DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH



GRADUATE HANDBOOK

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1 INTRODUCTION

This handbook outlines requirements, procedures, and departmental policies of the graduate program 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.

Additional useful information can be found online at the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences web site (http://www.as.pitt.edu) and the Dietrich School Graduate Studies web site (http://www.asgraduate.pitt.edu). The Graduate Studies Office offers information, help, and troubleshooting for many areas pertaining to graduate student life, including many important forms and policies students may require during their time at Pitt (https://www.asgraduate.pitt.edu/academics/academic-resources).

Students should remain in contact with the Department's Graduate Administrator and the Director of Graduate Studies regarding such matters as transfer of credits, tuition, fees, residency requirements, and dissertation credit requirements. More information is available in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Graduate and Professional Bulletin (https://catalog.upp.pitt.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=41).

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.

The graduate program is exclusively a Ph.D. program, which includes 3 years of coursework, a qualifying research paper, comprehensive examination, and the completion of a dissertation. On the way toward the Ph.D. and at the successful completion of the first two-years of coursework plus the second-year qualifying paper, students may earn a master's degree in political science. The department does not admit students interested in a terminal M.A. degree.

It is the responsibility of each student to assure that they comply 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.

2 COURSEWORK

2.1 Required Courses

Most courses offer 3 credit-hours in a semester and the university allows students to take up to 15 credit-hours per semester. International students are required to take a minimum of 9 credit-hours per semester in order to maintain their visa status (more information can be found at the site for the Office for International Services). All students must complete at least 72 credit-hours in their first three years in the program.

There are three types of courses: substantive, administrative, and elective. Substantive courses cover a specific area of knowledge in Political Science; administrative courses are those in which students are enrolled in order to prepare for program milestones or as they perform program duties; elective courses are those that students may choose to enroll in in order to fulfill specific needs (e.g., directed readings or independent studies, courses outside of the department). The department strongly encourages students to fulfill the 72 credit-hours requirements with substantive and elective courses.

2.1.1 Substantive Courses

All students must complete a five-course sequence before the end of their third year, The first four are to be completed during the first year and the last one during the third year of graduate work.

1. PS2000: *The Profession of Political Science.* This 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.

2. PS2010: *Foundations of Quantitative Methods.* This course provides the mathematical skills necessary for successful completion of the graduate methods sequence. It offers a structured review of core tools in calculus and linear algebra as well as an introduction to fundamental concepts in probability and statistical inference.

3. PS2020: *Empirical Methods of Research.* The course introduces students to concepts of philosophy of science, research design, and the use of qualitative and quantitative methods.

4. PS2030: *Political Research and Analysis.* This course applies quantitative methods to relevant data, teaching students practical applications of what they have learned in PS2010 and PS2020.

5. PS2904: *Dissertation Overview.* This two-term course provides students a structured environment to work on their dissertation overviews.

In addition to these courses, the department offers courses in five examination fields of study: American Politics, Comparative Politics, Mass Political Behavior, Political Methodology, and International Relations. (For a description of each field, see section 3). Students must choose two fields of specialization. For the first field they must complete at least four graduate seminars and pass a comprehensive exam. For the second field,

they must complete at least three graduate seminars. All students are required to complete at least two field seminars offered by the American Politics, Comparative Politics, or International Relations fields.

Students must receive a grade of A- or above in at least three of the four and two of the three substantive courses in their first and second fields, respectively. They must receive at least a B+ in the remaining substantive classes. Courses may be cross-listed in two sub-fields but they cannot meet a requirement for more than one field at a time. Courses offered in other academic units and cross-listed by the department may only count towards field requirements with the prior approval of the student's advisory committee and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Courses taken outside the department which are not cross-listed will only count towards field requirements with permission of the DGS in consultation with relevant faculty from the sub-field in question.

2.1.2 Administrative Courses

Students are automatically enrolled in *Teaching and Research in Political Science* (PS2905)), a hands-on teaching practicum course for graduate students to learn about university-level teaching while they serve as TA, TF or GSA. In the Fall of their second year students may enroll in *Qualifying Paper Preparation* (PS2906) and in the Spring they may enroll in *Comprehensive Exam Preparation* (PS2900). In each semester of their third year, students must enroll in *Dissertation Overview Preparation* (PS2904). These courses count toward the 72 credit-hours students must complete by the end of the third year. The department strongly advises that students take at least three substantive courses per semester beginning in their second semester until the Spring of their third year.

2.1.3 Elective Courses

With the approval of their academic advisor and the DGS students may enroll up to two times in *Direct Reading* (PS2902). They can also enroll in courses offered in other Pitt academic units. The purpose of these courses is to increase the breadth of the student's graduate education. Students are encouraged to seek out courses in different sub-fields or in different departments that are related to their research interests.

2.2 Grade Options

Most courses are listed with grade options LG (letter grade) and SNC (satisfactory/no credit). Faculty will give letter grades as the default option, and students should receive a letter grade for all courses during their first year in the program. Students in later years may take a limited number of courses using the SNC option, provided that the instructor authorizes this choice at the beginning of the semester. Satisfactory work in those courses carries credit-hours but does not alter the student's GPA. Failure to complete satisfactory work under the SNC option implies that no credit-hours will accrue from that course.

2.2.1 Course Auditing

Auditing a course results in no quality points, credit hours toward graduation, or GPA impact. To audit a course, students must enroll in the course, pay tuition for the course,

and visit the Dean's Office of the school offering the course to fill out a Grade Option/Audit Request Form. This form must be signed by the student's academic advisor, the instructor of the course, and the Dean's Office of the school offering the course and submitted by the posted deadline.

3 DEPARTMENTAL FIELDS

The Department of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh offers five examination fields. Students must specialize in two. Students are encouraged, however, to take courses within the department that will help them meet their individual research goals, whether or not that course is in one of their two fields of specialization.

3.1 American Politics

Students should develop a broad understanding of the basic theoretical and methodological issues in the field. The core seminar in American Politics provides an overview of the field. The field also regularly offers courses in American political institutions and political behavior. Occasionally, additional courses may be offered that cover specific 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 second-year qualifying paper, Ph.D. comprehensive examinations, and for work toward the Ph.D. dissertation.

3.2 Comparative Politics

A core seminar in Comparative Politics is offered regularly, covering the main areas of active research in the field. Although students in the field may specialize in the government and politics of particular countries or geographic regions, they are strongly encouraged to think cross-regionally, focusing on comparative institutions, political economy, or mass behavior. 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.

3.3 International Relations

The study of International Relations includes three areas of concentration: International Organization and Global Governance, International Political Economy, and International Conflict and Security. 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 International Relations, fulfill the field's requirements by taking graduate courses in the School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA).

3.4 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 electoral campaigns. 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 DGS and the student's advisors, students may supplement their training within the department by taking courses in Psychology, Sociology and other cognate fields.

3.5 Political Methodology and Formal Analysis

This field examines and develops ideas and concepts drawn from statistics and economics and applies them to the study of politics. Training in Methodology is not simply 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 courses in methods, PS2020 and PS2030. Students choosing Political Methodology as a field must complete twelve credits of course work (i.e. four additional courses) beyond the departmental core. Courses regularly offered include Formal Political Theory (both introductory and advanced), Maximum Likelihood Estimation and extensions, Causal and Longitudinal Modeling, and Time Series Analysis.

4 MILESTONES TO THE Ph.D.

Each student is responsible for meeting all of the requirements stipulated in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences (DSAS) Graduate and Professional Bulletin. The following material should be read as a supplement to the Bulletin.

a. Completion of at least 72 graduate credit-hours under University rules.

b. Successful completion of the Department's core course and field requirements.

c. Successful completion of a substantial research paper in the student's field of specialization (i.e., the second-year qualifying paper).

d. Passing the Ph.D. comprehensive examination in the student's chosen examining field, which includes a written and an oral examination.

e. Formal admission to Ph.D. candidacy following approval of a dissertation overview by the student's dissertation committee. Students should plan on doing this at the very latest by the end of their 3rd year).

f. Final oral defense of the doctoral dissertation. Students have up to seven years to defend their doctoral dissertations after passing the Ph.D. comprehensive exam. Failure to do so within this time frame requires re-admittance into the program and retaking of the comprehensive examination.

