views to this committee.
3. If the student remains unsatisfied, the problem will be referred to a standing subcommittee of the Graduate Council and composed of three faculty members (representing diverse disciplines within the university) and a graduate student, with the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies as an ex-officio member. A written report of proceedings at stage 2 will be presented to the Chair of Graduate Council for forwarding to the subcommittee, along with all other written materials generated during the investigation. The decision of this subcommittee is considered final.

The time frame for handling problem resolution is similar to that for handling petitions, appeals, and grievances.

For the university's policies on grievances and problem resolution, please refer to the General Announcements:

<http://ga.rice.edu/Home.aspx?id=138>.

Important Links

University Bursar	https://bursar.rice.edu/
Disability Support Services	http://dss.rice.edu/
ESTHER	https://esther.rice.edu/
Financial Aid	http://financialaid.rice.edu/
General Announcements	http://ga.rice.edu/
Graduate Student Association	http://gsa.rice.edu/
Graduate Studies	http://graduate.rice.edu/home
Health and Wellbeing	http://ricc.rice.edu
Registrar	http://registrar.rice.edu/
Rice Athletics	http://www.riceowls.com/
Rice Recreation Center	http://recreation.rice.edu/home/
Transportation & Parking	http://parking.rice.edu/

APPENDIX

Master of Social Policy Evaluation Dress Code**

Students in the Master of Social Policy Evaluation program come from a wide variety of professional and personal backgrounds. A commonality shared by all is that during the program, each person is bridging the worlds of being a student and a professional. As such, our dress code sets the tone for a professional atmosphere and mindset.

There are many visitors to the program and networking opportunities present themselves frequently, often with little warning. Like attendance, punctuality, and participation, appropriate dress is an expectation of members of this professional master's program.

Unless directed otherwise, "business casual" attire is expected for attendance at all classes and program-related events.

Throughout the year, there will be additional events and networking opportunities you are strongly encouraged to attend. These events may be planned by the program, other Rice partners, the Baker Institute, or an outside organization that is inviting our participation. If the appropriate dress for an event is not indicated, please inquire. Unless an event specifically indicates casual dress is encouraged (rare), you should never dress casually (shorts, jeans, athletic wear, hats, etc.).

"Business" or "business professional" attire may be required during employer visits, for guest speakers, and during special events or job interviews. You will be informed of the appropriate dress requirements in advance of each event. It is advisable that you have at least one formal business suit available.

***** Exceptions are made in the case of religious practice, belief, or health issues that conflict with the dress code.***

General Dress Code Guidelines

- Neat hairstyle, trimmed nails, little or no perfume/cologne.
- Skirts should not be shorter than a finger width above the knee.
- If you wear jewelry/watch, keep it simple leaning toward conservative. Avoid extreme styles and colors.
- When wearing a jacket, be sure it has a tailored fit. If wearing with a long-sleeved shirt, the jacket sleeve should hit the wrist so the shirt sleeve peeks out just a bit.
- If you wear a tie, the tip should always touch your belt line.

“Business Casual” Guide

- Khaki, corduroy, twill or cotton pants or skirts, neatly pressed.
- Sweaters, cardigans, polo/knit shirts, twin sets, button-down shirts, collared shirts.
- ***Not included:*** Athletic clothing, t-shirts, tank tops, jeans, athletic shoes/sneakers, flip-flops or sports slides, low necklines, sundresses, sweatshirts, or hats.

“Business” Guide

- A step down from Business Professional.
- Khakis or other slacks or skirt; not necessarily part of a suit.
- Button-down shirt with tie.
- Jacket is ready as the situation demands.

“Business Professional” Guide

- Conservative, well-fitting suit (navy, black, gray, brown) with solid colored shirt.
- Tie should be worn with button-up shirt.
- Fabrics should be crisp and pressed.
- Closed-toe dress shoes in dark or neutral color. Heels or flats are acceptable. If heels, no more than two inches high.
- Socks (similar to pant color); nylons (nude or black).
- Belt should match shoes.
- If carrying a purse, keep it simple, or carry a small briefcase or business-like tote bag in place of a purse. A structured bag tends to look more professional than something soft or floppy. If possible, coordinate purse/bag color with your shoes.

Professional Development

MSPE students are encouraged to use their time outside of class productively and wisely to ensure their professional growth and preparation for careers after graduation. Whether students are looking for entry-level positions or for upward mobility within their current organization, we encourage all students to maintain a systemic approach to efficiently balance the program's academic rigor and an effective job search.

MSPE program specific opportunities will include, but are not limited to:

- All students entering the Master of Social Policy Evaluation will be given a one-year complimentary membership to the American Evaluation Association.
- MSPE students are eligible to apply for a one-time \$500 professional travel grant to explore conferences and networking opportunities related to their career search.
- Employer meet and greets; on-campus conferences and guest lectures.
- One on one career advising.

Professional Travel Grant Guidelines:

The Master of Social Policy Evaluation awards professional development reimbursement grants to MSPE students to supplement their career development and professional networking. A student may make multiple applications to the professional development fund, however the maximum cumulative funding available to a student is \$500.

Application

[Online application](#) which shall include:

- Description of the conference, event or training opportunity to be attended ("professional activity");

- Brief outline of budget for funding request;
- Identification of the career interest or professional development you seek to advance through this professional activity and an explanation of how the professional activity will do this; and

Step 2: Request for Reimbursement. To be emailed to Assistant Dean for Student Programs and shall include:

- Proof of pre-payment by student for all claimed expenses (receipts must be provided);
- Copy of student's registration confirmation for conference, event, or training;
- Proof of attendance at/completion of the professional activity (copy of event program, photo, name tag, certificate of completion, etc.); and
- Brief explanation of what you learned or gained from attending and participating in the professional activity.

Additional Considerations and Details

- Students must complete both steps of the application process to receive reimbursement.
- The Pre-event Request for Approval should be submitted at least ten days prior to the event or travel and must be approved in order to later request reimbursement.
- Upon completion of the professional activity, student shall submit the Request for Reimbursement within 30 days. *This may not be requested prior to completion of the professional development activity.*
- All travel expenses and reimbursements must abide by all University guidelines and requirements. Please refer to the travel policy and procedures found at: <https://policy.rice.edu/806>.
- Professional activities supported by this fund **and** the request for reimbursement must be completed while the student is currently enrolled in the program; graduating students shall

submit their request for reimbursement no later than two weeks prior to their convocation ceremony.

Ineligible for Reimbursement

- Course materials, software, books, equipment/computers.
- Capstone project-related expenses.
- Students residing within a 100-mile radius of the professional activity destination are not eligible for overnight expenses. Transportation may be reimbursable.

Campus Professional Development Resources

In addition to the resources provided by the Master of Social Policy Evaluation staff, MSPE students also have access to the full breadth of Rice University resources listed below.

- [Rice Center for Career Development](#)
- [Center for Written, Visual, and Oral Communication](#)
- [Fondren Library Boot Camps and Short Courses](#)

Affirmation of Guidelines and Standards in the Graduate Handbook

I have read and acknowledged the guidelines and information provided for me. I affirm that I will comply with the requirements and standard practices outlined in the Graduate Handbook.

Signature

Date:
