

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2022-2023

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I. General Information for Graduate Students

A. The Graduate Studies Committee

The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and other related graduate committees are composed of faculty members chosen by the department head. The GSC and related committees are chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies, and their work is assisted by the Graduate Staff Coordinator. The main functions of these committees are:

- to assist in administering the graduate program,
- to propose and consider revisions in the program and the curriculum,
- to make recommendations on departmental awards, including travel awards, and scholarships
- to review and accept applicants for admission to graduate study in political science, and
- to make recommendations concerning the renewal of graduate student assistantships

B. Health Insurance (this information is drawn from the University Health Service website)

Graduate assistants and fellows are eligible to receive University-subsidized health insurance through the Graduate Assistant and Graduate Fellow Health Insurance plan. The University pays 80% of the premium for students in this plan. The remaining 20% of the student premium will be deducted from the September through May stipend checks. The coverage runs through the summer, with deductions for summer (June and July) taken out of spring stipend checks. By default every graduate assistant and fellow is automatically enrolled in the health insurance plan every year. The University also offers subsidized dental and vision plans (these are not mandatory for international students and international dependents). Again, by default, each graduate assistant and fellow is automatically enrolled in the dental and vision plans every year. There will be no more mailing of medical card for the medical insurance. You can go onto the Aetna website and print the card or request a card be mailed to you directly from Aetna. Graduate student must go to the University Health Services first for treatment or a referral, during hours of operation <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health>. If an emergency or the office is closed you can go to Mount Nittany Medical Center.

Domestic students are required to submit their health insurance coverage information via LionPATH after registering for classes. We strongly encourage students who do not have adequate insurance coverage to purchase the Penn State Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP).

All international students are required to provide proof of health insurance coverage that meets a certain set of criteria or purchase the Penn State SHIP. International students can provide proof of coverage through LionPATH after they register for classes and after open enrollment begins. Students are automatically enrolled in this health insurance plan by default; information about waiving enrollment can be found on your LionPATH or Workday accounts, must be sure to follow the proper procedure by the appropriate deadline to waive health insurance or to add their dependents to the plan. International students who want to decline the medical insurance must also complete a waiver application online [by](#) selecting “waive” under the current coverage year in LionPATH. If the waiver application is not approved, you will need to be enrolled in the student health insurance plan (SHIP).

The University pays 75-76% of the premium for dependent coverage. The remaining 25-24% will be deducted from the September through May stipend checks. **If you have dependents, you must re-enroll them every fall semester. Dependents are not automatically reenrolled.** To enroll dependents, you

must fill out a Dependent Enrollment Form by the appropriate deadline every academic year. For more information on this form, contact the Student Health Insurance at (814/865-“4UHS” 4874) or visit the Student Insurance Office website at <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/health-wellness/health-insurance/graduate-assistant-fellows-and-trainees> or contact the Student Insurance Office at uhs-insurance@psu.edu for additional information or questions.

C. International Students

The Directorate of International Student and Scholar Advising (DISSA), located in 410 Boucke Building, provide students with many services (e.g., assistance with government regulations regarding immigration and taxes; academic adjustment and personal counseling; emergency loans). In addition to the services which international students can expect from DISSA, students have a responsibility to provide DISSA with current information, including changes in academic programs or status, and plans to bring family from the home country. In general, the DISSA office should be kept apprised of student activities.

International students with student visas must normally maintain full-time academic status during the fall and spring semesters. Full-time status is maintained by registering for a minimum of nine credits. Exceptions to full-time study must be cleared, in advance, through the Foreign Student Advisor in the DISSA office. Specific questions regarding visas, academic status, work permits, and the like should be directed to the DISSA office.

D. Computing Facilities

The department provides graduate students with computer support in the form of access to a computer lab with PCs (including Apple machines) and a printer as well as shared access to PCs and printer in some of the graduate student offices. In addition, students are provided space on the department server to be used for research or teaching purposes. Computer support is provided both through the College of Liberal Arts (<http://it.la.psu.edu/>) and through Penn State’s IT services (<http://it.psu.edu/>).

There are many computer labs on campus with connections to the University's network of computers. The Information Technology Services staff conducts a variety of workshops. Interested students should plan to attend such sessions.

E. CIC Programs Available to Graduate Students

Penn State is a member of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), an academic consortium of the Big Ten Universities, plus The University of Chicago, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. The CIC sponsors the Traveling Scholars Program, which provides Ph.D. candidates and honors undergraduates the opportunity to study for a year at another CIC university. Supplemental support to attend CIC summer programs is available from the department (and sometimes from the University as well). In addition, the Course Share program allows students to enroll via distance learning in courses at other universities, many less commonly taught languages can be studied in this way. You can contact the graduate office for more information.

F. Job Placement Assistance

Placement assistance is available for students who are completing (or have completed) their Ph.D. In the months before the job search process begins, the Director of Graduate Placement works with students to help them prepare their job packet materials (e.g., curriculum vitae, cover letters, teaching portfolio), to

arrange mock job interviews, and to develop and schedule practice job talks.

Additionally, the Department's placement service coordinates the transmission of confidential materials (e.g., letters of recommendation and transcripts) to hiring departments. Students are responsible for applying for jobs well before each job's deadline. When a student has applied for a job, he or she should notify the Graduate Staff Coordinator. The Graduate Staff Coordinator will provide these materials to the hiring department separate cover. The Graduate Staff Coordinator should be given at least one week's notice to provide those materials to a hiring department.

G. Additional Sources of Graduate Information

Students should consult the *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin* (a publication of the Graduate School) for additional information. The websites for the Graduate School (<http://gradschool.psu.edu/>) and the Graduate & Professional Student Association (<http://gpsa.psu.edu/>) also contains useful information.

II. Degree Requirements

A. Advising

Every student must have an advisor who has a budgeted appointment in the Department of Political Science, though that person need not be that student's sole advisor. The choice of advisor is up to the student.

1. Selecting and Changing Advisors

The Director of Graduate Studies has an initial advising meeting with each of the incoming graduate students prior to the start of classes. At that session, the graduate director assigns the student an advisor, advises the student about fall classes, reviews credits the student may have completed or wishes to transfer, and discusses whatever other issues and questions the students may have. After this initial session, students should remain in frequent contact with their advisors regarding fields of study, course selection, timing of examinations, and the completion of degree requirements. A student's advisor may be changed by the student at any time (normally after consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies). In order to change advisors, students submit to the Graduate Staff Coordinator a form indicating a change in their major advisor.

Once a student begins to work on his or her master's essay, the essay advisor typically replaces the initial academic advisor. Similarly, as a student begins to draft a dissertation prospectus, the faculty member(s) who will (or are expected to) advise the dissertation and chair the doctoral dissertation committee becomes the student's advisor. This advisor should be selected by the time the student defends the dissertation prospectus as part of his or her oral comprehensive/qualifying exam.

