



Handbook for Graduate Study in Political Science University of Pittsburgh

This handbook outlines requirements, procedures, and department policies of graduate study at both the masters and doctoral levels in the Department of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. It covers both the formal requirements and the “common law” practices of advanced study in the department. It should answer most questions regarding a student’s program at every stage of progress through completion of the Ph.D.

In carrying out its program the Department of Political Science operates under the rules, regulations and policies of graduate studies as established by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the Handbook and Requirements for Graduate Studies in Arts and Sciences that summarizes the policies and rules for graduate study found in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin (http://www.fas.pitt.edu/graduate_handbook/toc.htm).

The Graduate and Professional Bulletin remains the official document-of-record governing graduate studies of the University and within Arts and Sciences. Many aspects of the University’s general graduate study requirements are not repeated in this handbook.

Students seeking further information about departmental rules and procedures should contact the Director of Graduate Studies or the Graduate Studies Secretary.

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The Department offers six fields of study (American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, Political Behavior, Political Methodology, and World Politics). Students must select three of these fields of study, and at least one of these fields must come from the following: American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, and World Politics.

Students must select one of these (American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, and World Politics) as the “first field,” taking at least four graduate seminars and take a written examination in this field at the MA level. This examination also serves as the PhD Qualifying Examination. Those students who are permitted to proceed into the PhD program must (1) complete a paper of professional quality in that field; (2) select a “second field” composed of at least four graduate seminars from among the remaining five fields of study; (3) Pass the PhD Comprehensive examination that includes a written examination in the “second field” and an oral examination that covers the “first” and “second field” and the PhD paper.

Students must also select a “third field” from among the six listed above composed of at least three graduate courses beyond the departmental core in theory and methods (Political Science 2020, 2030, 2040). There is no examination in this field, but it must be completed before the defense of the dissertation “overview” that marks the formal advancement to candidacy to the PhD.

Courses taken outside of the department may be counted for these fields with the permission of students’ advisor or advisory committee. Courses cannot meet the requirements for more than one field. Students may not develop ad hoc fields of study beyond the six fields outline above, except with the express permission of the Director of Graduate Studies.

Departmental Fields

American Politics. Students should develop a broad understanding of the basic theoretical and methodological issues in the field. A Core Seminar in American politics (offered annually) will provide an overview of the field. Courses focused on structure and

process are regularly offered covering the major American political institutions: the Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary and political parties. Courses in political behavior focus on questions of voting behavior, public opinion, and political psychology, and courses in public policy deal with various issues in this area. Students should take some course work in each of these areas: institutions, policy, and political behavior, but may choose to specialize in one of them for purposes of the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Examination and the PhD Comprehensive examination and for work toward the PhD dissertation.¹

Students are expected to master techniques of analysis in both qualitative and quantitative modes. For work at the doctoral level, course work in advanced methods is strongly recommended. The department values a strong comparative orientation and recognizes that American institutions, policies, and political behavior are often fruitfully analyzed in terms of comparisons with other national democratic political systems. To that end, students are encouraged to take at least one course in the theory and methodology of comparative politics.

Comparative Politics. Students in the field may specialize in the government and politics of East Asia, Latin America, the former republics of the USSR and Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the European Union. At the same time, students are responsible for developing competence in the basic approaches and methods in the study of comparative politics. They must demonstrate the capacity to make substantive comparisons across areas by developing a supplementary subfield beyond the country or region of their specialization. Students must take several courses (usually more than two) outside of the country or region of the students' declared specialization.

Normative Theory. Students in this field must develop competence in Normative Theory beyond the materials dealt with in the core course (Political Science 2040) mastered by all students in the program. Political theory includes the history of political thought, normative political philosophy, and the analysis of political concepts. In addition

¹ Students who intend to offer Political Behavior as a second or third field may not specialize in political behavior for the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Exam, or the PhD Comprehensive Exam.

to their special interests, students in this field are expected to demonstrate knowledge of modern political thought (Machiavelli to the present), and of contemporary political theory (e.g. theories of liberalism and its critics, democracy, justice) sufficient to teach courses at the undergraduate level.

Political Behavior. Students may elect Political Behavior as their second or third field. This field is designed for students who want to study politics in a non-institutional setting. Students are required to complete at least four courses in this field. As the label suggests, the focus is on how citizens think, make decisions, and act in the political arena-both independently and collectively. The field of political behavior includes topics such as public opinion, voting behavior, participation/mobilization, political psychology, political communications, and campaigns/elections. The field also includes the study of quasi-institutional “linkage institutions” such as the media, political parties, and interest groups. Methodologically, the field is characterized by the empirical examination of patterns across large numbers of citizens based upon statistical analyses of data obtained from surveys and experiments. Mass political behavior is designed to transcend the traditional fields of the discipline, spanning both American and comparative politics. Therefore students are exposed to theories and analyses of behavior both in the United States and in other regions of the world.

Political Methodology. Students may elect Political Methodology as their “second” or their “third” field. This field examines and develops ideas and concepts drawn from statistics and economics and applies them to the study of politics. Training in methodology should not be confused with memorizing formulas or the development of “cookbook” recipes for carrying out research; the field of methodology is as filled with theoretical controversy as any other.

Students in this field build upon the skills developed in the departmental core in methods, Political Science 2020 and 2030. Students in this field must complete nine credits of course work beyond the departmental core. Courses regularly offered deal with formal political theory, philosophy of science, math for political scientists, matrix

algebra, probability theory, maximum likelihood estimation, causal modeling, time series, survey design, measurement, and experimental design.

With the permission of their advisors in political methodology, students may supplement their course work in this field by taking courses at ICPSR or with offerings in departments such as Economics and Psychology. These courses can reduce the number of departmental courses to meet the requirements of this field.

World Politics. The study of world politics includes three areas of concentration; international organization and global governance (IO), international political economy (IPE), and international conflict and security (ICS). At present, the Department regularly offers advanced seminars in international organization and global governance, in international political economy, and occasionally in international conflict and security. Where the Department does not offer courses, students may, with the approval of their faculty advisor in world politics, fulfill the field's requirements by taking graduate courses in the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) and undergraduate courses in political science, supplemented by additional reading and writing assignments.

Students in this field must take Political Science 2501, "Theories of International Relations." Students who select world politics as their "first field" must complete a minimum of six courses, including Political Science 2501, two courses in each of the two areas of concentration outlined above and a sixth course in any area of concentration within world politics. Students who select world politics as their "second field" must complete a minimum of four courses, including Political Science 2501, two courses in one area of concentration within world politics and one course in another area of world politics. Students who take this field as a "third field" must complete a minimum of three courses including Political Science 2501 and any other two courses in the field.

The Master of Arts Program

MA Degree Requirements

Each student is responsible for meeting all of the requirements stipulated in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin. The following materials should be read as a supplement to the Bulletin.

1) Completion of at least 30 credits in course work at the 1000 and 2000 levels. At least half of these credits must be at the 2000 level. Credits received from “Directed Reading” and “Directed Research” count toward this requirement; “Independent Study” and “Teaching of Political Science” do not.

2) Completion of the nine credit sequence of core courses in theory and methods (Political Science 2020, 2030, 2040). The Core courses are designed to cover the analysis of theoretical concepts, epistemology and methods in the social sciences, the identification of theoretical and research questions, questions of research design, and the history and development of empirical theory and normative political ideas.

These courses should be taken during the first year of graduate work, although they may be deferred to the second year in the case of conflicts in the students’ academic schedule and with the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies and the instructor. (Political Science 2020 and 2030 MUST be taken in sequence). Two of these courses must be passed with a grade of B or better, the third with a grade of B- or better.

Students entering the program with an MA may waive any of the core courses, with the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies and the instructor, if they demonstrate that they have covered substantially identical material in previous graduate-level courses

3) Completion of at least four graduate seminars in one of the following fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, and World Politics.

4) A cumulative QPA of at least 3.0 in graduate level work.

5) Passing the MA Comprehensive Examination in one of these four fields. This examination is generally taken at the beginning of the third or fourth term of residence.

Normal Schedule for MA program

The normal full time course load is four courses per term. Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows normally elect three courses each term plus Political Science 2970, Teaching of Political Science. Most students will take a full course load for four terms. Students should expect to take the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying examination at the beginning of either their third or fourth full term of residence.

The MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Examinations

These examinations are given twice each year during the first week or two of the Fall term (August/September) or Spring term (January). Examinations are given in the fields of American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory and World Politics.

The Director of Graduate Studies appoints and announces the members of the examination committee for each field in the term preceding the examination. Students must meet with the members of the examination committees in their “first field” during the term preceding the examination to discuss their readiness for the examination and to reach agreement on its parameters whenever necessary.

The MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying examination is a “take- home” written examination. It must be returned to the examination committee within forty eight hours. The Examination Committee will determine whether or not the student has passed or failed the examination. The committee may request an oral examination to resolve any ambiguities in the student’s performance on the written examination.

Application for Graduation with an MA degree

Candidates for graduation with an MA degree must file an Application for Graduation in the Office of the Dean early in the term in which they expect to graduate. Student must be registered for at least one credit in the term in which they file this application if they registered regularly each term of residence. A student who has not been registered during the previous year must be readmitted and register for a minimum of three credits.

MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Examinations

The results of the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying exam will be forwarded to a Screening Committee composed of the Director of Graduate Studies and the chairs of the examination committees in the appropriate fields to determine acceptance into the PhD program. The Screening Committee will consider the students' performance on the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Examination and their overall academic performance in the graduate program in making its decisions. The Screening Committee may call upon other members of the faculty to assist in making this decision.

Repeating the Examinations

Students whose performance is unsatisfactory for an MA degree or for acceptance into the PhD program may take the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying examination a second time during the next term that these exams are given by the department.

Students Entering the Graduate Program with an MA Degree from Another Institution

Students entering the graduate program with an MA in political science from another institution will take the PhD Qualifying examination in one of the following four fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, and World Politics. They must take the core course sequence as soon as possible following entry into the graduate program; these courses must be completed before students can take the PhD Qualifying examination. Students whose graduate work duplicates that offered in the core course sequence can petition the Director of Graduate Studies and the member of the faculty offering the core course(s) in question for a waiver from that course requirement. Students should consult with their faculty advisers about the timing of the PhD Qualifying examination.

Academic Advising

During their first term of residence all graduate students are advised by the Director of Graduate Studies. During the second term of residence, each student will establish an advisory committee composed of one member of the faculty from each of the two fields that the student will offer in the PhD Comprehensive examination. To establish the advisory committee students must submit the form available from the Graduate Secretary indicating their fields of study and their preferences for members of the faculty to serve on their committee. Every effort is made to meet these preferences.

Each graduate student MUST convene his/her advisory committee each term from the second term of residence until the successful completion of the PhD Comprehensive examination. The advisory committee is responsible for registration and the planning of the student's academic program in all three fields of study. The advisory committee will design a program of coursework, language and other requirements including the determination of the PhD paper in the student's first field and a tentative date for the PhD comprehensive examinations. Students are free to change the membership of their advisory committee in accordance with changes in their fields.

Once a student passes the PhD Comprehensive examination, advising is provided by the students' PhD dissertation committee.

The University Office of the Provost has prepared a brochure Elements of Good Academic Advising that outlines the responsibilities of both graduate students and faculty. If students have problems with their advisor, they should consult with the Chairman of the Department or the Director of Graduate Studies and a change in advisors may occur. If problems cannot be resolved within the department, the Office of the Graduate Dean should be consulted.

The PhD Program

PhD Degree Requirements

Each student is responsible for meeting all of the requirements stipulated in the Graduate and Professional Bulletin. The following material should be read as a supplement to the Bulletin.

1. Completion of at least 72 credit hours that qualify for residence credit under University rules.
2. Fulfillment of any language or related “tool” requirements established by the student’s advisory committee and successful completion of the Department’s core course requirements and field requirements.
3. Successful completion of a substantial research paper in the student’s “first field.”
4. Passing the PhD Comprehensive examination in two of the six fields offered by the department (This examination includes a written examination in the student’s “second” field, and an oral examination that deals with the substance of the two fields and the research paper in the first field.)
5. Completion of a “third field” on a non-examination basis. A minimum of three graduate courses beyond the Department’s core course requirement must be taken to fulfill this requirement.
6. Formal admission to PhD candidacy following approval of a dissertation overview by the student’s Dissertation Committee.
7. Final oral defense of the doctoral dissertation.

PhD Course Work and Fields of Study

Students take at least one year of course work after passing the PhD qualifying examination in order to broaden their knowledge in their “first field,” fulfill the requirements of the “second field” (at least four graduate courses in the field) and of the “third field” (at least three graduate courses beyond the departmental core course requirements,) and improve their methodological and language skills.

The research paper requirement

A substantial research paper in the student’s “first field” (normally the field in which the student passed the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying examination) must be submitted as part of the PhD examination process. The research paper must be a solely authored paper suitable for submission to a journal or presentation at a professional meeting. It may originate in a regular graduate course, a research seminar, an independent

study, or elsewhere. It is expected that a paper developed for a course or seminar will be revised and expanded to fulfill this requirement.

The research paper is to be prepared under the supervision of a member of the faculty (mentor) chosen by the student. (The mentor is normally a member of the student's PhD oral examination committee.) The student and mentor must agree on the topic and the timetable and procedures to be following in writing the paper by the second week of the term preceding the term in which the student plans to take the PhD Comprehensive Examination, if not earlier. The student must immediately inform the Director of Graduate Studies that such an agreement has been reached. The Director of Graduate Studies will then name a member of the faculty as a second reader. (The second reader does not have to be a member of the PhD oral examination committee). Students must provide the second reader with all drafts and revisions of the paper for his/her comments.

The research paper must receive final approval from both the mentor and second reader before the student may take the written PhD Comprehensive examination in the "second field." Students should submit their initial version of this paper to the mentor and second reader well before the scheduled Comprehensive examination in their second field to allow time for revision and reevaluation. The research paper will be examined during the PhD oral examination in the student's "first" and "second" fields.

The Written PhD Comprehensive Examination in the "Second Field."

After successfully completing the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying examination in his/her "first" field and having been permitted to proceed in the PhD program, the student takes a written examination in a second field chosen from the six fields offered by the Department. This examination is generally taken after three years of full time study. (Students who join the program with an MA from another institution generally take this examination after two or three years of coursework.) These examinations are given during the first week or two of the fall term (August/September) and spring term (January).

The members of the PhD examination committee are announced in the term before each examination is given. Students taking the examination must meet with the

members of these examination committees as soon as possible after they are announced in order to discuss the specifics of the examination.

The written examination is a take-home examination to be completed within 48 hours. Students will select two questions from among those prepared by the examination committee. Answers are to be limited to approximately 3,000 words (12 pages double spaced 12 point type). These word limits are not to be exceeded.

The PhD Oral Comprehensive Examination

The PhD oral examination is comprehensive. It covers the student's knowledge of the "first field," the research paper submitted in the "first field," and the written examination in the "second field." (The examination committee may also discuss related topics such as the student's likely dissertation.) At the end of the examination, the committee renders a decision of pass or fail. In the case of failure, the committee may direct the student to re-write the written examination in the second field and to repeat the oral examination.

Dissertation Overview

With the successful completion of the PhD Comprehensive Examination, the student, in conjunction with his/her major adviser, chooses a topic for doctoral research and presents an overview to be reviewed by a dissertation committee (which replaces the advisory committee). The student's major advisor proposes, for the approval of the chair of the Department or the director of the Department's graduate program, a committee of four or more persons, including at least one from another department of the University of Pittsburgh or from an appropriate graduate program at another academic institution, to serve as the doctoral committee. The majority of the committee, including the major advisor, must be full or adjunct members of the graduate faculty.

The overview consists of a carefully developed research design for the proposed PhD dissertation. The document should include a clear statement of the question of research, its relationship to the relevant literature in the field, and indicate how the proposed dissertation can contribute to the knowledge in that field. The student must defend the overview at a meeting of the members of the Dissertation Committee.

Following the successful defense of the overview, the student files an application for Admission to Candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

1) The rules of the University of Pittsburgh stipulate that the doctoral candidate must meet at least once a year with his/her dissertation committee to monitor the progress of the PhD.

2) The University has a strict statute of limitations. All requirements for the PhD degree must be completed within ten years of the student's initial registration for graduate work, or within eight years if the student has entered the program with an MA degree.

3) The School of Arts and Sciences demands that students must pass their PhD Comprehensive examinations within seven calendar years of their initial admission to graduate school.

Oral Defense of the Dissertation

The chairperson of the dissertation committee informs the doctoral candidate when he/she has produced a draft of the dissertation that is acceptable to the members of the committee for an oral defense. During the two hour defense, the candidate presents his/her research to the dissertation committee and interested observers from within the University. The dissertation committee may stipulate alterations that are necessary for its approval of a final draft.

Practices and Policies Related to Graduate Study

Supervised Teaching Experience

Subject to the educational needs of the Department, all doctoral students should have some form of supervised experience of teaching before the completion of the PhD dissertation. The initial experience often involves conducting recitation sections for the

introductory courses with large enrollments under the direction and supervision of the member of the faculty responsible for the course. Students may also be given an opportunity to teach an introductory level course or an upper-level specialized course in one of their fields of specialization.

A member of the faculty is assigned as a “mentor” to students who assume these responsibilities. The “mentor” provides advice about course preparation, selection of materials, and problems of presentation in the classroom, before the class actually meets. Mentors are obliged to observe the teaching performance of the graduate student at least once a term in order to provide constructive criticism and advice on the improvement of teaching.

The University requires that student/teachers have their first course evaluated by the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching.²

Financial Assistance

The Department offers financial aid of various sorts to graduate students:

1) Teaching Assistantships/Fellowships. This is the primary source of financial aid to students; they are awarded on the basis of academic achievement

2) Financial assistance from within the University

A limited number of fellowships are awarded by the regional studies programs. These include the Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships granted by the centers for Latin American Studies, Russian and East European Studies, Asian Studies, and West European Studies.

² The University offers a number of workshops and seminars during the academic year to help graduate students learn techniques for effective teaching.

Some fellowships are provided by the office of the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. These include Arts and Sciences fellowships, Mellon Pre-doctoral fellowships, and fellowships from the Provost's Development Fund. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Awards Committee of the Department nominate qualified candidates for these fellowships.

Procedure for Awarding Assistantships and Fellowships

1) All newly admitted students who seek financial support are considered by the Awards Committee of the Department. Students already enrolled in the program are asked to file a written application for an award if they wish to be considered. Information about their scholarly achievements/activity over the previous year should be included in this application.

2) After the deadline for applications (January 1), all requests for financial aid are given to the Awards Committee composed of 3 or 4 members of the Faculty and chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies. The Committee makes its recommends to the Chair of the Department. The formal appointment is made by a letter from the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

3) For applicants to the program, the Awards Committee bases its decisions on the candidates' letter of recommendations, GRE score, grade point average, career statement, and adequacy of preparation.

4) For students already enrolled in the program, the Awards Committee reviews academic records, performance on comprehensive field examinations, performance as a teaching Assistant or Fellow, and the student's progress in meeting the requirements for

the degree. In addition, the Awards Committee hears direct testimony from those members of the faculty with direct knowledge of the student's performance during the previous academic year.

5) After extensive review of all appropriate materials the Awards Committee renews the awards of those students whose academic performance has been meritorious.

Department Policy on Awarding Teaching Assistantships/Fellowships

Graduate students offered financial aid from the department or from other sources of funding within the University can expect to have their fellowships renewed in some form for a maximum of four years if they consistently demonstrate a high level of graduate work and make timely progress through the MA and PhD programs. More specifically, student performance is evaluated in terms of the following criteria.

Grade Point Average. In contrast to undergraduate programs, a "B" grade is the lowest passing grade for graduate work. Excellent graduate performance is demonstrated by an accumulation of "A" grades.

Incompletes. Graduate students are expected to COMPLETE graduate courses during the term in which they are taken, except under extraordinary circumstances (such as severe illness and seminars in which the member of the faculty offers all students extra time to complete projects). Failure to make up these incompletes during the year immediately following the course will seriously compromise a student's standing in the competition for awards. Students will not be allowed to take either the MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying Examination or the PhD Comprehensive Examination until all incompletes are eliminated.

TA/TF Performance. All students with a TA or TF are assigned to assist faculty in their research and/or teaching or are assigned to teach specific courses. Performance of these responsibilities in a professional manner is expected as a matter of course. The Department attempts to resolve any problem related to a graduate student's performance as a TA/TF by consultation with both the graduate student and member of the faculty. Inadequate performance may influence a student's standing in the process of making financial awards.

The MA Comprehensive/PhD Qualifying and PhD Comprehensive Examinations. The better the student's performance on these exams, the greater the possibility of renewal of financial aid. Excessive delay in taking these examinations may influence the student's standing in the process of making financial awards.

Graduate courses

Courses numbered in the 1000s, 2000s, and 3000 count toward residence credit in the graduate program. Over half of a student's coursework should be in 2000-level courses, which are designed for graduate students.

Courses numbered in the 2900s.

1) 2902 Directed Reading

Programs of readings for individual graduate students may be provided in those areas of study in which no course or seminar is scheduled during an academic year. Faculty approval is necessary. Students must complete an agreed upon syllabus of

readings and meet weekly with faculty to discuss the assigned materials. Faculty members may require a paper to fulfill the requirements of this type of course.

2) 2903 Directed Research

Individual work on research design, generally related to the student's research for the PhD. Faculty permission is required.

3) 2970 Teaching of Political Science

Students who desire academic credit for the courses they teach or in which they assist a professor should register for PS 2970. This course counts toward "residence credit" for the PhD degree, but it does not count toward fulfilling the 30 credits needed for the MA.

4) 2990 Independent Study

Students who are preparing for comprehensive exams or who are undertaking other forms of study that do not require the supervision of a member of the faculty register for 2990. These courses do not count for credit for the MA, but do count as "resident credit" for the PhD degree.