4.1 The Preliminary Examination

At the end of the first year of coursework, the full faculty will assess the performance of each first-year student. Assessment will be based on grades, reports from the DGS and from the faculty who had the student in class, plus any other source of information deemed relevant during the meeting. This assessment comprises the preliminary examination mandated by the DSAS. The meeting will determine whether students are allowed to continue into their second year, whether they are invited to continue but under supervision by the DGS and one additional member of the faculty, or whether they are asked to leave the program.

First-year students who have earned a grade of A- or higher and at most one B+ in each of their courses in the first year are automatically considered to have passed the preliminary examination.

First-year students who have earned a grade of B+ or lower in two or more of their first year courses are not in good standing in the program. If they are allowed to continue into the second year, such students must consult with the DGS and submit a remediation plan to the Graduate Education Committee, via the DGS, in order to restore their good standing in the program. The remediation plan must be submitted by Friday of the second week in May.

The purpose of the remediation plan is to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate that they understand the reasons for their grades during their first year and to explain how they plan to improve their performance in future courses.

To be clear, the goal of this policy is not to automatically remove students who find themselves with grades below what is expected in the first year. Rather, the policy's goal is to ensure that students receive additional guidance on how to improve the quality of their work and are induced to reflect whether pursuing the Ph.D. is indeed what they want to do. Requiring a remediation plan of some students does not reflect in any way on their capacity, intellectual or otherwise. Rather, it is meant as an invitation for reflecting on ultimate goals and whether remaining in the program is the best path to achieving them. Assuming the answer is positive, students must pro-actively change how they are approaching their studies.

At the preliminary examination meeting, the faculty will discuss the performance of each student with grades lower than A- and will suggest aspects and actions that should be included in their remediation plans. At that time, the faculty may decide that a student who has demonstrated particularly poor performance in their first year 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.

4.2 The Qualifying Paper

In the first month of the Fall semester the DGS will send a schedule with all relevant deadlines leading to the completion and presentation of the qualifying paper. Apart from defining the paper itself, the first task for students in the first semester of their second year is to constitute a committee that will be tasked with advising and ultimately evaluating their 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 by the deadline indicated in the DGS's instructions.

The purpose of the qualifying paper is to provide students with the opportunity to complete a manuscript 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 April of the second year, students will defend their 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. In order for the presentation to be scheduled, both committee members must indicate that they have read a final draft which they deem ready for presentation to the full department. If the committee does not clear the paper for oral presentation, the case will be immediately referred to the DGS and to the student's sub-field for consultation and review. After this review, if there is a determination that the paper is not presentable, the student will not be permitted to participate in the departmental presentation of qualifying papers. The case will be discussed at the faculty evaluation meeting (see below), but the possible outcomes will be limited to a decision of "Terminal MA" or "Fail."

During the presentation of the qualifying paper any member of the department may ask any questions he or she deems appropriate. All presentations take place in the same day and all members of the department are strongly encouraged to attend all of them, as well as to ask questions as they would during a job talk. This will provide students with an experience that mimics the one they should expect to have on the job market.

Late in the Spring semester the full faculty will hold an evaluation meeting to discuss all second year students and their qualifying papers. The Director of Graduate Studies will be responsible for informing the student, in writing, of his or her performance on the qualifying paper, the presentation of that paper, and coursework thus far.