Advisor changes that occur any time before a student passes his or her comprehensive/qualifying exams and advances to ABD (all but dissertation) status need only be submitted to the Graduate Staff Coordinator using the department form. Once students are ABD, any changes to their advisor or doctoral committee require the submission of a form to The Graduate School. Students should contact the Graduate Staff Coordinator to initiate the submission of this form.

2. Annual Advising Session

All students must arrange a meeting with their advisory committees each year in late March or early April. For all students, the advising committee is comprised of the student's primary advisor and at least one other faculty member (if second year or beyond the member should be from his or her MA or PhD committees). For students defending their Master's essay, the student may be advised in the same session as the oral defense of their Master's essay as long as they are provided separate advice about their coursework and future plans of study. The advising meeting for all other students should be used to review performance (particularly in the past year), to gauge their progress toward an MA or PhD, and to discuss students' plans for the upcoming summer and subsequent academic year.

Advisors will draft a written summary of the advising session and submit it to the GSC prior to the annual meeting in which the GSC discusses graduate students. The purpose for the annual meeting, which generally takes place in late April or early May, is to develop collective strategies for training graduate students who are doing well, and to identify and develop strategies for working with students who are not performing adequately. Advisors may be asked to modify the advising summary based on the discussion in this meeting. The summary will then be added to the student's file (and available to the student) after the faculty meeting. If appropriate, advisors will be asked to meet again with students who are having difficulty.

B. Course Selection and Course Load

Courses for the first semester in the program will be selected in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies during an initial advising session that occurs prior to the start of fall semester classes. A student's advisor should be consulted prior to all subsequent course registration.

All graduate students in the political science department are required to take at least nine credits per fall and spring semester until they have completed the course credit requirements for a Ph.D. (or a master's degree if they are leaving the program after receiving a master's degree). Nine credits are necessary to maintain full time status, which is a necessary condition for receipt of a graduate assistantship.

The Graduate School requires students receiving assistantships to register for no more than 12 credits per semester. Students may apply for one credit beyond this limit, provided they have the approval of their academic advisor, and the department head. Course overload is routinely checked by the graduate school and a satisfactory explanation is required for any violation. Students who have successfully passed their comprehensive exams may register for 3 credits (either as an auditor or for credit) in addition to signing up for the appropriate 601 class. Students who wish to take a course for credit must submit an application to the department for approval to take the additional courses for credit. The Graduate School does not allow students who have successfully completed comprehensive exams to register for more than 3 additional credits.

The Graduate School requires students to have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better to graduate. However, the department generally expects students to maintain a grade point average of 3.4 or better to be considered in good standing for receiving graduate assistantships.

C. Graduate Core Courses

A select set of courses covering research design and basic statistics are central to the graduate program in political science at Penn State. These courses will be useful for more advanced work in research seminars. The three core courses in the program – PLSC 501, 502, and 503 – are taken during the first year of graduate study.

D. Speech Communication and Writing Courses

The Graduate School requires that the department evaluate each student's English competency in speaking and writing. Spoken and written proficiency in English is made on the basis of oral presentations and written assignments in all graduate seminars. Students whose spoken and written English is judged unsatisfactory are required to enroll in a speaking course in a summer session or upcoming fall. These courses fill up quickly and you will need to consult with your advisor and Graduate Director. You will need to inform the Graduate Staff Coordinator if you are planning to enroll in the course. After satisfactorily completing the required course, students will make a formal presentation (oral or written, depending upon the deficiency) to their advisor early in the fall semester (or early spring if course is taken in the fall). Students who fail to receive a satisfactory rating from their advisors may not continue in the program.

In addition, all international graduate students who have been offered assistantships must take and pass an oral language proficiency test. Penn State's American English Oral Communicative Proficiency Test (AEOCPT) is administered at the beginning of each semester (January, June, and August), but students can only take the test once in a 12-month period. Students' test scores determine when they may assume

teaching duties as a teaching assistant. Depending on the score, a student may be required to complete ESL 115G, ESL 117G, and/or ESL 118G before serving as a teaching assistant. See the Linguistics and Applied Language Studies website for additional information (<http://aplng.la.psu.edu/programs/about-the-aeocpt>)

E. Scholarship and Research Integrity (SARI) Requirements

All graduate students in the College of Liberal Arts entering graduate programs on or after Fall 2009 are required to complete a unit on Scholarship and Research Integrity that is appropriate for their field of study prior to receiving a Master's or Ph.D. from Penn State. In the department of Political Science, the SARI requirement is fulfilled by a) successfully completing PLSC 511 (Professional Norms in Political Science) with a passing grade; b) attending at one departmental brownbag on a SARI-related topic; c) attending at least one workshop sponsored by the Office of Research Protection (ORP) and d) receiving certification in the CITI On-Line course. Proof of completion of these requirements must be provided to the Graduate Staff Coordinator so that the department can certify a student's completion of the requirement to the Graduate School.

In addition, all students are required to complete successfully PLSC 513 (Writing and Professional Development in Political Science) with a passing grade.

Attendance will be taken at all departmental sponsored SARI brown bags. Students are responsible for providing proof of attendance at ORP sponsored workshops to the Graduate Staff Coordinator. No substitutions can be made for these two requirements without prior approval of the Director of Graduate Studies. Students must provide certification that they passed the CITI On-Line course in "Social and Behavioral Human Subjects Research" with a grade of 80% or better. Instructions for enrolling in the on-line courses are found here: <http://www.research.psu.edu/training/sari/citi>.

F. Special Course Registration

There are a number of courses that graduate students may enroll in that require the assistance of the Graduate Staff Coordinator. These courses are:

PLSC 594: supervised research projects; to be taken for a non-quality grade of R during the summer.

PLSC 595: supervised off-campus internships.

PLSC 596: individual/independent study and non-thesis research; a specific title may be entered on a student's transcript if the 596 is arranged at least six weeks prior to the start of the semester in which the course is to be taken.

PLSC 599: graduate-level foreign study at an overseas institution.

PLSC 600: thesis credit; to be taken by students who are doing research on campus and who have *not* passed the oral comprehensive exam and two-semester residence requirement (students should register for a minimum of nine credits of PL SC 600). **Notes:** Students registered for PL SC 600 will not receive a "quality" grade (i.e., A, B, C, etc.). Rather, the symbol R will be used to indicate "that the student has devoted adequate effort to the work scheduled" (Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin, p. 42). R grades do not affect a student's GPA.

PLSC 601: thesis credit; to be taken by students who are on campus, doing thesis work for the Ph.D., *who have passed (ABD)* the oral comprehensive examination and satisfied the two-semester residence requirement. Students registered for PL SC 601 may take up to three additional credits of course work for audit without formal approval by the department or college. Students may also take up to 3 credits for course credit after passing comprehensive exams but this must be approved prior to registration by the Department and College of Liberal Arts. Enrolling in three credits either for audit or credit will be the maximum a student may take along with PL SC 601 without additional special approval by the Graduate School.

PLSC 610: thesis credit; to be taken by students who are doing research off campus (students can maintain *continuous enrollment* while off campus with one credit of PL SC 610 but doing so does not constitute full-time status).

PLSC 611: thesis credit; to be taken by students who are engaged in part time thesis research, and who meet all the requirements for PL SC 601. Students who enroll in PL SC 611 may *not* register for other courses.

When a graduate research seminar is cross listed within the department in two different subfields (e.g., PLSC 552 is offered for credit in either American or comparative politics), students must decide when they register in which subfield credit is to be assigned. Once a subfield is selected for the credit to be assigned, a student's seminar research project must be in that same subfield (i.e., if 552 is taken for credit in comparative politics, then the student's research project must also be in comparative politics). Assignment of credit should be consistent with the student's areas of specialization and program of study. Assignment of credit must be approved by the course instructor and the Director of Graduate Studies.

G. Transfer Students

Students may request to transfer a maximum of 10 credits towards the 30 credits required for a master's degree. Students who have earned a master's degree in political science from an accredited university may request to transfer up to 30 credits towards the 60 credits required for the Ph.D. Successful transfer requires approval of the Director of Graduate Studies (in consultation with relevant faculty).

Core field seminars (PLSC 504, 540, 550, 560) must be completed in residence. Therefore, transferred courses with similar titles will normally count as electives and will not satisfy requirements for field seminars. Students wishing to satisfy the department's methods core requirements of PLSC 502 and PL SC 503 by graduate courses taken elsewhere will normally be expected to pass 504 or another advanced statistics course within the department with a grade of B or higher before the statistics requirement is considered met.

H. M.A. Degree Requirements

The Department of Political Science does not offer a separate program of study leading to the M.A. degree. Instead, students complete their M.A. as a first step toward the Ph.D.

1. Courses and Areas of Study

Requirements for the M.A. degree consist of a total of 30 credits. Students may take a maximum of 6 credits for work in independent studies and internships (PLSC 595 and 596). The one exception is 596 credits that are taken at ICPSR. Students should generally complete the M.A. requirements within four

semesters.

As a part of the general requirements for the M.A. degree, students must complete three core courses – PLSC 501, 502, and 503, and all SARI requirements.

In addition, the M.A. candidate must complete 12 credits in one of the department's four major fields (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, or Political Methodology), including the core seminar (PLSC 504, 540, 550, or 560) in that field.

Students must also complete six credits in a minor field within political science, including the core seminar in that field. The only dual-title M.A. degree that the department offers is with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Students pursuing this dual degree need *not* have a minor field for the M.A. in political science. All other students must have a major and a minor field in political science for the M.A. degree, even if they will not need a political science minor field for the Ph.D.

For students majoring or minoring in methodology, these 12 (for majors) or six (for minors) credits must be more advanced than the 501, 502, and 503, core methods sequence. Students completing a dual M.A. with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies must complete 12 credits in these fields instead of the six credits in a minor field. The dual degree in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies also requires that the student take WMNST 501, 502, and 507 prior to completing the M.A. and the M.A. essay be on a Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies related topic.

Students must also take 511 -- the 1.5 credit "Professional Norms in Political Science" in their first year in the program, which includes completion of online CITI programs and additional training in issues of scholarship and research integrity. Students must receive a passing grade in this class in order to receive their MA degree. Students must also complete all other SARI requirements.

2. M.A. Thesis

Students are required to complete a major research paper, written under the supervision of their master's essay advisor. The essay may originate as a seminar paper presented in connection with formal course work. It should demonstrate significant research accomplishment and have the scope and length of a major journal article.

Students are required to successfully defend their master's essay before their master's committee before they can receive their MA. Candidates for a master's degree will schedule their oral defense of their master's essay after (a) submitting a complete draft of the essay to their advisor and receiving the advisor's approval to move ahead with the defense; and (b) submitting a complete draft of the essay to the other members of the master's committee. The essay will be the primary focus of the oral exam. In some cases, the master's committee may wish to discuss a student's essay-related coursework.

The student's master's committee will consist of their master's essay advisor and two additional members of the graduate faculty. The student's master's essay advisor must be in his or her major field of study. For students completing a dual M.A. with Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, one faculty member from Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies should be included on the master's committee, and the thesis topic must reflect their inquiry in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. While there is no dual-title M.A. degree between Political Science and African American and Diaspora Studies, African Studies, or Asian Studies has a dual degree MA degree, students in these dual degree programs should generally write M.A. essays on subjects related to these fields of study. They should also consult the section on

their dual degree below as well as the Director of Graduate Studies in their dual major on course selection every year.

I. Ph.D. Degree Requirements

1. Courses and Areas of Study

The department requires a minimum total of 60 credits of major field, minor field, and dissertation coursework. At least 45 credits of work must be in political science.

All students in the Political Science Ph.D. program must complete coursework in a major field as well as a “second minor” (or “third field”). Additionally, all students must *either* complete coursework in a political science minor field (the “first minor”) *or* a dual-title program.

Students also are required to complete the designated core courses listed below in sections (a) and (b) before taking their Ph.D. qualifying/comprehensive exams, and to complete coursework in a major and two minor fields.

a. Fields of Study

Students should consult with their advisor about their selection of fields. Major and first minor fields may be selected from the following:

- American Politics: includes the study the study of political institutions and political behavior in the United States.
- Comparative Politics: concerns the cross-national study of political institutions and behavior, including such questions as the relationship between the state and society, the development of democracy and dictatorship, and the origins and ramifications of domestic political conflict.
- International Relations: includes the study of international conflict, conflict resolution, and international political economy.
- Political Methodology: includes the application of quantitative, qualitative, and formal methods of analysis to study politics.
- **NOTE:** Political Methodology may not be used as a major field if the student chooses to pursue the Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and Social Data Analytics.

