

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDY

JULY 8, 2025

MA AND PHD PROGRAMS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
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1. Admission and Enrollment

1.1. Application Procedures and Deadlines

The Department of Political Science considers applications for admission at any time; however, prospective graduate students are encouraged to initiate their applications as early as possible. Complete applications should be submitted by January 15 to receive full consideration for financial awards and fellowships. Under normal circumstances, newly admitted students start the MA or PhD program during a Fall semester.

Instructions on how to apply can be found on the [Graduate Admissions page](#). Please note that in addition to completing the online application, applicants are responsible for submitting all required documents to the university.

1.2. Admissions Requirements

All application requirements can be found in the [Political Science Graduate Catalog](#). Additional information about some of the requirements is provided in the sections below.

1.3. Grade Point Average

In order to be admitted as a *Regular* graduate student in the MA or PhD program, applicants must have achieved at least a 3.0 cumulative grade point average at the undergraduate and/or graduate level. Ideally, PhD applicants will have attained a 3.5 undergraduate GPA and/or a 3.5 graduate GPA.

1.4. Course and Major Pre-requisites

Students admitted to either the MA or PhD program should ideally have a substantial background in political science, some preparation in statistics, and skill in written composition. In the case of statistics, students should have completed the equivalent of one undergraduate course in statistics as taught in a mathematics or statistics department. Students should have taken at least six credit hours of political science course work. Although political science and public administration are the preferred fields, students with any undergraduate major or graduate concentration may be admitted. Students deficient in any of these areas may be required to take remedial course work.

1.5. Letters of Recommendation

Students applying for admission must submit three letters of recommendation. Letters should typically be from college or university instructors who are familiar with the applicant's academic work. Letters from employers may be submitted, but at least two from instructors are required. Applicants returning to graduate study after an extended absence from college and who have difficulty obtaining academic letters of recommendation should speak directly with the Director of Graduate Studies.

1.6. Statement of Purpose

The online application requires that applicants upload a statement of purpose. The statement should be 200-500 words in length. It should indicate the intellectual and career goals of the

applicant and how the program being applied to will aid the applicant's educational plans.

1.7. Admissions Committee

All admission decisions are made by the Graduate Admissions Committee consisting of five members of the graduate faculty appointed by the Chair. In addition to admissions, the Admissions Committee is responsible for developing and overseeing the entire admissions process from initial recruitment and contact of potential students to final acceptance. The committee also regularly reports data regarding admissions to the full graduate faculty. The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the principal contact point for admission inquiries and program information.

1.8. Tuition, Fees, and Other Costs

Unless waived by the University, students are responsible for all tuition, fees, and other costs. These costs vary from year to year and are subject to change without notice. Current university and college tuition and fees can be found at the [WVU Tuition page](#). Please note that the Department of Political Science is in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. Students who receive financial assistance (e.g., a GTA position) or a tuition waiver must still pay college tuition and mandatory university fees each semester. International students may also have to pay an international student fee.

1.9. Housing

[WVU Housing](#) provides information concerning University-owned housing. [Campus and Community Life](#) provide information concerning privately owned, off-campus housing. Since private housing varies in quantity and quality, depending on location, it is advisable for students to arrange for housing in person to assure complete satisfaction with living arrangements.

1.10. Orientation Program

After acceptance into the program, students will receive notification of the Graduate Student Orientation sponsored by the Department of Political Science. This orientation will be held just prior to or at the beginning of the Fall semester. Attendance at this orientation is required. In general, students should plan to arrive on campus at least one week prior to the first day of fall semester classes, and early enough to attend the orientation session.

1.11. Course Registration

Students admitted to the program will receive notice of their admission both from the Office of Graduate Admissions and Recruitment and from the department. Along with the departmental notice will be a **Letter of Intent** to enroll in the program. The letter of intent should be returned to the Department of Political Science as soon as possible. Course registration will follow thereafter, either at your convenience during the pre-registration period or at the time of general registration at the beginning of the semester. Course registration should be arranged with the department's Director of Graduate Studies.

1.12. Advising

The Director of Graduate Studies serves as the advisor for all incoming graduate students. After the first year in residence, each PhD student should select a permanent faculty advisor for the

remainder of his or her program. The permanent advisor, along with the student, will make sure all requirements of the program are completed. Advisors will maintain the Plan of Study in the student's file. Each student must sign a preliminary Plan of Study developed by the Director of Graduate Studies during the first semester of residence. This plan serves as a guide for graduate work, and while not a binding contract, represents the anticipated course of study. It may be modified at any time, subject to the approval of the Director of Graduate Studies, the Department Chair, and/or the Dean of the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences.

2. Good Standing and Annual Evaluation

2.1. Minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) and Minimum Grade Requirements

In order to remain in good standing in either the MA or PhD program, students must maintain a 2.75 cumulative GPA for all graduate coursework and attain at least a 3.00 GPA in political science graduate coursework in each semester for which they are enrolled. Students who do not attain at least a 3.00 GPA in political science coursework in a given semester will be placed on academic probation. Students on probation who fail to attain at least a 3.00 GPA in their next nine hours of political science coursework or have a cumulative GPA in political science coursework below 3.00 after their next nine hours of coursework will be dismissed from the program. Under no circumstances will a student be permitted to continue in the program if his or her cumulative GPA in all graduate coursework falls below 2.75 for two consecutive semesters.

PhD students must earn a minimum grade of B- in POLS 500, 501, 502, and 603. Students will have a maximum of two attempts to earn the required B- minimum grade in these four courses. Students who fail to earn the required grade minimum after two attempts in a course will be dismissed from the program.

2.2. Annual Department Evaluation of Student Progress

At least once each academic year, all students will be reviewed by the graduate faculty to determine their standing in the program and to evaluate their progress toward obtaining the degree. The purpose of this evaluation is to help students assess their progress to date and to target particular goals and needs in the forthcoming semester or year. Students must complete a survey documenting their progress that is distributed by the Director of Graduate Studies during the spring semester. The faculty will evaluate students on the basis of their academic performance (cumulative GPA and performance in individual courses), level of commitment to the program (participation in seminars, colloquia, and other departmentally sponsored activities), task completion (including performance as a graduate assistant, if applicable), and timely progress toward completion of the degree.

2.3. Course Incompletes

Occasionally, students may, in agreement with the instructor, receive an Incomplete ("I") in a course. Incompletes are given only in unusual circumstances, principally because of unavoidable personal circumstances or for research topics requiring special development. It is college policy to require the removal of any incomplete received in a regularly scheduled course by the end of the next semester.

2.4. Residency Requirement

Although graduate study may be pursued on a part-time basis, the nature of the graduate experience is such that it is highly desirable to be enrolled full-time. Full time, on-campus study allows for the full utilization of library, computer, and other resources, professional interaction with faculty and other graduate students, and timely completion of the degree. Students in the MA and PhD programs are required to spend a minimum of one academic year in residence, taking a full load of courses, participating in colloquia, and generally contributing to the intellectual and professional life of the department. In a given semester, a student who is registered for at least six credit hours is considered to be in residence.

2.5. Course Load

Full-time students are expected to take a minimum of nine credit hours each semester in residence. In most instances, students will enroll in three regular courses (core or elective) plus the graduate professionalization seminar (POLS 796), for a total of 10 hours. If a graduate student is using the University libraries, research facilities, or consulting with graduate committee members, it is necessary for the student to enroll for at least one hour of graduate credit during that semester. PhD students must enroll for at least one credit hour each fall and spring semester from the time that they qualify for doctoral candidacy until they complete their degree. Students who wish to graduate in the summer must also register for at least one credit hour during the summer of graduate unless all graduate requirements have been met prior to that summer.

PhD students who have completed their required course work but have not yet passed two comprehensive exams may be advised to take additional course work in order to better prepare for exams and/or to maintain their full-time enrollment status.

2.6. Auditing

To improve knowledge of the policy process and the discipline of political science, graduate students, especially those with fewer than twenty undergraduate hours in political science, may wish to audit upper-level (300 level) undergraduate courses. An auditor attends class sessions and reads class materials but does not submit to examinations or papers. A course that is formally audited appears on the student's transcript so that prospective employers can assess the student's learning experience. Auditors enrolled for less than 9 hours must pay tuition, although tuition waivers do apply to audited hours.

2.7. Academic Integrity and Professional Ethics

West Virginia University, the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences, and the Department of Political Science are fully committed to academic integrity and ethical behavior as it relates to the academic enterprise and the political science profession. This means that the department will adhere strictly to the rules regarding academic honesty at the University, and the standards of the American Political Science Association regarding professional ethics (APSA, *A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science*). Collectively, these rules and guidelines cover such items as cheating, plagiarism, sexual harassment, research integrity, student-faculty relations, co-authored works, and other matters related to cheating and professional ethics. Violation of these

ethical standards can result in expulsion, in accordance with the rules of the University. **The Department of Political Science takes academic integrity seriously. Students who engage in plagiarism in any course or on any comprehensive examination may be removed from the program.**

2.8. University Graduate Catalog

In addition to the rules and procedures described in this graduate handbook, all graduate students are subject to the rules and procedures described in the university's [Graduate Catalog](#). Students should familiarize themselves with the Graduate Catalog upon enrolling in the MA or PhD program.

3. Resources for Graduate Study

3.1. The Graduate Faculty

The Department of Political Science has a nationally recruited graduate faculty. Members of the graduate faculty and their specialties can be found in the [Political Science Graduate Catalog](#) and on the [WVU Political Science page](#).

3.2. Graduate Financial Support

The Department of Political Science offers financial assistance to students on a competitive basis. Every applicant to the graduate program is automatically considered for financial assistance, with full consideration given to applicants who submit their applications by January 15. Returning students are considered for funding provided they apply for renewal. Initial graduate assistantship offers are typically announced in late March or early April.

All full-time graduate assistants and fellows are required to be full-time students (enrolled in nine hours or more). Students may hold only one appointment as a graduate assistant per term. Although holders of full-time assistantships and fellowships are exempt from paying university tuition, all students must pay university fees and college tuition. International students not holding an assistantship may also be required to pay an international student fee each semester.

There are also additional assistantships and fellowship opportunities available at WVU. Information on fellowship opportunities is available at the Graduate Education and Life [Fellowships](#) page. You can find instructions on how to search and apply for graduate assistantship positions at WVU at the Graduate Education and Life [Graduate Assistantships](#) page.

3.3. Office/Desk Assignment

Graduate teaching assistants will be assigned office space that will permit individual conferences with students enrolled in their classes. Graduate research assistants will be assigned offices or desks appropriate to their specific research activity. Although office and desk space is limited, the department will make every effort to accommodate all graduate students with office or desk space that is conducive to strong academic performance and professional development. Office and desk assignments are made at the beginning of each semester and no assignment is

guaranteed for more than a single semester.

3.4. Mailboxes

All graduate students are assigned a mailbox on the third floor of Woodburn Hall next to the Seminar Room (Room 306E). Students should check their boxes daily for notices, messages, and personal mail. Students are expected to assume all costs of personal correspondence. Use of the department's mailing services is confined to official correspondence and is only rarely authorized by the department. Students engaging in mail survey research may request support from the department. Such requests should be made through the student's research supervisor to the Office Manager.

3.5. Graduate Student Association

All MA and PhD students are encouraged to join GSAPS, the Graduate Student Association in Political Science. This association promotes the interests of graduate students.

3.6. Research Support

The University, College, and Department collectively provide limited travel support for graduate students conducting dissertation research and for graduate student travel. Details on these programs can be found on the college's [Graduate and Doctoral Travel and Research Programs](#) page.

3.7. The Library

The West Virginia University Library contains over a million volumes and 900,000 microforms. Some 30,000 volumes are added each year, and 9,000 periodical titles are received. Major collections of particular relevance to political scientists are housed in Wise Library (General), Colson Hall (West Virginia Collection, Reserve Library), Evansdale (Education, Agriculture, Forestry, Engineering), Medical Center (Health), and Law Library.

Graduate students have full access to university libraries and are issued an encoded Library Card. As in every library, restrictions are imposed on the amount of time an item may be checked out and heavy fines imposed for violations. Failure to pay library fines will prevent students from registering for classes and from graduating.

3.8. Conference Papers and Participation

Although students entering the political science graduate programs are targeting a variety of careers, both academic and applied, a common requirement of all fields is the ability to conduct primary research. This ability involves a capacity to design a research project (including defining a research question), collecting data, data analysis, and writing, reporting, and presentation. In order to develop these skills, PhD students are expected to prepare papers for presentation at local, state, and national conferences. Ideally, conference paper presentations should be seen as a prelude to publication. The faculty will guide students in this important aspect of their professional development, often collaborating with students, and providing advice on the proper course to follow in presenting research. Students should seek opportunities to present their research, either singly or as co-authors with other students, or in collaboration with faculty. The most common research presentation experiences available to students at West Virginia

University include department-sponsored colloquia and the annual meetings of the Southern, Midwest, and American Political Science Associations, as well as various other regional conferences and specialized meetings such as the annual meeting of the International Studies Association.

While some students start presenting work at major conferences as early as their second year in the program, it is more common for students to start presenting research, usually related to their dissertations, in their third or fourth years in the PhD program. Because it is crucial that students' projects are sufficiently well-developed to allow for them to make good impressions at conferences, students should not submit proposals for conference presentations without first consulting with their advisors and/or other faculty. As such, students are required to obtain support from a faculty member who supports their prospective conference participation prior to submitting a proposal to present work at any conference. At a minimum, support must include faculty approval of the proposal a student plans to submit to the conference organization. Students must notify the director of graduate studies once they receive faculty support to participate in a conference.

Students who fail to obtain faculty support to participate in a conference prior to submitting a proposal will not get department approval to receive financial support (department, college, or university) to travel to and participate in the conference. Additionally, students who fail to follow the conference participation policy may be placed on academic probation by the director of graduate studies. Probationary status will be reviewed each semester to determine whether the student has demonstrated the ability to follow the department guidelines on conference participation.

Students presenting at conferences are expected to give practice presentations in professionalization seminars scheduled by the department and/or the Graduate Student Organization in Political Science (GSAPS). Students should consult with the director of graduate studies in cases in which it will not be possible to give practice presentations.

3.9. Membership in Professional Associations

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to become student members of professional associations, including the American Political Science Association. Memberships are also desirable in selected regional associations such as the Midwest Political Science Association, the Southern Political Science Association, and the Western Political Science Association. Such memberships are indications of a strong commitment to the profession of political science and to the research and teaching activities associated with these professional groups. Application for memberships are typically available online.

3.10. Survey Research/Human Subjects

Some graduate students may receive training in survey research or other primary data collection techniques through one or more research methods or substantive courses taken in the Department of Political Science or other departments. Training may include project design, questionnaire construction, survey sampling, telephone and personal interviewing techniques, survey coding, experimental design, and data analysis.

Students planning surveys or other primary data collection should work closely with their advisor to assure full compliance with all University regulations involving research on human subjects and the highest standard of professional ethics in conducting survey research. Surveys may be conducted only after University approval has been received, typically after submission to the WVU Institutional Review Board. The student's advisor should be consulted regarding research conducted on human subjects to assure full compliance with University regulations.

Financing of research surveys is the primary responsibility of the student, although the department may, upon request, facilitate various aspects of the survey.

4. Program Requirements

All MA and PhD program requirements can be found in the [Graduate Catalog](#). Additional information about some requirements is provided below.

4.1. Hours for Degree

In order to receive the MA degree students must complete a minimum of 36 credit hours, exclusive of hours earned in the graduate professionalization seminar (POLS 796). Students with course deficiencies or those lacking a background in statistics or economics may have to take courses that cause them to exceed 36 hours. Under normal circumstances, Regular graduate students should be able to complete the MA in four semesters, provided they enter the program in the fall semester and have sufficient background in statistics and political science.

Students in the PhD program normally complete a minimum of 72 credit hours, exclusive of the graduate professionalization seminar. The 72 credit hours may include hours earned previously in a master's degree, provided the MA degree hours are relevant to the student's program. This total consists of 48 hours of instruction and the dissertation, which carries with it 24 hours of (POLS 797) graduate credit.

Although 72 credit hours is the minimum for PhD students, it is more important that the student take sufficient hours to become fully competent in the student's chosen areas of emphasis. This may require more than 72 hours and the PhD student should be prepared for a long-term commitment to course work as well as independent reading and research. In most instances, doctoral students following the recommended plan of study will take five years to complete all work for the PhD, including work completed for the master's degree.

Students completing an MA in Political Science in the department can apply their MA course work to the requirements of the PhD program should they enter that program, subject to graduate committee approval.

4.2. Courses

The Department of Political Science offers MA and PhD degrees. PhD areas of emphasis include American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, and Public Policy. Courses are offered in the fields of American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Public Policy, and Political Research Methods and Political Theory. In addition to the courses within the fields of study listed below, special topics courses are often offered at the graduate level.

Students should consult with the Director of Graduate Studies regarding which area or areas of emphasis a given special topics course will count towards.

4.2.1. Public Policy

These courses are designed to guarantee a common body of knowledge with respect to the field of policy studies and a demonstrated ability to conduct policy analysis. The public policy field includes:

- **POLS 530 Policy Analysis**
- **POLS 531 Economic Analysis of Politics**
- **POLS 536 Politics of Agenda Setting**
- **POLS 555 Comparative Public Policy**
- **POLS 638 Seminar: Policy Implementation**
- **POLS 710 Judicial Politics, Policy and Law**
 - Note: POLS 710 may count towards preparation for a comprehensive examination in either American Politics or Public Policy but may not count towards both.

4.2.2. American Politics

These courses are designed to guarantee a common body of knowledge with respect to the field of American politics, with a focus on institutions and political behavior. The field includes:

- **POLS 522 Racial & Ethnic Politics**
- **POLS 523 Religion and Politics**
- **POLS 630 Seminar: American Politics and Policy**
- **POLS 710 Judicial Politics, Policy and Law**
 - Note: POLS 710 may count towards preparation for a comprehensive examination in either American Politics or Public Policy but may not count towards both.
- **POLS 712 American Construction and Political Development**
- **POLS 715 The American Presidency**
- **POLS 728 Congress**

4.2.3. Courses in International Relations

These courses are designed to guarantee a common body of knowledge with respect to the field of international relations. The field includes:

- **POLS 560 International Theory and Policy**
- **POLS 660 International Political Economy**
- **POLS 665 Comparative Foreign Policy**
- **POLS 666 National Security Policy**
- **POLS 667 Foreign Policy Decision Making**

4.2.4. Courses in Comparative Politics

These courses are designed to guarantee a common body of knowledge with respect to the field of comparative politics. The field includes:

- **POLS 550 Comparative Politics**
- **POLS 551 Comparative Political Institutions**
- **POLS 555 Comparative Public Policy**

- **POLS 559 Contentious Politics**
- **POLS 650 Professional Seminar in Comparative Politics**

4.2.5. Courses in Political Research Methods and Political Theory

The Department of Political Science requires all students to develop competence in those research methods commonly employed in policy research and political science. The core research methods courses are:

- **POLS 500 Introduction to Political Research**
- **POLS 501 Quantitative Political Analysis**
- **POLS 502 Advanced Quantitative Methods**
- **POLS 603 Advanced Quantitative Analysis**
- **POLS 670 Professional Seminar in Political Theory**
 - Note: PhD students must earn a minimum grade of B- in POLS 500, 501, 502, and 603.

4.2.6. POLS 797: Research

This course requires students to complete research toward the completion of their dissertation. All PhD students must take at least 24 hours of POLS 797 as part of the PhD degree requirements.

Students taking POLS 797, “Research,” must consult with their advisors prior to the semester during which they enroll in 797. In consulting, students and their advisors should develop a “plan for 797 hours.” These plans will provide information—at a level of detail deemed suitable to advisors—regarding what work students will complete during the semester. The volume of work should be a function of the number of hours for which students enroll; more work will be required for students taking 9 credit hours of POLS 797 than students taking 6 credit hours, for example. Because POLS 797 provides for students to receive academic credits while conducting research on their dissertations, the plan that students and their advisors develop should ensure that students make demonstrable progress on their dissertations. Students taking POLS 797 must provide their advisors with a plan describing the work that they will do to meet the credit hours requirement. Advisors will assess whether this plan is sufficient and will revise it accordingly with the student. Advisors may then submit this plan to the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of the academic semester during which students take POLS 797 hours. Advisors will notify the Director of Graduate Studies as to whether students made “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” progress on their plan at the end of each semester. These reports from advisors will allow the Director of Graduate Studies to enter grades for students enrolled in POLS 797.

4.3. MA Degree Requirements

See the [Political Science MA](#) catalog page for all degree requirements.

4.4. PhD Degree Requirements

See the [Political Science PhD](#) catalog page for all degree requirements.

4.5. PhD Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive written examinations are administered at the completion of the candidate’s

formal course work in the two areas of emphasis constituting the PhD.

Objectives

The comprehensive examination is a measure of the doctoral candidate's knowledge of political science and policy analysis. It evaluates the candidate's knowledge of material from courses and seminars, directed readings, audited courses, and general reading and independent inquiry. The candidate should anticipate that questions will range beyond topics covered in courses. The comprehensive examination therefore is an evaluation of the candidate's understanding of the nature of political science and policy research, the theoretical issues of political science and the policy sciences, the nature of empirical inquiry, the scope and limitations of existing research on politics, government, and public policy, and either the professional practice of policy analysis or the teaching of political science. From the beginning of doctoral study candidates should seek out graduate faculty in the areas of emphasis of their comprehensive examinations for study suggestions and advice on preparatory reading, and they should consider enrolling in or auditing advanced undergraduate courses related to their areas of emphasis.

Scheduling Procedures

1. Comprehensive examinations are administered two times per academic year, once in August, and once in January. Students who fail a comprehensive exam also have the option of retaking that exam in May, subject to faculty availability. A candidate can sit for an exam after the completion of the candidate's formal course work in an area of emphasis as specified on the candidate's plan of study. August and January exams are typically administered during the week before classes start or during the first week of classes. May exams are scheduled on a case-by-case basis.
2. At least three months prior to the examination the candidate will consult with their advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies regarding the composition of the examination committee, with one member of the examination committee being designated as chair. For examinations in American Politics, Comparative Politics, and Public Policy, committee members shall include three members of the faculty with expertise in the area of emphasis of the examination, at least two of whom must be members of the regular graduate faculty. For examinations in International Politics, the committee shall consist of two faculty members with expertise in Comparative Politics and two faculty members with expertise in International Relations, and at least three members of the committee shall be members of the regular graduate faculty.
3. Exams are written over an eight-hour period. Candidates are allowed to use notes and references in answering the questions on the exam.

Suggestions for Exam Preparation

1. Candidates should seek out graduate faculty in the areas of emphasis of their examination for study suggestions and advice on preparatory readings.
2. Candidates should review all course material and assigned readings, and should consider preparing detailed reading notes, annotated bibliographies, or outlines.
3. Candidates should complete departmental reading lists when available and should consider preparing detailed reading notes, annotated bibliographies, or outlines.
4. Candidates are expected to have reviewed current research published in academic journals related to the areas of emphasis of their examination. Candidates should consider

reviewing several years' worth of journal volumes and develop detailed reading notes and outlines of selected fields or topics of inquiry. Candidates may want to consider reviewing the works of significant scholars in the areas of emphasis of their exam.

5. Candidates may consider enrolling in advanced undergraduate courses related to their examination areas of emphasis or completing readings from those courses.
6. Candidates should, at their own initiative, investigate other preparatory readings such as recently published books, classic published works in the area of emphasis, or government reports and popular writing on policy areas.

A Note on Faculty Expectations

In line with the expectations detailed above, candidates should note that comprehensive exams are designed to test your knowledge of your areas of emphasis in a broad manner and thus are not restricted to covering course material. The faculty expects you to know the broad contours of the areas of emphasis and to develop answers that reflect both course material and material read outside of seminars. Moreover, you should anticipate using the entire time allotted to develop and write your answers. While some time should be spent developing ideas, lists of authors to be covered, and outlines for answers, the faculty expects you to spend the vast majority of the time writing. As a result, candidates are strongly encouraged to develop well-organized reading notes, annotated bibliographies, reference guides, and outlines prior to taking exams.

Testing and Evaluation Procedures

1. Candidates are given an eight-hour period to complete the exam. Exams are distributed via email by 9AM (normally on a Thursday) and must be returned by 5PM on the day of the exam.
2. Exam committee members will serve as examination readers. They will grade and return their written evaluation of their portion of a candidate's examination to the Director of Graduate Studies within thirteen calendar days of the completion of the examination. Students will be notified of the results of their exam within fourteen calendar days of the completion of their exam. After considering the examination readers' evaluation and grades of high pass, pass, low pass, or fail on each question, the candidate's committee will assign a grade of high pass, pass, low pass, or fail to the exam.
3. If all members of an exam committee agree that an exam is close to the threshold between receiving a grade of "fail" and a grade of "low pass," the committee may request an oral defense of the student's mastery of the material on the exam. The decision to offer an oral defense must be agreed to by all members of the exam committee and may not be appealed. Oral defenses must occur within one week of the student being notified of the opportunity to defend their exam orally. Students offered an oral defense may decline the offer and accept a grade of "fail." Successful oral defenses will result in exam grades of "low pass," and unsuccessful defenses will result in exam grades of "fail." Students will be notified in writing of whether oral defenses are successful or unsuccessful within 48 hours of their defense.
4. Candidates who fail an examination can be required by their committee to complete a plan of study before taking a second examination in that area of emphasis.
5. If a candidate fails a comprehensive examination in a single area of emphasis a second time, they will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program.
6. If a student wishes to appeal their dismissal from the Ph.D. program due to the second

failure of a comprehensive exam, the student must submit an appeal to the graduate admissions committee. The student may submit materials on his or her behalf, including a letter of support from his/her advisor. The graduate admissions committee will consider the appeal and provide a recommendation to the full graduate faculty. A majority-rule vote of the full graduate faculty will determine whether the student is allowed to remain in the program.

7. Written examinations and written evaluations of the examination become a permanent part of the candidate's departmental file.

4.6. PhD Dissertation and Prospectus

All doctoral students must complete a dissertation designed in accordance with the candidate's career objectives. The initial dissertation topic and research design must be approved by the faculty committee, chaired by the candidate's dissertation advisor. Members of the committee will be selected in consultation with the candidate and the Director of Graduate Studies. Although work on the dissertation does not begin formally until after the successful completion of comprehensive examinations, it is desirable for doctoral students to begin early planning for the dissertation. Early planning and consultation, both as to topic and research design, and committee membership, enhances the probability of completion without major problems.

The prospectus must be completed and formally defended before a dissertation committee within **nine months** following the successful completion of the final comprehensive exam. When a student does not defend his/her prospectus within nine months after passing his/her comprehensive exams, s/he is "off normal progress." At this point, the student will have another **six months** to defend his/her prospectus. If students still have not defended a prospectus 1 year and 3 months after passage of their second comprehensive exam, students must write a memo to the Graduate Admissions Committee if they wish to remain in the program. In this memo, they must explain why they have not yet completed a prospectus, what measures they plan to pursue to complete one, and lay out a time frame for completion. The admissions committee will then decide if students remains in the program.

The prospectus is a research design that acts as an informal contract between the student and the dissertation committee to clarify the dissertation's nature and scope. It should contain at least the following nine parts:

- a cover page
- a 100- to 200word abstract summarizing the dissertation's topic, methodologies employed and expected contribution to the literature
- a proposed table of contents for the dissertation
- a brief introduction stating in clear, precise and concise language, the dissertation's objectives, research hypotheses, and methodology
- a literature review that (1) demonstrates command of the existing literature and (2) indicates how the dissertation will enhance the existing literature
- a discussion of the theoretical argument that demonstrates how the dissertation will meet the University's requirement that all dissertations must "embody a definite contribution to knowledge"
- an explanation of the methodologies used, including the operationalization of all variables and justification for the use of any selected models and tests of statistical

significance

- a brief conclusion indicating the expected results and their significance, and
- a comprehensive bibliography.

The prospectus should typically be between 20 to 40 pages in length, subject to the guidance of the student's advisor. Students should discuss expectations regarding the prospectus with their advisors. When composing your prospectus, you should follow the guidelines available on the [Department website](#).

A final oral defense of the dissertation occurs after submission of a penultimate copy of the dissertation. The final, approved copy must be submitted in accordance with all university requirements.

4.7. Graduate Professionalization Seminar

An essential professional activity within the department is the graduate professionalization seminar (POLS 796: Seminar). The seminar consists of an on-going series of speakers, seminars, research presentations, and workshops designed to encourage professional development and the lively exchange of ideas among graduate students and faculty. The intent of the graduate professionalization seminar requirement is to provide the opportunity to socialize all graduate students into the profession of political science and to promote a sense of collegiality among graduate students and between graduate students and faculty. Professionalization seminar credit will be one hour per semester. All full-time graduate students in residence must register for POLS 796 and attend a minimum of three graduate professionalization seminar events per semester. Part-time students should make an effort to attend as many seminar events as possible.

All PhD students must present at a graduate professionalization seminar event sometime before graduation. Advisors will work with doctoral candidates to schedule an appropriate time for completion of this requirement. The presentation can be used for practice job interviews, practice conference presentations, or simply discussion of completed work or research in progress.

Since the professionalization seminar is a required activity, all full-time students must enroll in POLS 796 each semester in residence. Grading is on a Satisfactory ("S"), Unsatisfactory ("U") basis, as determined by attendance and/or other requirements.

In rare cases, students in residence may be unable to take POLS 796. If a student anticipates taking at least six credits in an upcoming semester but has a legitimate reason for not being able to participate in POLS 796 during that semester, that student may petition the graduate admissions committee to be excused from the POLS 796 requirement for that semester.

Legitimate reasons may include, but are not limited to, conducting field work away from campus and attending to significant issues related to personal and/or family health or welfare. A student wishing to be excused from POLS 796 in an upcoming semester should send a request, including the reason(s) that he or she anticipates not being able to participate in POLS 796, to the director of graduate studies via e-mail. If a reason is health-related, the request should not include specific or confidential details about the issue; the director of graduate studies will ask for additional information if necessary and appropriate. The graduate admissions committee shall have sole discretion over whether requests to be excused from POLS 796 are granted.

4.8. Time Limits for Degree Completion

The university establishes time limits for completing graduate degrees. All MA and PhD students should be familiar with the time limit guidelines found on the [Degree Regulations page](#).

For doctoral students, the university requires the completion of the degree within five years of obtaining doctoral candidacy. Note that PhD students in political science attain doctoral candidacy after they pass their second comp exam.

For students who anticipate that they will not complete the doctorate within five years after admission to candidacy, an extension of up to 12 months may be requested. Prior to requesting an extension, students must repeat the program's candidacy examination or an alternate procedure to demonstrate academic competence and current knowledge in their field of study. The Department of Political Science's Alternate Candidacy Recertification Procedure is as follows:

1. Notify the director of graduate studies that you are pursuing a candidacy extension.
2. Provide a written statement of support for the extension from all members of your dissertation committee. An email from your advisor to the director of graduate studies confirming that the committee supports your extension request is acceptable.
3. Prepare and submit to the director of graduate studies a Recertification Memo that includes the following required information:
 - a. An overview of key program milestones, including when you entered the program, when each comprehensive exam was passed, and when your dissertation prospectus was defended.
 - b. A discussion of the interruptions during your candidacy period that led to delays in completing your degree.
 - c. A summary of the dissertation research you have already completed and how your research has contributed to your continued academic competence and current knowledge in your field of study. This should not be copy and pasted text from your working dissertation. Instead, your goal should be to describe the research you have completed and how this work has allowed you to maintain up-to-date knowledge and skills in your field.
 - i. While not required, you may also include supplementary evidence of your current knowledge and skills by describing research endeavors not directly associated with the completion of your dissertation. This evidence might include research presented at academic conferences, published research, or work submitted to academic journals. Again, the purpose of this supplementary evidence is to demonstrate maintained expertise in your field.
 - d. A clearly developed timeline explaining your plan to complete your degree requirements if the candidacy extension is approved.
4. Provide accompanying materials to support your Recertification Memo. Specifically, these materials must include the most current version of your dissertation. If you describe supplementary evidence of current knowledge and skills your memo, the referenced

documents must also be provided (e.g., conference papers, published articles, working manuscripts).

5. Once the director of graduate studies has confirmed that all requirements described in steps 1-4 above have been met, these materials will be reviewed by the Graduate Admissions Committee. Based on your Recertification Memo and the accompanying materials you provide, the committee will determine whether you have clearly demonstrated continued academic competence and current knowledge in your field of study. You will be notified of the results of the review within 10 working days from when all recertification materials were confirmed and distributed to the Admissions Committee.
6. If the Graduate Admissions Committee review determines that you have maintained expertise in your field, the director of graduate studies will notify the College that you have demonstrated continued academic competence and up-to-date knowledge in your field of study and will provide the College with any other required materials needed to formally request the candidacy extension. If the Graduate Admissions Committee review determines that you have not maintained academic expertise, your candidacy will expire as scheduled.
 - a. A positive or negative review by the Graduate Admissions Committee will be determined by majority vote. If the committee vote is tied, the vote from the director of graduate studies will serve as the tiebreaker.
 - b. If the dissertation chair of a student requesting a candidacy extension serves on the Graduate Admissions Committee the faculty member will not participate in the committee review of the extension request.

Keep in mind that successfully completing the Alternate Candidacy Recertification Procedure does not guarantee that your extension request will be granted. This procedure is a necessary step that is part of the extension request process. Your request must be approved by both the College and Provost Office.

5. Graduate Assistant Responsibilities

5.1. GA Work Assignment and Hours

Students receiving graduate assistantships are obligated to be available for assignment for the entire academic year (normally mid-August through mid-May) in which the assistantship is received. Although the teaching and/or research assignment may vary from one assistantship to another, the total hours per week for which an assistant is obligated is 20. Specific teaching and research assistantship assignments are made by the Director of Graduate Studies at the beginning of each semester. Each assignment is based on two principal factors: (1) the overall professional development of the student; and (2) the needs of the department and faculty. Insofar as possible, graduate assistants will be rotated in assignment in order to maximize the students' professional experience. Typical assignments include serving as a teaching assistant or independent instructor (i.e., being a GTA) or serving as a research assistant (GRA).

Since graduate assistants are employees of the University, they are expected to adhere to all the rules of the university, including those dealing with sexual harassment, building and office

security (including keys), university property, and the confidentiality of student records. All GTAs are required to attend the University's orientation for GTAs prior to the start of classes in the Fall term.

5.2. Research Assistantships

Graduate assistants assigned research functions in which they are to assist one or more faculty members are expected to report to their faculty supervisor(s) at the earliest possible time during the first week of the semester for instruction on their specific responsibilities. Faculty members should not have to track down assistants. Likewise, it is not the responsibility of faculty members to initiate contacts with the GRA throughout the semester; this is a responsibility of the graduate assistant. Projects and assignments given to GRAs are to be performed in a timely fashion and any assignment involving proctoring of classes or other activities requiring service on a specific date should be adhered to strictly.

5.3. Teaching Assistantships

Graduate students assigned as teaching assistants for large lecture classes should arrange to meet with the instructor of the course prior to the beginning of the semester. Responsibilities vary by assignment and course, but usually include completing the course's readings and attending lectures, answering student questions regarding both, preparation for examinations, and administration of quizzes. TAs also proctor and grade examinations TAs should make themselves available to students through formal office hours at least three hours per week. A schedule of office hours should be available to the department secretaries. It is desirable for students to serve as a TA prior to assuming independent teaching responsibilities.

5.4. Independent Teaching Responsibilities

Advanced graduate students may be assigned independent teaching responsibilities. In this instance, graduate teaching assistants are given the responsibility for planning and implementing one or more courses in consultation with appropriate faculty mentors. Typically, graduate assistants are assigned to teach introductory courses in their areas of emphasis.

Students assigned independent teaching responsibilities are expected to work closely with the Director of Undergraduate Studies and/or the Director of Graduate Studies as well as the specific faculty member(s) associated with the particular course to which student is assigned. The Director of Undergraduate Studies, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the faculty member will review course syllabi and other teaching materials for courses being taught independently. Although the department does not have required syllabi or textbooks for our courses, students are expected to follow existing department and discipline norms when preparing a course. It is also necessary for students to be aware of and follow university and college guidelines for course syllabi and other related policies. The department will also review the teaching evaluations for those courses being taught independently by graduate students and will provide additional feedback when needed.

Every teaching assistant who is independently responsible for a course will have an office area to meet with students. Instructors should make themselves available to students through formal office hours at least three hours per week. A schedule of office hours should be available to the department secretaries. In addition, any tests that require reproduction should be given to the

secretaries early enough to assure their readiness on the date required. This may be a matter of several days if the test is lengthy, such as is often the case with a multiple-choice type examination. Finally, if problems of discipline, academic honesty, or inter-personal problems arise, they should be brought to the attention of the Chair of the department as soon as possible.

Independent teaching is an important step in enhancing the marketability of a student who wishes to obtain an academic placement. Successful performance, as indicated by course evaluations, are a valuable addendum to the student's placement credentials. In addition, teaching is a rewarding experience in and of itself.

5.5. Teaching Practicum

Prior to assignment as an independent teaching assistant, students should register for POLS 790 **Teaching Practicum**. The student will work with his or her advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies to select an undergraduate course for the purpose of providing training in classroom instruction. The student will be responsible for assisting the professor in all phases of the course, including the presentation of one or more lectures, and will attend class to provide a basis for the student's own entry into the classroom. The instructor will convey to the Director of Graduate Studies the appropriate grade for the course (S or U). In addition, the student is encouraged to attend classes taught by other faculty in the department. The student should produce a "syllabus" for the semester which parallels the course that is being used as well as identifies other classes in which the student has observed. The student will coordinate this with all participating faculty.

5.6. Teaching Evaluations

Graduate teaching assistants who have responsibility for their own courses are required to have their courses evaluated each semester. Teaching evaluations are online. These evaluations serve as a basis of the Department evaluation of student teaching. Graduate instruction is evaluated as excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory. In evaluating student instruction emphasis is placed on a combination of factors, including course syllabus, GPA, student evaluations and feedback.

5.7. Annual Evaluation of Graduate Assistants

In addition to the annual evaluation of all graduate students regarding academic progress, the department also conducts an evaluation of performance in regard to assistantships. The criteria for this evaluation are work performance, diligence, punctuality, initiative, and general responsibility. These criteria, together with academic performance, constitute the basis for continuation of assistantships.

5.8. Sexual Harassment Policy

The department stresses the need to guard against sexual harassment in the workplace and requires that all GTA/RAs acquaint themselves with college and university guidelines. A copy of the WVU sexual harassment policy will be provided to all students, and its policies must be strictly adhered to.

6. Graduation Requirements

All graduation requirements can be found in the Graduate Catalog section on [Degree Regulations](#).

Each semester, the Eberly College of Arts and Science distributes updated guidelines on graduation requirements and deadlines. All graduate students are responsible for knowing and meeting these requirements and must apply for graduation by the posted deadline. Graduation application deadlines are also posted by the [University Registrar](#).

PhD students should note that there are multiple graduation deadlines that must be met. These include deadlines for:

- Applying for graduation
- Submitting a declaration of defense date
- Holding a defense
- Submitting the final dissertation to the [Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Department](#)

The College also posts details on the graduation process and required graduation forms on its [Graduation Forms and Processes](#) page.

All degree policies can be found in the Graduate Catalog. Please note the following requirements that are sometimes overlooked:

- **Time limits.** Both MA and PhD students must complete their degrees within a specific time period established by the university. The specific requirements can be found on the [Time Limits](#) section of the Graduate Catalog.
- **Enrollment in final term.** All graduate students must enroll for at least one credit hour during the term of graduation. The Graduate Catalog page on [Minimum Enrollment](#) details this policy.

All degree recipients are encouraged to attend commencement ceremonies in celebration of their achievements. Please keep in mind that attending commencement requires registration. **The commencement registration process is separate from the application for graduation.** Details on commencement can be found on the [WVU Graduation](#) page.

7. Placement

7.1. The Job Market

Students in the political science graduate programs typically target two main avenues of employment. The first, for PhD students, is the academic job market in the nation's colleges and universities, both in the U.S. and abroad. The PhD is a requisite for these positions, as is a necessity for demonstrating outstanding research skills. PhD graduates of this department have become increasingly competitive nationwide in the search for positions in higher education. Their success is testimony to the rigor of the doctoral program and the reputation the program has achieved in recent years.

The MA program is linked to the academic job market in that students in the MA program use this degree as the first step in leading toward the PhD. Many successful master's degree holders in the political science program ultimately continue on to complete their PhD at West Virginia University. The transition from MA or MPA to PhD can be accomplished with ease and is a natural choice for many students. Other master's students decide to continue their work toward the PhD at other universities, and the graduates of this MA program do very well at other universities, largely because of the quality and rigor of the WVU program.

The second targeted area of employment is government and the private sector. Both MA and PhD students, but particularly master's degree holders, often seek positions as policy analysts in government or with private organizations. There are many positions in government, at all levels, and in both executive and legislative branches, that are available to well-trained political science students and policy analysts. These include government agencies such as the U.S. General Accounting Office, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and so forth. State agencies such as the Commission on Aging and international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, also provide positions for policy analysts. Likewise, Congressional and state legislative committee and research organizations hire persons especially trained in policy analysis. In all, there are some 15 million jobs in government, many appropriate for persons with advanced degrees in political science or policy analysis.

In the same way that government provides opportunities for political scientists and policy analysts, so too does the private sector, particularly special interest groups. There are, today, some 150,000 organized interests in the U.S., many of them with programs that focus on governmental affairs. These organized groups frequently hire political scientists and policy analysts to assist them in making their case before Congress, state legislatures, and executive agencies. Strong lobbying and public affairs divisions are present in almost every major interest group, including those representing the environment, health, energy, labor, business, education, agriculture, social welfare, and the like. Both the MA and PhD programs at WVU target these positions.

7.2. Building the Placement Vitae

Students are urged to begin early to build a job placement curriculum vitae (CV) or resume that will highlight their skills and experience. Contained in the CV should be specific skills gained from courses, such as statistics, knowledge of policy evaluation techniques, understanding of the policy process as it relates to applied policy analysis, and training in economics and other associated fields. The CV should also highlight work experience as a policy analyst, research reports for which you are the author, co-author, or member of a project team, publications in professional or applied journals, paper presentations, and other reports, papers, and activities demonstrating research competence.

7.3. Compiling Placement Credentials

Students' job market materials should be flawlessly prepared and carry with them the endorsement of the department as revealed in a cover letter and supporting documents. A credentials packet typically includes:

1. Letter from Candidate Expressing Interest

2. Curriculum Vitae
3. Letters of Reference
4. Transcript
5. Writing Sample (as requested)
6. Teaching Evaluations (as requested)
7. Other

The American Political Science Association maintains an interview placement service. Doctoral students completing their degrees should investigate the service and plan to attend one or more association meetings (e.g., APSA, MWPSA) to meet with representatives of colleges and universities advertising positions. In addition, the APSA publishes job openings online through its eJobs service. Students on the academic job market who are not yet members of APSA should become members in order to access this service.

7.4. