



## University of Pittsburgh Department of Political Science Graduate Student Handbook

This handbook outlines requirements, procedures, and departmental 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, and should serve to answer most questions that students have at any stage of progress, from entry to completion of the Ph.D.

The Department of Political Science operates under the rules, regulations and policies of graduate studies as established by the Faculty of the Dietrich School 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.

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.

Those seeking further information about departmental rules and procedures should contact the Director of Graduate Studies or the Graduate Studies Administrator:

The Department of Political Science  
4600 Wesley W. Posvar Hall  
University of Pittsburgh  
Pittsburgh, PA 15260  
Phone: [412] 648-7270  
FAX: [412] 648-7277

## Welcome!

Thank you for your interest in graduate study in political science at the University of Pittsburgh!

Pitt Political Science is a vibrant, active, collaborative and diverse community of scholars. We have a strong norm of coauthoring with graduate students and are proud of our record of placing graduate students in tenure-stream jobs throughout the United States and abroad.

This handbook will provide you with an overview of the policies and procedures of the program. You will also learn about all requirements of the program, as well as resources available to our graduate students. These resources include perhaps the most generous funding structure of its kind, which includes three full years or more of fellowship funding (support with no work component) for our very best students. This handbook will serve as a guide throughout your time as a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, from your first day of classes to your dissertation defense and beyond.

I hope this book is helpful to you. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Sincerely,



Kristin Kanthak

kanthak@pitt.edu

Director of Graduate Studies

## Introduction

The purpose of the graduate program in political science at the University of Pittsburgh is to prepare students to become active members of the scholarly community. First and foremost, that means learning the skills you need to produce first-rate original research. Your training will also assist you in learning to critique the research of others, to collaborate effectively with your colleagues, to be part of a community of scholars, and to achieve excellence in teaching, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. You should expect the program to take five years to complete, six if your dissertation will require extensive field research.

The graduate program is exclusively a Ph.D. program, which includes 2-3 years of coursework, a qualifying paper, comprehensive examinations, and the completion of a dissertation. On your way toward the Ph.D. and at the successful completion of the coursework and the qualifying paper, you will earn a Masters degree in political science. The department does not offer admittance to students interested in a terminal M.A. degree.

It is the responsibility of each student to assure that he or she is in compliance with all rules laid out in this handbook. Typically, exceptions to the rules stated here are not granted. Deviations from these rules are allowed only with written permission from the Director of Graduate Studies. Students are responsible for assuring that an original, signed copy of a memo or form allowing a deviation is included in their official departmental files. Students should also keep a copy of this record for their own files.

We offer six fields of study:

- American Politics
- Comparative Politics
- Mass Political Behavior
- Normative Political Theory
- Political Methodology
- World Politics

Students must select two examining fields of study. If they choose, students may also select a concentration or theme that cuts across one or more of the traditional fields of study. Students, in conjunction with their advisory committees, can construct themes that best meet their individual needs. Some examples of themes include:

- Democracy and Human Rights
- Political Economy
- Mass Behavior
- Governance

All students must complete a five-course sequence comprising graduate education in political methodology, normative political theory, research design, professionalization, and more. The five core courses are:

- *PS 2000: The Profession of Political Science.* This year-long one-credit course provides all first-year graduate students with the opportunity to meet the faculty and learn about a variety of professional issues, from the ins and outs of publication to navigating the job market to balancing teaching and research to meeting professional obligations, and more.
- *PS 2010: Introduction to Statistics and Probability.* This course provides students with an introduction to basic mathematics, including calculus and linear algebra, along with coverage of basic probability theory and inference.
- *PS 2020: Empirical Methods of Research.* The course introduces students to concepts of philosophy of science, research design, and the use of qualitative and quantitative methods.
- *PS 2030: Political Research and Analysis.* This course applies quantitative methods to relevant data, teaching students practical applications of what they have learned in 2010 and 2020.
- *PS 2040: Core Political Theory.* This course provides students with an introduction to political theory, the history of Western political thought, and the study of normative issues in politics.

Students must complete at least four graduate seminars from their examining fields (or three seminars for the methods subfield) and successfully pass comprehensive field examinations. With permission of the student's advisory committee and the Director of Graduate Studies, students may count courses taken outside the department toward those requirements. Courses cannot meet a requirement for more than one field. Students must complete three graduate seminars in their theme/concentration; Courses may count for a theme *and* a field requirement.

## Departmental Fields

The department of political science at the University of Pittsburgh offers six fields, of which every student must specialize in at least two. Students may complete an optional

third field if they choose. Students are encouraged to take courses within the department that will help them meet their individual research goals, regardless of whether or not that course is in one of their two fields of specialization. The fields are described below:

**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 Executive, and the Judiciary. Additionally, two courses are regularly offered in American political behavior (Mass Politics and Electoral Politics). Occasionally, additional courses may be offered that cover areas of interest such as Interest Groups, Political Representation, Religion and Politics, State Policy, Public Policy, and others. Students must take courses in both institutions and behavior, but may choose to specialize in one of them for purposes of the M.A. Thesis, Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations, and for work toward the Ph.D. dissertation.

**Comparative Politics:** Although students in the field may specialize in the government and politics of particular geographic regions, such as East Asia, Latin America, or Europe, they are strongly encouraged to think cross-regionally, focusing on comparative institutions, economy, or mass behavior,. At any rate, students are responsible for developing competence in the basic approaches and methods in the study of comparative politics. That is, 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 (at least two) outside of the country or region of the students' declared specialization.

**Political Theory:** Students in this field must develop competence in normative theory beyond the materials dealt with in the core course (Political Science 2040, which does not count toward the political theory subfield). Political theory includes the history of political thought, political philosophy, and the analysis of political concepts. In addition 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.

**Mass Political Behavior:** This field focuses on the analysis of individual political choices and activities (such as voting) and their collective outcomes, rather than institutional frameworks, and is typically focused on citizens (rather than elites or governmental officials). Specifically, this includes topics such as public opinion, voting behavior, participation/mobilization, political psychology, political communication, political sociology, and campaigns/elections. The field also includes the study of "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. With the permission of the Director of Graduate Studies and a students' advisors, students may supplement their training within the department by taking courses in psychology, sociology and other cognate fields.

**Political Methodology:** 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 2010, 2020, and 2030. Students choosing Political Methodology as a field must complete nine credits of course work (i.e. three additional courses) beyond the departmental core. Formal Theory courses may count for no more than one of those three courses. Courses regularly offered include Formal Political Theory (both introductory and advanced), Maximum Likelihood Estimation and extensions, Causal and Longitudinal Modeling, and Time Series Analysis.

**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). The Department regularly offers advanced seminars in all three of the aforementioned fields. 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.

## Themes

In addition to the two fields, students may choose a theme or concentration that cuts across traditional subfield designations. Students may, with the permission of their major advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies, create their own themes or concentrations. A concentration or theme comprises three courses that must include courses in at least two different traditional subfields. There is no required examination for the theme or concentration. Although courses may count toward only one field, the same course may count toward both a field and a theme. Some possible themes include:

- Democracy and Human Rights
- Political Economy
- Mass Behavior<sup>1</sup>
- Governance

## The Master of Arts Program

Again, the department does not admit students who intend to pursue a terminal Master's degree. Instead, the degree is assumed to be a milestone on the way toward a Ph.D. Terminal MA's are offered only to students who, for personal or professional reasons, cannot or choose not to continue their training beyond a minimum of two years of study.

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 department-specific supplement to the Bulletin. The requirements for the M.A. in political science are:

- Completion of at least 30 credits in course work at the 2000 levels. Credits received from "Directed Reading" and "Directed Research" count toward this requirement; "Independent Study" does not. These courses must involve the completion of the twelve credit sequence of core courses in theory and methods (Political Science 2010, 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).
- Completion of at least four graduate seminars in one of the following fields: American Politics, Comparative Politics, Normative Theory, or World Politics.
- A cumulative QPA of at least 3.0 in graduate level work.
- Completion of a qualifying paper

The normal full time course load is four courses per term. Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, and Graduate Student Assistants normally elect three courses per term, plus Political Science 2990: Independent Study, for time spend as a TA, TF, or GSA. Requirements for the MA, in most cases, ought to be completed by the end of the second year in residence, although students may sometimes opt for a fifth semester of coursework, in order to take the courses that best meet their needs.

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<sup>1</sup>Note that Mass Behavior may be taken as *either* a field or a theme, but not both.

## The Preliminary Examination

At the end of the first year of coursework, the full faculty will assess the performance of each first-year student. This assessment comprises the college-mandated preliminary examination. Students who have earned a grade of A- or higher in each of their courses in the first year are automatically considered to have passed the preliminary examination. Students who have earned a grade of B+ or lower in one or more core courses must submit a remediation plan to the Graduate Education Committee, via the Director of Graduate Studies, to remain in good standing in the program. The purpose of the remediation plan is to provide students with an opportunity to explain how he/she plans to show mastery of the material in the courses for which he/she has received a B+. To be clear, the goal of this policy is not to remove students who have earned even one B+, but rather to ensure that students receive additional guidance on how to improve the quality of their work if it is deficient. Receipt of a B+ grade indicates that the faculty member assigning the grade feels that the student is “at risk” of being unsuitable, rather than being unsuitable with certainty, for graduate education. The full faculty will meet at the end of each academic year – generally on the last day of final examination week – to discuss the performance of any student who has received a grade lower than a B+ in one course, or a grade of B+ in more than one course. At this meeting, the full faculty will discuss both the performance of each of the identified students and their remediation plans. At that time, the faculty *may* decide that a student has failed the preliminary examination. Any student who fails the preliminary examination – by a vote of the full faculty – will be dismissed from the program.

## The M.A. qualifying paper

At the start of the third semester in the program (the beginning of the second year), each student should create a committee that will be tasked with advising and ultimately evaluating an M.A. qualifying paper. That committee will comprise a chair (a faculty member from the student’s first field) and one reader. This committee will guide the student in the year-long process of writing a qualifying paper. Students should obtain the proper signatures and file the Qualifying Paper Committee Form with the graduate administrator as early as possible in the third semester, and no later than the date of the University’s fall break.

The purpose of the qualifying paper is to provide students with the opportunity to complete a paper that will ultimately be accepted for publication prior to their entering the job market. Most often, this paper will be an extension or revision of a seminar paper (or papers), and may also serve as a segue into the dissertation. The qualifying paper itself does not already have to be publication-worthy, but it must be of sufficient quality that feedback from the full faculty will provide assistance in getting the paper to the point that it is ready to be sent to a journal at some time in the third year of residence.

In the spring of the second year, the student will defend the qualifying paper before the entire department. That defense will comprise a 20 minute presentation of the



paper and a 20 minute question and answer period. At that time, any member of the department may ask any questions he/she deems appropriate. The oral defense of the qualifying paper is a very serious step toward the degree. All members of the department are strongly encouraged to attend all defenses and to ask questions as they would during a job talk, thus providing our students with an experience that mimics the one they should expect to have on the job market.

Within a week of the oral defense, the two-person committee will reconvene (either in person or via email) to prepare a report to the entire faculty that recommends the grade the student earned on the qualifying paper. That grade is based in part on the performance during the oral defense. The full faculty will then hold a faculty meeting to discuss each of the students who defended their qualifying papers. The Director of Graduate Studies will be responsible for informing the student, in writing, of his/her performance on the qualifying paper, the oral defense of that paper, and coursework thus far.

Three grades on the qualifying paper are possible:

- Pass with invitation to continue in the program: Students who achieve this grade have earned an M.A. degree and are invited to take the second part of the comprehensive examination in the fall. Note that students may also earn a Pass with Distinction or a Pass with Reservations, but these distinctions do not bear on the necessity that they take the second part of the comprehensive exam.
- Pass: Students who achieve this grade have earned an M.A. degree, but are not invited to continue in the program.
- Fail: Students who achieve this grade do not receive an M.A. degree and are not invited to continue in the program. Students whose performance does not merit an invitation to continue in the program may, in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies, attempt to rewrite the paper and provide another oral defense in the August following their first attempt. Students whose performance still does not merit an invitation to continue must leave the program immediately.

### Application for graduation with an M.A. degree

Students who have either chosen or have been encouraged to graduate with a terminal M.A 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. In other words, students who are leaving the program and whose paperwork is not complete by the end of the spring term will have to pay, out of pocket, summer tuition in order to graduate with the M.A.

A student who has not been registered during the previous year must be readmitted and register for a minimum of three credits.

## Transfer credits

A maximum of 24 credits may be transferred toward the requirements for the Ph.D. degree for course work at the master's level earned in another approved graduate school. A student who transfers 24 credits due to completion of a master's degree at another institution is not eligible to earn a master's degree in that discipline at the University of Pittsburgh. If a student has completed relevant graduate work beyond the master's level at another institution, up to 12 additional credits may be accepted for transfer. (No more than 36 credits can be accepted for transfer from all other graduate institutions.)

Students who wish to transfer credits must complete the Transfer Credit Authorization Form, secure the proper signatures, and file it with the department administrator. Under some circumstances, students may request a waiver from one or more of the core graduate classes. To do so, the student must complete the Core Course Waiver Form, secure the proper signatures, and file it with the department administrator. *It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all proper forms are in their official departmental files.*

## 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 for which the student will complete the Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations. To establish the advisory committee, students must submit the Advisory Committee Form indicating their fields of study and containing the signatures of the relevant faculty members.

Each graduate student MUST convene his/her advisory committee each term from the second term of residence until the successful completion of the Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations. The advisory committee is responsible for registration and the planning of the student's academic program in all aspects of study. The advisory committee will design a program of coursework, language and other requirements including the determination of the M.A. thesis in the student's first examining field. Students are free to change the membership of their advisory committee in accordance with changes in their fields or interests, by completing the Advisory Committee Change Form, obtaining the proper signatures, and filing it with the graduate administrator.

Once a student passes the Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations, advising is provided by the student's Ph.D. dissertation committee.

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

## The Ph.D. Program

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. The requirements for the Ph.D. include:

- Completion of at least 72 credit hours that qualify for residence credit under University rules.
- 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.
- Successful completion of a substantial research paper in one of the student’s examining fields (i.e., the M.A. qualifying paper).
- Passing the Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations in the student’s chosen two examining fields, which includes a written examination in each of the student’s examining fields, and possible oral examinations that deal with the substance of the two fields.
- Formal admission to Ph.D. candidacy following approval of a dissertation overview by the student’s Dissertation Committee (students should plan on doing this by the end of their 8th semester in residence, and ideally by the end of their 7th semester)
- Final oral defense of the doctoral dissertation (typically within 5 to 6 years of having started the program).

### Comprehensive examinations

Students who successfully complete the qualifying paper are not considered to be advanced to candidacy until they have passed the comprehensive examination in the August following the successful completion of the qualifying paper. The purpose of the examination is to provide the student an opportunity to demonstrate that his or her knowledge of the field is sufficiently broad and deep that he or she is capable of teaching a graduate-level field seminar in the examining field and to assure that the student can synthesize and critically evaluate the literature. Students must successfully pass comprehensive examinations in two of the department’s subfields.

The faculty from each subfield are tasked with creating and maintaining a comprehensive examination reading list, which will be available to students by the January prior to the August comprehensive examination. Although students must eventually complete all course work, they can choose, in consultation with their advisory committees, to take the comprehensive examination prior to the completion of all the coursework for the subfield.