Second minors, i.e., “third fields,” are fields defined by the student and that are relevant to the student’s academic interests. The third field may be one of the program’s existing fields, or it may be comprised of courses from a range of fields or academic disciplines. Three courses are sufficient to meet this third-field requirement. The coherence and relevance of those three courses should be established to the student’s committee’s satisfaction, however “third field” courses may not double-count with a student’s major, minor, or dual-title degree requirements.

b. Methodology Core Requirement

Courses in the methods core should be completed as early as possible in a student's program of study. The typical core sequence includes PLSC 501 (Methods of Political Analysis), PLSC 502 (Statistical Methods for Political Research), and PLSC 503 (Multivariate Analysis for Political Research), for a total of nine credits.

c. Professional Development

Students are required to complete two, 1.5 credit professional development seminars. The first of these seminars is generally taken in the student's first year (Professional Norms in Political Science) and includes completion of online Collaborative IRB Training Initiative programs and additional training in issues of scholarship and research integrity (students must complete other SARI requirements on their own). The second is taken in the student's second year of the program (Writing and Professional Development in Political Science). These three credits are Pass/Fail and do not count towards the student's required 60 credits of coursework for the Ph.D. Students are also required to attend at least one workshop sponsored by the Office of Research Protections.

d. Introductory Field Seminars

Students are required to take one proseminar in their major field, first minor field, and – if appropriate – second minor (third field) field if those fields are methods, American, comparative or international politics. The proseminars offered in the political science department are PLSC 504 (Methods), PLSC 540 (American politics), PLSC 550 (Comparative politics), and PLSC 560 (International relations).

e. Field Credits

The department requires that a student complete a minimum of 15 credits of course work in their major field, and nine credits in each of the two minor fields. Credits earned in the introductory field seminars may apply toward this requirement (exception: for political methodology, nine credits must be taken beyond 501-502-503).

f. Dual Title Programs

The department offers dual-title Ph.Ds with African American and Diaspora Studies, African Studies, Asian Studies, Social Data Analytics, and Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Students should consult the *Graduate Bulletin* (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/programs/majors/political-science/#dualtitlestext>) for specific requirements for each dual-title degree. Students are encouraged to reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies in their dual-title program of interest early in their graduate career to assist with course selection and admission into the dual-title program.

f. Independent Study and Internships

Students are permitted to take a maximum of 12 credits of coursework in independent studies and internships (PLSC 595 and 596). 596 credits taken for attending ICPSR will not count against the 12-credit maximum.

2. Ph.D. Qualifying Examination

a. Purpose

At the end of the fall semester, each second year the graduate student has a meeting with his or her advisor and two other faculty members. This session has two main objectives. First, the session offers the advisory committee an opportunity to assess a student's initial progress in the program, to provide feedback on that student's progress, and to work with him or her to plan a future course of study. Second (and relatedly), it is the occasion for the student's committee to formally recommend whether the student should be admitted to doctoral candidacy. This session satisfies the Graduate School's requirement for a "Qualifying Exam." The outcome of the qualifying exam is either pass, fail, or decision deferred. If a student passes, he or she is officially a candidate for the Ph.D. A failure in the qualifying exam reflects the examining committee's view that the student should not continue to pursue a Ph.D. at Penn State. A deferred decision means that the committee is uncertain about whether the student is a promising candidate for the Ph.D. If the decision is deferred, the committee will indicate a time for reassessment (see below).

b. Format

As noted above, the session has two objectives. One of these objectives is to give students' committees a chance to assess their initial progress in the program, to provide feedback on their progress, and to work with students to plan a future course of study. The materials in a student's file, as well as the materials a student circulates to his or her committee will provide the basis for this assessment and discussion. Students should be prepared to discuss: their first two semesters and a half in the graduate program; some ideas about research interests and plans; the course work students plan to undertake in order to write and complete both a master's essay and dissertation; a proposal for master's essay and/or dissertation research; students' summer plans; and any other topics students feel it is important to discuss. Students should also come to the session with questions about their program of study.

The second objective is to assess a student's qualifications to pursue the PhD. Because the department does not administer a written qualifying exam, a student's record, and the ensuing discussion of it in the advising session, will serve as the basis for the advising committee's assessment of a student's likelihood of success in the Ph.D. program, and thus his or her suitability for continuation in the program. If the committee determines that a student is doing well in the program, he or she will be admitted formally to doctoral candidacy. If a student has had significant problems – for instance, with course work or with GA responsibilities – the advisory committee may recommend steps that a student can take to address these problems in the short term. The advisory committee may follow up on deficiencies discussed in the session by requiring a second assessment session at a later date (in which case the qualifying decision would be postponed). In the case of serious deficiencies or problems, the committee may recommend that a student complete a terminal master's degree, or that a student leave the program at the end of the semester (under these circumstances, a student would obviously not be formally admitted to the PhD program).

Although student circumstances vary, faculty will consider these general guidelines in making decisions about the qualifying exam.

A decision to pass means that the student shows promise for completing the Ph.D. at Penn State. Students who pass the qualifying exam will have positive seminar evaluations, they will have done well in their courses, and they will be able to articulate a relatively clear research topic or area of interest.

A decision to fail reflects the examining committee's view that the student should not continue to pursue a Ph.D. at Penn State. Students who fail the qualifying exam include those who are struggling in their courses, show insufficient motivation in seminars, and/or cannot articulate research interests. Students who fail the qualifying exam may continue in the program to complete their master's degree.

The decision is likely to be deferred if the committee is uncertain about whether the student is a promising candidate for the Ph.D. If the decision is deferred, the committee will provide a clear statement of what the student will need to accomplish to demonstrate adequate progress and fitness to pass the exam. The committee also must indicate a time for reassessment, but in any event prior to the end of the third semester of coursework (not including summer session). Advisors will prepare a written summary of the advising committee's recommendations. The summary will be added to each student's file.

c. Advisory Committee

The advisory committee must consist of three members of the department faculty: the student's advisor, a faculty member of the student's choosing with whom the student has taken (or is taking) a class, and a member of the Graduate Studies Committee. Students in dual degree programs must include a member of the dual-title program on the advisory committee. This person could be a fourth committee member or one of the three departmental committee members could "double" as the dual-title member.

d. Preparation

Students must schedule their qualifying exam with the Graduate Staff Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the date. The Graduate Staff Coordinator will reserve a room for the session and prepare paperwork that will need to be signed by your committee the day of the exam.

At least one week in advance of the session, students must distribute to their advisory committees four documents: a CV; a brief (one page or so) statement of research interests indicating the questions, topics, and/or puzzles they would like to study; an agenda of courses to be taken prior to comprehensive exams; and a backward calendar from receipt of Ph.D. to the semester subsequent to the qualifying exam.

Students may also distribute papers or other written work from their courses to members of their committees. If materials beyond those that are required are distributed, students should include a cover memo that describes to their committee the reason(s) for including the additional information.

In addition to these data, the graduate studies office will collect some basic information about students' fall seminar performance for students and their committees to review. Specifically, faculty who are teaching graduate seminars will be asked to complete an evaluation checklist in early October for each second-year student in their class. The evaluation forms will be placed in

each student's file.