Four grades on the qualifying paper are possible:

a. 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 comprehensive examination in the fall. They may or may not choose to claim the MA, but they are entitled to it. If they decide to claim it, they should work with the Graduate Administrator in

order to formally make the request. 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 comprehensive exam.

b. Pass conditional on revisions: The faculty may decide to allow the student to revise the qualifying paper. This option will only be chosen if the faculty determines that the student's overall performance in the program otherwise warrants continuation, and is at the same time willing to delegate to the thesis committee the task of determining whether the student makes adequate revisions. Revisions must be complete and the committee must make its determination by May 20th. Students whose performance merits it will be deemed to have passed with an invitation to continue in the program. Students whose performance still does not merit an invitation to continue will be asked to leave the program with or without a terminal MA degree.

c. Terminal MA: Students who receive this grade have earned an M.A. degree, but are not invited to continue in the program. Combined consideration of the qualifying paper, performance in coursework and overall research potential should inform such a decision. Moreover, prior to recommending a terminal MA, faculty within the student's entire sub-field(s) should meet to consider this option prior to the full faculty evaluation meeting. Before the meeting of the full faculty, all faculty from the relevant sub-field must be in agreement on granting the student a terminal MA degree. The sub-field coordinator is in charge of canvassing the appropriate members of the faculty and reporting their views.

d. Fail: Students who receive this grade do not receive an M.A. degree and are not invited to continue in the program. Combined consideration of the qualifying paper, performance in coursework and overall research potential should inform such a decision. Moreover, prior to recommending a failing grade, faculty within the student's entire sub-field(s) should meet to consider this option prior to the full faculty evaluation meeting. Before the meeting of the full faculty, all faculty from the relevant sub-field must be in agreement that the student has not met the standards for a terminal MA degree to be granted. The sub-field coordinator is in charge of canvassing the appropriate members of the faculty and reporting on their views.

4.2.1 Application for Graduation with an MA Degree

Students who have either chosen or have been asked to graduate with a terminal M.A. must file an Application for Graduation in the Office of the Dean for Graduate Studies early in the term in which they expect to graduate. In doing so, they should consult with the DGS and seek help from the Graduate Administrator. Students must be registered for at least one credit in the term in which they file this application. This means that students who are leaving the program and whose paperwork is not complete by the end of the spring term will have to pay summer tuition in order to graduate with the M.A. in the summer term. A student who has not been registered during the previous year must be readmitted and register for a minimum of three credits in order to graduate.

4.3 Comprehensive Examination

Students must successfully pass comprehensive exams in one of the department's five examination fields in August following the successful completion of the qualifying paper. The purpose of the examination is to demonstrate that the student is capable of teaching a graduate-level seminar in the examining field and to assure that the student can synthesize and critically evaluate the literature. Students must declare their field of examination in response to the DGS requests sent out in the first six weeks of the Spring semester.

The faculty from each field are tasked with creating and maintaining a comprehensive examination reading list, which will be available to students by February prior to the August comprehensive examination. The lists and copies of past years comprehensive exams are accessible through the Graduate Program Canvas Page.

Each field will also create a two-person committee tasked with creating and grading the exam. Members of the field's exam committee will read the exam and determine whether the student should pass or fail.

The exam comprises a written and an oral component. Each field determines the format of the written component and the oral component is based on the written one. The exam will be evaluated holistically. Whatever format the fields choose, it must be conveyed to the students by February of the calendar year during which the exam will take place, together with the material students must use to prepare for the exam. This format will be effective for the class entering the program in Fall 2026.

Students receive one of two possible grades on the comprehensive exam:

a. Pass with invitation to continue to candidacy: Students who achieve this grade are invited to continue on to begin work on the Ph.D.

b. Fail: Students who fail may, in consultation with the Graduate Education Committee and the DGS, attempt the examination in the same field in the following January. Students who have failed any part of the examination are not considered to be in good standing. Students who receive this grade after the second attempt are asked to leave the program by the end of the academic year.

4.4 The Dissertation Committee

During the third year of study, 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, defined below). Doctoral dissertation committees are composed of three "internal members" and one "external member," that is, someone who is at Pitt but not affiliated with the Department or is at a different University. The three internal members must be part of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Pittsburgh and members from the candidate's department.

Students must submit a Dissertation Committee Declaration Form containing the signatures of the three internal members by December 1st of their third year in residence.

Students must secure approval for the external committee member before they defend the dissertation overview. External committee members who are not members of the Graduate Faculty at the University of Pittsburgh, whether or not associated with the University, must be approved by the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. The student's dissertation committee chair is responsible for requesting this approval. The DGS can help guide faculty members through this process.

The dissertation Committee Chair must be physically present at both the overview and dissertation defenses. In special circumstances, a committee member may request to participate remotely via videoconferencing. An internal committee member may request remote participation at either the overview or defense, but cannot participate remotely in both. An external committee member may request to participate remotely at both the overview and the defense. Only the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies can approve remote participation. In these cases, the student's dissertation advisor must prepare a letter to the Assistant Dean explaining the reasons for the request. These requests may take several weeks to process, and students must plan accordingly. The Committee Chair must also complete the Remote Attendance Certification form to verify that all conditions of remote participation were satisfactorily met.

Committee members who leave the University after a student has been admitted to candidacy may stay on the committee provided that the defense is scheduled within 18 months of the faculty member's departure. If the committee's chair leaves the University, he/she may continue to serve as chair, but a co-chair from the department must be designated. Committee members who retire may remain on the committee as long as they are willing to serve.

4.5 The Dissertation Overview

Students should plan to pass the overview by the end of their third year in residence. Students who have not completed the overview in this time frame will be considered to be not in good academic standing. If a student does not form a dissertation committee by April 15th of their third year in residence, he/she will be put on academic notice in the 4th year. The academic notice will be lifted if the following conditions are met:

a. The student forms a committee by September 1st of their 4th year.

b. The committee chair writes a letter to the DGS by that date stating that the student made significant progress on the dissertation overview during summer and has a reasonable chance of defending the overview by the end of 4th year.

c. The student defends the overview by the end of 4th year in residence.

If a student forms a committee on time but does not defend his/her overview by the end of third year, he/she will be put on academic notice in the 4th year. The academic notice will be lifted if the student defends the overview by the end of 4th year in residence.

The overview consists of a carefully developed research design for the proposed Ph.D. dissertation. The document should include a clear statement of the research question, its relationship to the relevant literature in the field, and indicate how the proposed dissertation can contribute to knowledge in that field. Students should work closely with

their advisor to set specific expectations for the overview. 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.

Once admitted to candidacy, students should make sure that the following is observed:

a. The DSAS requires that the doctoral candidate meet at least once a year with his or her dissertation committee to monitor the progress of the Ph.D. It is the responsibility of the student to convene the annual meeting of the committee and inform the DGS that it has occurred.

b. Students must maintain their registration throughout their program of study. Those who have not registered during a 12-month period are transferred to inactive status, and must apply for readmission in order to defend the dissertation. 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.

c. The DSAS 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 and they must pass their Ph.D. comprehensive examinations within seven calendar years of their initial admission to the program.

4.6 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. University regulations regarding the proper formatting of the dissertation are strict, and students must assure that the format of the dissertation matches the Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD) template and other regulations prior to final submission.

5 Practices and Policies Related to Graduate Study

5.1 Transfer Credits

A maximum of 6 credits may be transferred toward the requirements for the Ph.D. degree for course work done in another approved graduate school at the Master's level. If a student has completed more than one year of graduate work beyond the Master's level at another institution, up to 6 additional credits may be accepted for transfer. A student who transfers more than six credits is not eligible to earn a master's degree at the University of Pittsburgh.

In extraordinary circumstances, the faculty of the department may authorize the transfer of up to 24-30 credits. Students who wish to transfer credits must complete the Transfer Credit Authorization Form, secure the proper signatures, and file it with the Graduate

Administrator. Students requesting a waiver from one of the core graduate classes must secure the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies and of the faculty member teaching the class. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all proper forms are in their official departmental files.

5.2 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 two faculty members from the field in which the student will take the comprehensive examination. To establish the advisory committee, students must submit the Advisory Committee Declaration Form indicating their fields of study and containing the signatures of the relevant faculty members.

Each graduate student must convene his or 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 and other requirements, including the determination of the qualifying paper in the student's examining field. Students are free to change the membership of their advisory committee in accordance with changes in their fields or interests. To do so, they must complete a new Advisory Committee Declaration Form, obtain the proper signatures, and file 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, which outlines the responsibilities of both graduate students and faculty. If students have problems with their advisors, they may consult with the DSAS Office of the Ombudsperson, the Chair of the Department, or the Director of Graduate Studies.

5.3 Financial Assistance

Unless specifically informed otherwise in the offer of admission, Ph.D. students receive up to five years of financial support, typically through a combination of pre-doctoral fellowships, TA, TF or GSA appointments (see section 6). All of these forms of financial assistance provide students with full tuition, healthcare benefits, and a living stipend.

Students who enter the program with external funding (e.g. a Fulbright Fellowship) are guaranteed sufficient university financial support to carry them through their fifth year in residence.

5.4 Year by Year Funding

The Department of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh is proud to offer various fellowship opportunities, for which students have no work obligations. These fellowships count toward the five years of support guaranteed by the University.

In most cases, first-year students receive a fellowship from the School of Arts and Sciences (Dietrich School Fellowship). These fellowships do not carry a work requirement, thereby enabling students to focus entirely on their studies. Funding in years two and three typically takes the form of an assistantship (teaching or research). Other competitive fellowship opportunities within the University, such as the Foreign Language Assistance Scholarship (FLAS) or the Gutierrez Fellowship, may be granted in years 2-3 of study.

Some fourth and fifth year students receive fellowships, thereby enabling them to focus entirely on dissertation research. These come in two forms. First, up to five Social Science Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships (SSDD) will be awarded to outstanding students (typically in the fourth year of study) if they have successfully defended a dissertation overview. Second, a select few outstanding students will be nominated each year for university Mellon Fellowships, which is highly competitive. Students are typically nominated to receive a Mellon in their 5th year of study, but occasionally they may be nominated in other years. Fourth- and fifth-year students who do not receive such fellowships, but who have maintained good academic standing, receive teaching or research assistantships or may be allowed to teach their own undergraduate courses.

Aside from the fellowship and teaching opportunities listed above, there is no guarantee of financial support after a student's 5^{th} year. In some cases, contingent upon funding availability from the university, students will obtain a sixth year of funding through the teaching of their own courses. In general, 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. Some resources can also be found in the Political Science Graduate Program Canvas page.

5.5 Summer Funding

Each year, the department awards summer funding to outstanding students. These fellowships are competitive, open to all students in the department, and of variable amount. Such fellowships may be used for field work, general support for research, language training, or to attend educational programs and workshops in other universities. 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. The Director of Graduate Studies will notify the students early in the Spring semester as to the deadline for summer funding proposals.

5.6 Travel Funding

Students registered and active in the program have access to a limited travel budget to help defray travel expenses, conference registration fees, and hotel accommodations for paper or poster presentations at approved academic conferences. Those planning to apply for conference reimbursements should discuss with their plans advisors and notify the department administrator in advance. If funds are insufficient to meet all requests in any given year, the Graduate Awards Committee will consider the applications, giving priority to students in years 2-5, and to those demonstrating the most need and the most scholarly promise.

5.7 Evaluation of Progress

At the end of each academic year, the full faculty reviews the progress of all students in their first three years of the program. These evaluations help ensure that students are moving satisfactorily through key milestones and receiving the guidance they need at each stage of their doctoral training.

In order to maintain good progress,

a. The student must maintain a Grade Point Average higher than 3.5 in each term, in courses taken with full-time graduate faculty within the Department of Political Science.

b. The student must successfully pass the preliminary examination after the first year.

c. The student should not have more than one incomplete on his or her record for more than one consecutive semester. Students are discouraged from carrying incompletes at all, save for unusually extenuating circumstances, which should be discussed with the DGS.

d. The student must complete the Qualifying Paper by the end of the fourth semester in residence.

e. The student must successfully pass his or her comprehensive examination after no more than two attempts, and no later than the end of spring semester of the third year in residence.

f. The student must successfully defend his or her dissertation overview by April of the third year in residence.

g. The student must continue to show promise as a scholar.

Each spring, the Director of Graduate Studies provides written feedback to students completing the first and second years in the program. This feedback informs each student of whether he or she is making "good progress" as defined above, and also provides a qualitative assessment of each student's overall performance. Students in later years receive regular feedback from their dissertation advisor.

5.8 Criteria for Allocation of Social Science Dissertation Development Fellowships

The number of Social Sciences Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships available to Political Science is determined annually by the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research. To receive an SSDD fellowship, students must complete all their pre-dissertation requirements.

Available SSDD fellowships will be allocated in the following order:

a. Students completing all requirements before the end of the spring term in their third year in the program.

b. Students completing all requirements by May 20 of their third year in the program. Students who plan to pass the overview in May must inform the Graduate Administrator by the end of April. They must also enroll for the summer term or teach in the summer.

c. Students completing all requirements before the end of the spring term in their fourth year in the program.

d. Students completing all requirements by May 20 of their fourth year in the program.

If at any stage in this sequence the number of qualifying students is greater than the number of SSDD fellowships remaining to be allocated, the Graduate Awards Committee will determine the allocation of fellowships based on merit (including GPA, publications, and quality of the dissertation proposal). Allocations may also consider balance across fields.

Additional policies adopted by the Graduate Education Committee in order to clarify general criteria outlined in this handbook will be added to it every year.

6 Graduate Appointments (GSA/TA/TF)

Beginning in their second year student financial support may come in the form of appointments as Graduate Student Assistant, Teaching Assistant, or Teaching Fellow.

A *Teaching Assistant* is a graduate student who holds a teaching or teaching-related appointment made in accordance with the University regulations pertaining to TAs. TAs often assist faculty with teaching classes, such as large lecture classes with recitation or lab sections. A *Teaching Fellow* is the same as a TA except that a TF is more educationally advanced or experienced, typically holding the equivalent of a master's degree. TFs are responsible for teaching a significant portion of a course for their own advanced academic and professional training and may be the instructor of record. A *Graduate Student Assistant* is a graduate student who assists in the educational or research mission of the University that support the student's academic and professional development, but does not teach a class, recitation or laboratory.

Related resources:

TA/TF/GSA Academic Regulations

GSR Academic Regulations

Predoctoral Fellows and Trainees Policy

6.1 Supervised Teaching Experience

All students teaching assignment must attend the Department's TA Training Workshop before their first semester of teaching. This workshop is offered every August by the

Director of Undergraduate Studies. These students must also attend the New Teaching Assistant Orientation offered every August by the University Center for Teaching and Learning.
The Department considers teaching an important (though not required) component of graduate training. In most cases, this teaching begins as a graduate teaching assistant (TA). As a TA, students are responsible for discussion sections for one of our large undergraduate lecture courses. TAs are responsible for teaching material, facilitating discussions, answering questions, providing office hours, and grading all materials for the undergraduate students in their sections. TAs must conduct midterm evaluations of teaching in line with the department's requirements, in addition to final evaluations conducted by the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching.

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 the second-year qualifying papers, students may begin teaching summer courses. After passing the Ph.D. comprehensive exams, students may teach courses in the fall and spring semesters. Practically, what this means is that 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. Prior to teaching, students must submit a brief course proposal to the Director of Undergraduate Studies regarding their plans and preferred courses. Applications for summer teaching are solicited each fall semester.

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 should 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.

Students who teach their own courses are required to complete the hands-on teaching practicum course, Faculty Development course (FACDEV 2200), for graduate students to learn about university-level teaching.. This should typically be done during the 3rd year of study. The University requires that all grad- uate student teachers have their courses evaluated by the Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching (OMET).