

Specialisation Area Public Policy



Innovation and globalization create new opportunities but also threaten jobs and earnings of others. Inequality gets larger. Ageing challenges pension and health systems. Climate change threatens the quality of life. Education and public infrastructure must catch up to support new technologies, and governments must rethink their role in the economy. What is required more than ever are public policies based on sound theory and empirical evidence?

Students can choose from a large set of elective courses to cultivate a profile in public policy. Equipped with rigorous tools in theory and empirical analysis as part of the core courses, they specialize in the art of evidence based policy analysis to explore better policy solutions to key social and economic problems.

To cultivate a public policy profile, the student carefully selects 7 elective courses. **Public Economics** and **Political Economics** are a 'must have' and are required for certification. She thereby learns the basic trade-off between efficiency and distribution in the tax transfer system and the need for productive public services. She also develops an understanding of policy-making in the democratic process, as public policy proposals need to be economically meaningful as well as politically feasible. She complements the two courses with a tour de force across **Selected Topics in Swiss Public Finance**. Since distributional analysis requires working with individual household data, she invests in **Micro-Econometrics**. After all, policy solutions need backing with credible numbers and hard evidence. The transformation of future employment by digitization and robots, the importance of skills and life-long learning for labour market performance, and the permanent threat of unemployment and poverty motivates her to dig deeper into **Labor Economics: Theory and Applications**. She also chooses **Debt and Fiscal Policy** to understand better the reasons for government insolvency, the effectiveness of short-run macro-economic stabilization, and the consequences of public policy for redistribution across generations. She also expects that policy makers pay more attention to big problems rather than small ones and are thus interested in the size of the effect of proposed policy changes. She therefore chooses **Quantitative Economic Policy**. That makes the 7 complete. Clearly, students have many other chances to select from the menu of elective courses in public policy.

Policies need explaining. Each solution usually meets vastly different interests of diverse stakeholders. In the **contextual studies**, she thus searches for opportunities to improve her communication skills, to learn about conflict resolution, and delve into topics of political science. Finally, her interest in the **Master thesis** is about inequality and social mobility. She wants to gather data and study whether the top 1% are mostly from working people and business owners who inherit wealth and earn income by lobbying and collecting monopoly profits, or whether it stems from start-up entrepreneurs and individuals with successful careers who start from the bottom and make it to the top. She would like to explore the empirical determinants of social mobility and top incomes. The topic links well with her choice of elective courses.

Jobs: Typical jobs requiring a public policy expertise are in government institutions, OECD, industry organizations, labour unions or independent think tanks. Research institutes specialized in public sector economics, social security, or related fields are key employers (e.g. Institute of Fiscal Studies in London, KOF in Zürich, Ifo in Munich, ZEW in Mannheim, IZA Institute of Labor Economics in Bonn and the likes). To keep up career chances in academics and applied research, a PhD is also on the agenda.

Formal Requirements:

In order to graduate as a Master in Economics with a declared specialisation on the diploma supplement in **Public Policy**, students need to gain at least 16 ECTS a defined course list and write their Master's thesis in the area of **Public Policy**. The current course list can you find on our [programme website](#).

Contact

For questions regarding your study plan and the specialisations, please contact the Executive Director of the Master's in Economics: mecon@unisg.ch or +41 (0)71 224 29 26.