Students should discuss with their advisor both the materials they are preparing for the session, and the format of the session. A memo regarding qualifying exams will be distributed to students in early fall.

3. Doctoral Committee

Within one calendar year of having passed the Qualifying Exam, each student is required to have constructed a Doctoral Committee (<https://gradschool.psu.edu/graduate-education-policies/gcac/gcac-600/gcac-602-phd-committee-formation/>) to provide advise leading to a successful dissertation.

Typically, one member of the department's graduate faculty is selected to serve as the primary doctoral advisor. In some cases, it is possible to arrange for two members of the department's graduate faculty to serve as co-advisors. The doctoral committee consists of at least three members of the Department of Political Science and at least one member from another department (the outside member). The doctoral advisor must be in the student's major field. For students in dual-degree programs, the doctoral committee must include at least two members who are affiliated faculty in their dual major. In some cases, a person with a joint or affiliate appointment in both programs may count as both a political science advisor and a dual degree advisor. In cases where the most appropriate advisor is a faculty member who is not tenured, a co-advisor arrangement may be permitted subject to approval by the Director of Graduate Studies or the department head.

4. Dissertation Prospectus¹

Student may choose to write a dissertation prospectus prior to taking the written comprehensive exams (the "Prospectus Track" or "Track I") or choose not to do so (the "Exam Track" or "Track II"). Under the Prospectus Track, a student will submit a prospectus to the departmental members of her/his dissertation committee **no later than** two months prior to the scheduled major field written comprehensive exam for approval. The committee within two weeks of that submission must approve or not approve the

1 For purposes of this document, a "prospectus" is written by a student under the Prospectus Track and submitted to her or his committee at least two months prior to the date of the major written comprehensive exam. The style and length of an acceptable dissertation prospectus varies. Generally, a fifteen-page prospectus is expected, but a doctoral committee may request a longer and more detailed document. The prospectus at this stage is intended: 1) to permit the committee to judge the student's ability to undertake a dissertation in political science; 2) to determine whether the proposed dissertation topic is promising; and 3) to demonstrate mastery of the literature relevant to the proposed research.

The "proposal" (see Section 7, below) is written by all students, regardless of the track chosen, and submitted to the doctoral committee prior to the oral comprehensive exam. The amount of specificity in a proposal will vary from case to case and ultimately will depend on the judgment of the doctoral advisor and doctoral committee. In some cases, the doctoral advisor will urge the committee to approve a short, general proposal that permits the student wide latitude in exploratory research. In others, the committee may desire a very specific plan before encouraging a student to invest time and effort in field research, data collection, or analysis. Given this wide range of expectations, students are advised to maintain frequent communication with their primary doctoral advisors as the dissertation idea evolves.

Generally, it is expected that a student pursuing the Prospectus Track will incorporate much of the prospectus into the proposal. The prospectus is intended to provide a foundation for the proposal and to facilitate the proposal's development and completion.

prospectus. An affirmative vote by majority of the committee is required for approval of the prospectus; the committee chair must be included in that majority. If the prospectus is approved, the student may opt out of the afternoon portion of the major field examination in political science.

If the prospectus is not approved, the student must take the morning and afternoon portions of the major field exam when the exam is next offered. That is, a student whose prospectus is not approved cannot, under normal circumstances, delay taking her or his written comprehensive.

A student wishing to pursue the Prospectus Track is required to get her/his advisor's written approval by the end of the second week of the semester in which the prospectus will be submitted.

Students are expected to consult with their advisor about what constitutes an acceptable prospectus.

5. Written Comprehensive Examinations for the Ph.D.

Students must pass written comprehensive examinations in their major and first minor field. The student must also submit a portfolio of work from courses comprising the second minor (third) field.

The comprehensive examination should be scheduled within a year of completion of all required course work to provide students with timely assessment of their ability to complete their dissertation, but it must be scheduled no later than five years following the passing of the Qualifying Examination.

The comprehensive examinations require the student to demonstrate mastery of critical literature and key debates in the field, to summarize and synthesize arguments across the literature, to apply their knowledge of the literature to answer questions about the state of the discipline, and to identify gaps in and directions for further research.

Written comprehensive exams are offered two times each year, in January and in May. Under special circumstances and in consultation with their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies, students may also receive permission to take exams in August. Students should plan to take their comprehensive exams as soon as they are ready, as determined in consultation with their advisors. Students entering Penn State with a bachelor's degree or master's degree in political science should take exams in January of their third year; the exam also could be taken in May after completion of the third year.

At the time that the written comprehensive examination is administered a student must:

- have a minimum graduate GPA of 3.00 (at Penn State); and
- have no deferred grades.

The major field examination will be a full day exam, while the minor field exam is typically half a day. *Exceptions:* 1) students in dual degree programs take a full day exam in their dual major, with the exception of students with a dual major in Social and Data Analytics, who will take a half-day exam in that field; 2) students taking the political methodology qualifying exam as their major field will also give an oral presentation on an advanced methods topic; and 3) a student who has had a prospectus accepted under the Prospectus Track need not take the afternoon session of the major field exam in political science.

Major and minor field examinations typically are administered approximately five days apart.

The comprehensive examination questions for each field are written and graded by two or more subfield

examiners appointed by the department head. In the case of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies minor qualifying exam, at least one examiner each will be appointed by the political science department head and by the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program head.

Each examiner gives a grade of "Superior," "Above Average," "Pass," or "Fail" to the written examination. To pass, both examiners must give a grade of "Pass" or higher. If the examiners are unable to agree about whether an exam is a "pass" or a "fail," they should reach out to the Director of Graduate Studies. The DGS, in consultation with the Department Head, will appoint an ad hoc committee of three supplemental readers who will provide the DGS with an up-or-down "pass" or "fail" evaluation of the exam as a whole. The majority vote of this ad hoc committee will constitute the result of the exam. Students may review past written comprehensive exam questions. These questions are available from the Graduate Staff Coordinator.

Students who fail their major and/or minor comprehensive examinations may petition the Director of Graduate Studies for permission to re-take the examination(s) at the next regularly scheduled administration. Under no circumstances will a third attempt be permitted.

A student who has failed the written comprehensive exam must retake the exam in the same format. A failed exam taken in the Exam Track must be retaken under the Exam Track format; a failed Prospectus Track exam must be taken under the Prospectus Track exam format.

6. Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral comprehensive exam must follow the written comprehensive exam within the same semester. Students are encouraged to complete the oral exam as soon as possible after the outcome of the written exam is known. The oral exam must be completed no later than the end of the semester in which the written exam was completed. Thus, students taking the written qualifying exam in May must check with each member of their doctoral committee in advance to ensure that all members will be in town during an appropriate period in the summer.

Students are responsible for arranging a date and time for the oral examination with their committee, and for providing this information to the Graduate Staff Coordinator *at least three weeks prior to the oral exam*. The three-week window is needed to process and submit the appropriate forms to The Graduate School.

At the time that the oral comprehensive examination is administered a student must:

- satisfy the English competency requirement
- satisfy the Department's foreign language/research skill proficiency requirement and
- register as a full-time or part-time student.

The oral comprehensive examination is administered by the doctoral committee. The examination focuses on the dissertation proposal (see below), as well as the student's preparation to undertake dissertation research as evidenced by the student's written comprehensive examinations, third field portfolio, course preparation, research experience, and overall record of performance in the program. The doctoral committee may, at its discretion, bring in an additional member or members of the major or minor fields to assist in administering the comprehensive examination.

The doctoral committee grades the student's oral comprehensive examination performance using the scale

“Superior,” “Above Average,” “Average,” “Below Average,” or “Fail.” In order to pass the exam, two-thirds of the committee must provide grades of “below average” or higher. In cases where a student fails an exam and the failure is due to a specific weakness in preparation, the doctoral committee shall explain this in a memo to the Director of Graduate Studies and propose a timetable for the student to address this weakness and retake the comprehensive examination. Examples of specific weaknesses include inadequate language preparation or statistics background needed to undertake the proposed dissertation, a third field portfolio that is judged inadequate, and a dissertation proposal that is deemed poorly conceived. In any case of failure, the student may appeal to the Director of Graduate Studies to retake the examination in the next semester. In no instance shall a student be permitted to take the oral comprehensive examination a third time.

Passage of the comprehensive examination denotes advancement to ABD (all but dissertation) status.

If six years elapse between passing the comprehensive examination and completion of the degree program, the student must re-take and pass written and oral comprehensive examinations before the final oral defense of the dissertation will be scheduled.

7. Dissertation Proposal

Within six months of passing the oral comprehensive examination, a student must submit to the Director of Graduate Studies a proposal approved by the members of the student’s doctoral committee. In some cases, the initial proposal will be approved and satisfy this requirement. In other cases, however, the doctoral committee will require a revised proposal to contain more detail about the conduct of the dissertation research.

As some superior dissertations require more time to formulate than others, the six-month period may be extended by the Director of Graduate Studies upon written request by the student’s doctoral advisor. This request must describe the student's progress to date and an anticipated timetable for submitting an approved proposal.

In some (perhaps most) cases, the doctoral advisor may request that the committee reconvene for a formal oral defense of a revised proposal.

The proposal requirement must be met in order for the student to be in good academic standing and eligible for departmental financial assistance, teaching assignments, or use of the placement service.

8. Dissertation and Final Oral Defense

The final oral defense is administered by the doctoral committee. Students are responsible for arranging a date and time for the final oral defense with their committee, and for providing this information to the Graduate Staff Coordinator *at least three weeks prior to the defense*. The three-week window is needed to process and submit the appropriate forms to The Graduate School.

The Graduate Staff Coordinator will announce each student’s oral defense to members of the department. The defense is open to the public and anyone may attend. Requirements for the dissertation are noted in the *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin* (online at <https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/>). The dissertation must meet at least two minimal requirements. First, it must represent an original contribution to our knowledge and understanding of politics. Second, it must be sufficiently ambitious to demonstrate the candidate’s ability to undertake and competently complete original and independent research projects

after completing the degree.

If six years elapse between passing the comprehensive examination and completion of the degree program, the student must re-take and pass written and oral comprehensive examinations before the final oral defense of the dissertation will be scheduled.

J. Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and African American and Diaspora Studies

<https://afam.la.psu.edu/>

K. Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and African Studies

<https://africanstudies.la.psu.edu/>

L. Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and Asian Studies

<https://asian.la.psu.edu/>

M. Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and Social Data Analytics

<https://soda.la.psu.edu/>

N. Dual Ph.D. in Political Science and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

<https://wgss.la.psu.edu/>

O. Termination of Graduate Study

The procedure for termination of a graduate student for unsatisfactory scholarship is set forth in Appendix III of the *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin*. The major provisions of this document are:

1. When the department head or Director of Graduate Studies determines that a student must be terminated for unsatisfactory scholarship, the student must be given advance notice, in writing, which in general terms shall advise the student of the academic reason for termination.
2. Upon receipt of this notice the student has the opportunity to seek a review of the decision. If the student desires such a review, the student must, within ten days of receipt of the notice, submit a written appeal to the department head or Director of Graduate Studies.
3. If, as a result of a meeting, the termination decision is sustained, notice will be given to the student and the Dean of the Graduate School. Within five days after receiving this notice of termination for unsatisfactory scholarship, the student may make a written request to the Dean of the Graduate School for further review of the decision.

A graduate student will not be permitted to continue in the Department of Political Science if he or she:

1. Fails to attain a grade point average of at least 3.0 by the end of the second semester of full-time study (or 18 credits of coursework) and every semester thereafter.
2. Fails to complete successfully the qualifying exam, or comprehensive examinations.
3. Fails to adhere to the University code of Conduct.

III. Assistantships and Other Financial Support

A. Departmental Assistantships

Assistantships are contracts to provide services to the department in the form of research or teaching assistance for which a stipend is received. A half-time assistantship (the typical assistantship awarded) provides students with a monthly stipend during the fall and spring semesters plus a grant-in-aid of resident education tuition in exchange for research and teaching assistance responsibilities that occupy approximately twenty hours per week. Students with assistantships schedule 9-12 credits of coursework each semester. A student's specific assistantship duties will be determined by the faculty member to whom that student has been assigned. See Appendix A "General Criteria for Awarding & Renewing Graduate Assistantships and Fellowships" for additional information.

Penn State is on a semester calendar system. The period of instruction each semester is fifteen weeks. ***Graduate assistants are appointed for eighteen weeks of activities each semester.*** Although assistantship responsibilities begin and end each semester, the academic year appointment (thirty-six weeks) begins on the Monday following the last day of Summer Session final exams and continues until the last day of exams for the spring semester, less the period of time classes are suspended at Thanksgiving, over the December holidays, and during Spring Break.

It is a general policy to assign graduate assistants largely scholarly tasks that will give them useful teaching and research experience in their fields of study. For the most part, research assistants are students supported by faculty with externally funded research projects or departmental funding. Continuation of a research assistantship depends on the quality of the work performed and the availability of funds. Students may also be assigned to teaching assistantships, helping instructors with undergraduate or graduate courses. Advanced students may also be assigned to be the sole instructor of an undergraduate course. Assistantship duties may also include tasks involved in conducting the work of the department (e.g., collecting data for departmental reports to the College). In making assignments effort is made to match student interests with available assistantships, but students may be assigned assistantships outside their areas of interest.