Each subfield will create a two-person committee, tasked with writing one comprehensive examination which all students in the subfield will take, and grading those examinations. Students will have eight hours to complete each examination. Members of the subfield's comprehensive examination committee will read the examination and determine if the examination is passing or failing. If the committee is unsure if the work merits passage, members of the committee may invite the student to sit for an oral defense of the examination. If the examination committee has determined that a student has failed the comprehensive examination, faculty who comprise the entire subfield (if they are not already on the comprehensive examination committee) should read the examination and, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, decide whether or not the examination is failing.

Two grades on the comprehensive exam are possible:

- Pass with invitation to continue to candidacy: Students who achieve this grade are invited to continue on to begin work on the Ph.D.
- Fail: Students who achieve this grade are not invited to continue on to the Ph.D.

Students who do not achieve a passing grade on the comprehensive examination may, in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies, attempt the examination again the January following the first examination attempt. Students who are rewriting the qualifying paper in August because they failed their first attempt must make their first attempt at the comprehensive examination in January. If such a student fails the comprehensive examination in January, he or she may make another attempt in April. Students who have failed any part of the examination are not considered to be in good standing, and therefore have no guarantee of continued funding.

To be clear, oral examinations take place only when the committee would like more information regarding the student's knowledge and abilities. If the committee is unsure as to whether or not the examination merits passage, they may invite the student to provide an oral defense of the examination. If the committee is certain that the written examination is not acceptable, the members may fail the student without scheduling an oral examination.

## The Dissertation Overview

With the successful completion of the Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations, the student, in conjunction with his/her major advisor, 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 person from outside the Department of Political Science. Typically, the outside member of the committee will come from a related academic department within the University. In some cases, students may secure approval for a committee member from outside the university. All requests for committee

members from outside the university must first be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee. Furthermore, committee members from outside the university must also receive approval from the Graduate Dean's Office. At least three of the four members of the committee, including the major advisor, must be full or adjunct members of the graduate faculty.

All members of the committee must be physically present both for the overview and final dissertation defenses. Students must also ensure that they have secured funding for any committee members from outside the University to travel to Pittsburgh for the defenses. The department will award a small number of grants each year for the purpose of funding this travel, and these funded outside committee members are expected to perform other functions, including giving a talk in one of the department's colloquium series, during their trip. Students are also invited to work with their advisors to secure other sources of funding for these trips. Under no circumstances are students permitted to use their own funds for these trips. Under unusual circumstances, students may obtain permission from the Graduate Dean's office to allow an outside committee member to participate in either the overview or the final defense via conference call. In these cases, the student's dissertation advisor must prepare a detailed letter to the dean, explaining the reasons for the request. These requests may take several weeks to process, and so students must be sure to plan accordingly.

Students must submit a Dissertation Committee Approval form, with all required signatures, by September 30 of their third year in residence. In most cases, students should plan to have their overview defended by the end of their third year in residence. Students who have not completed the overview in this time frame may be considered to be not in good academic standing, and may have their departmental funding cut or eliminated.

The overview consists of a carefully developed research design for the proposed Ph.D. 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. Except with special permission from the Graduate Education Committee, the dissertation overview will be limited to 40 pages. Students may petition for special permission via the Director of Graduate Studies.

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

- 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 Ph.D. It is the responsibility of the student to assure that the Dissertation Committee Annual Meeting Form is completed properly and filed with the graduate administrator.
- Students should maintain their registration throughout their program of study.

Students who have not registered during a 12-month period are transferred to inactive status, and must apply for readmission. Requests for readmission should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies, who will assess their merits in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee. Readmission is not assured, and students cannot complete any milestones when they are on inactive status.

- The University has a strict statute of limitations. All requirements for the Ph.D. 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 M.A. degree.
- The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences requires that students must pass their Ph.D. Comprehensive examinations within seven calendar years of their initial admission to graduate school.

### The Dissertation Defense

The final dissertation defense must occur no less than eight months after the defense of the dissertation overview. Students must provide a final version of the dissertation to all members of the committee at least six weeks prior to the scheduled dissertation defense date. Furthermore, students must complete a Final Dissertation Defense Scheduling Form and submit it to the graduate administrator six weeks prior to the dissertation defense.

University regulations regarding the proper formatting of the dissertation are quite strict, and students are encouraged to plan to spend time assuring that the format of the dissertation is acceptable prior to final submission.

## Practices and Policies Related to Graduate Study

### Financial Assistance

Unless specifically informed otherwise in the offer of admission, the university guarantees all Ph.D. students five years of financial support (fellowships, assistantships, teaching), conditional upon the continued demonstration of good progress toward the Ph.D. (see below for the definition of "good progress"). All such fellowships, assistantships, and teaching assignments provide students with full tuition, an outstanding healthcare benefits package, and a competitive living stipend. Exception: Students who enter the program with external funding (e.g. a Fulbright Fellowship, etcetera), are guaranteed university financial support through their fifth year in residence (which may amount to less than four full-years of university support, if the student arrives with two or more years of external support).

## Year by Year funding

The political science department at the University of Pittsburgh is unusual because it provides its very top students a five-year degree, with only two years of working as a TA/TF or graduate research assistant. In other words, our top students can qualify for *three* of five years of funding as fellowship, for which they have no work obligations. Furthermore, other opportunities within the University, such as the Foreign Language Assistance Scholarship (FLAS) or the Gutierrez Fellowship, can allow students *additional* fellowship support. This is a level of support virtually no other program can match.

In most cases, first-year students receive a fellowship (from either the School of Arts and Sciences (Dietrich School Fellowship) or the department itself (Umberger Fellowship)), which does not carry a work requirement – thereby enabling first-year students to focus entirely on their studies.

After the first year, students will file a written application for an award if they wish to be considered for funding in subsequent years. Funding in years two and three typically takes the form of an assistantship (teaching, research, administrative), or may take the form of a Foreign Language Assistance Scholarship (FLAS) or Gutierrez Fellowship.

Some fourth and fifth year students receive fellowships, thereby enabling them to focus entirely on dissertation research. These come in three forms. First, up to five Social Science Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships (SSDD) will be awarded to outstanding students for their fourth year of study, if they have successfully defended a dissertation overview by April of their third year in residence and have demonstrated consistent excellence throughout the program. Second, up to five outstanding 3rd and 4th year students will be nominated each year for university Mellon Fellowships, to be used the following year (in year 4 or 5). Third, in some rare instances, the department may award an Umberger Fellowship to a 4th or 5th year student.

Those fourth- and fifth-year students who do not receive such fellowships, but who have maintained good academic standing, receive assistantships, as in their second and third years, or may teach their own courses. Furthermore, in some cases (contingent upon funding availability from the university) students will obtain a 6th year of funding through the teaching of their own courses.

Aside from the fellowship and teaching opportunities listed above, there is no guarantee of financial support in a student's 6th year. As such, students are strongly encouraged to apply for external fellowships and scholarships, beginning after their third year in residence. A database of externally funded scholarships and fellowships is maintained by the university's Office of Research.

## Department of Political Science Summer Fellowships

Each year, the department awards a minimum of five summer fellowships of 1000 to 3000 dollars, to our most outstanding students who have not yet attained PhD candidacy. These fellowships are competitive. Only 2nd and 3rd year students will be eligible to apply for funding to be used the following summer. Students who wish to be considered for these awards should submit a proposal of no more than three pages, outlining how

the fellowship will further their program of study. These proposals should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Study by the beginning of the spring semester each year and fellowships are awarded by the end of March.

### Travel Funding

Students in years 2-5 have a travel budget of 400 dollars per year, to spend on travel expenses, conference registration fees, and hotel accommodations, for paper/poster presentations at approved academic conferences. Of these funds, 250 dollars may be spent on the student's first conference of the year, and 150 dollars on a second. An additional fund of 3000 dollars is designated to reimburse additional expenses, for students who demonstrate they tried but were unable to secure other university travel grants. The graduate awards/evaluation committee considers applications for these reimbursement funds and offers such awards to those demonstrating the most need and the most scholarly promise.

### Summer Programs

The university financially supports student participation in prestigious summer programs such as the quantitative methodology program and survey research program sponsored by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan, the Annual Summer Institute in Political Psychology at Stanford University, and others.

### Evaluation of Progress and Procedure for Awarding Financial Support

Each year, the Awards and Evaluation Committee determines whether students are making good progress through the program. A detailed description of the evaluation process follows.

In order to maintain "good progress,"

- The student must maintain a Grade Point Average of 3.56 or higher, in each term, in courses taken with full-time graduate faculty within the Department of Political Science;
- The student must successfully pass the preliminary examination after the first year;
- The student must not carry more than one incomplete on his or her record for more than one consecutive semester, and are discouraged from carrying incompletes at all, save for unusually extenuating circumstances;
- The student must complete the M.A. qualifying paper by the end of the sixth semester in residence;
- The student must successfully pass his/her comprehensive examinations (written and oral) by October of the fourth year in residence;



- The student must successfully defend his/her dissertation overview by April of the fourth year in residence;
- The student must continue to show promise as a scholar;
- If applicable, the student must consistently and diligently perform tasks as a research assistant, teaching assistant, or teaching fellow, to the satisfaction of the faculty member for whom he or she has been assigned to work in a given semester.

Each spring, the Awards and Evaluation Committee (composed of three or four members of the Faculty and chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies) meets to evaluate each student in the program. After reviewing each student's academic record and receiving oral testimony regarding each student from the entire graduate faculty, the Committee deliberates and makes its recommendations to the Chair of the Department. At this time, the Committee also provides written feedback to each student in the program. This feedback not only (1) informs each student of whether s/he is making "good progress," as defined above, but also (2) provides a qualitative assessment of each student's overall performance. Students are informed of their particular funding arrangements for the following year (teaching assistantship, fellowship, etc.) by the end of the spring term.

### Supervised Teaching Experience

The Department considers teaching an integral component of graduate training. In most cases, this teaching begins as a graduate teaching assistant or teaching fellow (TA/TF). As a TA/TF, students are responsible for three discussion sections for one of our large undergraduate lecture courses. TA/TFs are responsible for teaching material, facilitating discussions, answering questions, providing office hours, and grading all materials for the undergraduate students in their sections.

Furthermore, in addition to opportunities afforded through teaching assistantships or fellowships, all of our students in good standing have opportunities to teach their own courses, subject to undergraduate student demand. After they have finished their M.A. qualifying papers, students may begin teaching summer courses. After passing Ph.D. comprehensive exams, students may teach courses in the fall and winter/spring semesters. Practically, what this means is that most students will have the opportunity to design and teach their own courses during their fourth or fifth years. From the department's perspective, the ideal year to teach is in the fifth year, when one is near completion of the dissertation. Students should inform/consult the Directors of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies in October of the year previous to that which they plan to teach, and must submit a brief proposal to the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the Director of Graduate Studies regarding their plans, preferred courses, as well as any other courses that s/he could teach. The same deadline and procedure applies to summer teaching. Note that all teaching experience is based on undergraduate student demand. If a course does not attract sufficient enrollment, it may be canceled. Graduate students, therefore, should be aware that their course is not certain to take place until

enough undergraduate students enroll. We cannot reimburse students for losses incurred because of canceled courses.

A member of the faculty is assigned as a mentor to students who assume these teaching 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. Students who teach their own course during the fall or spring semesters are also required to enroll in the Faculty Development course (FACDEV 2200) during the semester in which they are teaching.