A graduate assistant may not accept concurrent employment inside or outside the University unless special permission is obtained from the Director of Graduate Studies or department head.

Assistantship stipends are paid monthly. For the fall semester, graduate assistants will be paid one fifth of the semester stipend at the end of August (if processed in time), and then monthly through December. For the spring semester, graduate assistants will receive one fifth of the semester stipend at the end of January (if processed in time), and then monthly through May.

A student entering the program with a bachelor's degree (or with a master's degree that is not closely linked to the student's coursework in political science) can normally expect funding for five academic years so long as he or she maintains a strong academic record and makes timely progress through the program. The department often provides funding for a sixth year, with preference given to students who have excelled academically; in some cases, preference will be shown to students highly qualified to meet specific a department needs (e.g., teaching a course on a particular topic).

In addition to receiving a grant-in-aid of tuition during the period of appointment, a graduate student may be eligible for other forms of tuition assistance or loans.

B. Summer Tuition Assistance Program (STAP)

This program, funded by The Graduate School, provides tuition assistance to graduate students who have held assistantships or full fellowships for two consecutive semesters (Fall and Spring) so they can continue graduate studies during the summer. Students previously appointed as graduate assistants or fellows may enroll for a maximum of 9 credits during the summer. STAP funding is competitive and requires an application from eligible graduate students. The application can be found online (<https://secure.gradsch.psu.edu/stap/>). Students may submit an application beginning in February, and applications are accepted on a rolling basis. The College of the Liberal Arts receives limited STAP funds, therefore, **students seeking summer tuition assistance are advised to apply early.**

C. Other Sources of Financial Support

Students may wish to explore fellowship opportunities from the College of the Liberal Arts (<http://www.la.psu.edu/current-students/graduate-students/student-resources/student-resources-1>), the Graduate School, the National Science Foundation (general graduate and minority student fellowships), and elsewhere.

IV. General Administrative Policies and Procedures

A. Department Facilities, Services, and Supplies Available to Graduate Students

Office space for graduate assistants is generally located in Pond Lab. Assistants typically have access to a desk, a shared computer and printer, and a shared telephone (for local calls only). Printers are available for graduate student use in 214, 224 and 314 Pond. Additional computers are available for graduate student use in the department's computer lab located in 124 Pond. While no limits exist on printing; students are asked to be judicious in their printing, and the department will occasionally monitor printer usage. Students who abuse their printing privileges will be warned and continued abuse of printing privileges may lead to elimination of printing privileges.

Graduate student mailboxes are located in 203 Pond. Students are expected to check their assigned boxes often.

Graduate students will be given keys to access their office space and 224 Pond (the graduate office which houses the high speed printer as well as a refrigerator and microwave oven). Keys as well as the lock combination for 124 Pond (the computer lab) are available in 220 Pond Lab. Supplies, use of the copy and fax machines, and clerical assistance typically are available only in conjunction with the assigned duties of graduate assistants (consult your faculty supervisor for more information). You will be assigned a code for the copying machine (if assigned as TA or instructors) which you will need to enter each time you wish to use the machine for assistantship duties. Typically, the code will be the last 4 digits of your Penn State ID number. If there are duplicates, a random number may need to be assigned.

B. Guidelines for Graduate Student Absences or Leaves

Graduate assistants who serve as research assistants or teaching assistants are generally assumed to be on campus and available during the regular academic year. There are different policies that pertain to short-term absences, medical and family leaves, and parent leaves. Students concerned about longer leaves should consult the graduate school policies on absences and leaves for graduate assistants at <http://www.gradsch.psu.edu/graduate-funding/infoga/paid-leaves/> which pertain only to issues related to the individual as a graduate assistant.

1. Short-Term Absences

Short-term absences, typically less than one-week duration, are generally not problematic. In these instances, the graduate assistant should make arrangements with their supervising professor. In the cases of foreseeable events, the student should inform his/her supervisor as soon as the circumstances and dates of needed leave are known. For unforeseeable events, notification should be made as soon as possible once the need arises.

Graduate students who are teaching their own classes are expected to meet all scheduled classes and be present at posted office hours. If you know in advance that you must be absent from a class for reasons such as attending a conference, you are expected to notify the department head and Director of Graduate Studies ahead of time and inform them how the class will be handled in your absence. It is not acceptable to reschedule classes, with the exception of independent studies or small graduate courses if this is done in a way that does not shorten the semester or lengthen vacations.

2. Medical and Family Leave Policies

If a graduate assistant is unable to fulfill the duties of his/her assistantship appointment because of illness, injury, or needing to care for an immediate family member for a longer duration, the graduate assistant must submit a written request to the Director of Graduate Studies. The request should be made by the student as soon as it is known that an extended leave will be required. If the leave is approved, the graduate assistant's stipend can be maintained for up to six weeks or until the end of the appointment (whichever occurs first) in the case of personal illness or injury and up to three weeks or until the end of the appointment (whichever occurs first) to care for an immediate family member. In the event that the leave period includes an academic break included in the regular period of appointment, such as the winter break that occurs between fall and spring semesters for an academic year appointment, the leave period includes the academic break and cannot be extended by the length of the break.

Requests for an extended paid leave are generally granted but may be denied for a number of reasons, including but not limited to inadequate documentation, repeated requests for paid leaves, documented unsatisfactory performance, or incompatibility with funding source guidelines.

3. Parental Leave Policies

Penn State's policy is to reasonably accommodate the needs of its graduate assistants when they become parents. A graduate assistant who becomes a parent is eligible for paid leave upon the birth of a biological child or when an adoptive child is placed within the individual's custody and adoption proceedings are officially underway. Graduate assistants desiring a new parent paid leave must submit a written request to the Director of Graduate Studies. Where medical leave is required prior to the birth of a child, or because of complications that may arise during or following the birth of a child, these leave requests are to be handled in the same manner as other illnesses or injuries.

4. Denial of Leave

Should a request for an extended paid leave of any type be denied, the graduate assistant has the right to appeal such a decision by submitting an appeal in writing to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts. This appeal must be submitted within 10 days of receiving the notification that the original request has been denied.

C. Academic Standards

Students who wish to submit the same (or a similar) paper in order to satisfy the requirements for more than one seminar must consult with and receive prior approval from the faculty who are leading each of the relevant seminars. The department insists on strict standards of academic honesty in all courses. Any case of plagiarism will be reported to the College Academic Integrity Committee and will be severely penalized. In general, plagiarism can be defined as the act of passing off the work of someone else as your own. Specific information about University policies regarding what constitutes plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity can be found on the website (<http://english.la.psu.edu/undergraduate/plagiarism-policy>) who have questions about academic integrity issues should contact their advisors, another faculty member, or the Director of Graduate Studies.

D. Graduate Assistant Evaluations

All faculty supervising teaching or research assistants are asked to provide a written evaluation of the student's performance at the end of each semester of service. These evaluations will be placed in the

student's permanent file and will be consulted in all decisions for assistantship renewal and for appointment as an instructor.

E. Department Appeals Procedure

Decisions of a faculty advisor or committee may be appealed to the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Head. With all appeals, the decision of the Department Head is final.

F. University-Level Graduate Student Problem Resolution

The Code of Conduct and Procedures for Resolution of Problems are contained in Appendices I and II of the *Graduate Degree Programs Bulletin* (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/graduate/>).

G. Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention Training

The department requires all graduate students to comply with university policy regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. This policy (AD85) is outlined on the following website: <http://guru.psu.edu/policies/AD85.html>

As part of this compliance, graduate students are required to complete Title IX training within 30 days of employment at Penn State.

H. Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Training

The department requires all graduate students to be in compliance with university policy regarding mandatory reporting of child abuse. This policy is stated below:

All Penn State employees and Authorized Adults are required to complete a Reporting Child Abuse training every three years (See Penn State Policies [AD72](#) and [AD39](#)). After you complete the training, you are required to maintain and/or produce a current certificate upon request. If you are classified as an Authorized Adult, you also need to share a copy of the certificate with your program director, manager, or supervisor.

Appendix A

Criteria for Awarding & Renewing Graduate Assistantships/Fellowships

Overview

The responsibility for admission to the graduate program and appointment as a graduate assistant is vested in the graduate faculty of the department, acting through the Graduate Studies Committee. For students completing all Ph.D. requirements during their period of funding eligibility, the Committee also recommends (to the Department Head) appointments to the position of Fixed-Term Instructor. The Committee, together with the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Head, shares responsibility for administering the graduate program, consistent with the rules of the Graduate School and the University. The criteria outlined below are designed to ensure the highest degree of excellence and to assure fair treatment to all promising applicants who qualify for both admission to the program and a graduate assistantship.

The number of qualified applicants invariably exceeds the number of available positions. Thus, many qualified applicants will be denied admission to the program. In addition, because assistantship awards are competitive, renewal is not automatic and failure to receive a renewal may reflect the relative merits of those in the applicant pool.

Disqualifying criteria

Disqualifying criteria include:

- Continuing students who have completed two or more semesters of full time study, with a graduate GPA below 3.4.
- Students with more than one deferred grade (DF). For these purposes, an “administrative F” shall be defined as a deferred grade.
- Students who do not advance to qualifying, complete their master’s essay, pass their comprehensive exams, or make progress on their dissertations in a timely fashion (see below).
- Unprofessional performance as a graduate student or teaching/research assistant shall disqualify a student from renewal of an assistantship. Unprofessional performance may include (but is not limited to):
 - Repeated absence from class responsibilities or office hours.
 - Repeated evidence of poor preparation for class.
 - Repeated missing of deadlines including (but not limited to) supervisor deadlines for completing assistantship tasks.
 - Violation of University rules and policies including (but not limited to) those pertaining to academic integrity and sexual harassment.

Competitive criteria for awarding assistantships

Letters of award, and annual letters of renewal, indicate a period of eligibility for graduate assistant support. Typically, this period is five years for students admitted with a bachelor's degree. During this period, financial assistance requires demonstration of satisfactory skills and performance as a graduate assistant and demonstration of academic excellence combined with timely progress towards degree completion.

Two important criteria for ranking students for assistantship renewals are academic excellence and progress towards degree completion (initial assistantship awards consider academic excellence). Given these criteria, assistantship decisions will consider the following aspects of a student's portfolio:

1. Academic performance in the graduate program at Penn State as indicated by grades, faculty seminar evaluations, evaluations of qualifying exam, and comprehensive examinations.
2. Research accomplishments such as internal and external research grants, conference participation, and scholarly publications.
3. Timely completion of coursework, distribution requirements, and examinations. Except in extenuating circumstances, the following schedule represents expected progress towards the degree:

Schedule of progress:	Students entering with a bachelor's or a master's degree:
Ph.D. qualifying exam	November of year 2
Defense of M.A. Essay	April/May of year 2
Written comprehensive exams	January in the middle of year 3 or May at the end of year 3
Prospectus and oral comprehensive exam	May at the end of year 3 or August in the fall of year 4

Students failing to meet these goals shall be given lower priority for graduate assistant support, but students may provide evidence of mitigating circumstances. These may include personal or medical circumstances as well as scholarly ones (e.g., an especially ambitious dissertation may require unusual preparation).

Performance as a teaching or research assistant is assessed each semester by supervising faculty. In teaching assistant and lecturer assignments student teaching evaluations are made as well. Two or more evaluations that indicate below average performance, unprofessional conduct or unreliability shall be taken as evidence of below average performance. Although below average performance does not automatically disqualify a student, students with below average performance shall be renewed only when financial resources are ample.

Appendix B

Summary of Program Milestones

First Year

- Annual Advising Session (Late Spring)

Second Year

- Qualifying Exam (mid-Fall)
- M.A. Defense (by end of April)
- Annual Advising Session (Late Spring)

Third Year

- Dissertation Committee Formed (mid-Fall)
- Written Comprehensive Exams (January or May)
- Oral Comprehensive Exam (End of Written Exam Semester)
- Annual Advising Session (Late Spring)

Fourth Year

- Dissertation Proposal Approved (Six Months from Oral Exam date)
- Job Market Notification (Winter)
- Annual Advising Session (Late Spring)

Fifth/Sixth Year

- Apply for Jobs
- Dissertation Defense
- Annual Advising Session (Late Spring)

Appendix C

Summary of Degree Requirements

Requirement	Master of Arts	Doctor of Philosophy
Total Credits	30	60
-- In Major Field	12	15
-- In First Minor	6	9
-- In Second Minor	0	9
Minimum at 500 Level	21	51
Maximum Independent Study	6	12
Maximum Transfer Credits	10	30
Required Proseminars (PLSC 540, 550, 560, 580)	Major and Minor Field	Major Field and First and Second Minor Fields
Required Methods Courses	PLSC 501, 502, & 503	PLSC 501, 502, & 503
Written Qualifying Examination		(January or May of 3rd Year) Major Field and First Minor Field
Research Prospectus	1-2 Page MA Essay Outline Approved by Advisor (November of Second Year)	5-10 Page Dissertation Prospectus (same semester as written qualifying/comprehensive exam)
Oral Comprehensive Exam	Defense of MA Essay (April of Second year)	Defense of Written Qualifying Exam 3rd Field Portfolio and Prospectus
Research	MA Essay	Dissertation Proposal and Doctoral Dissertation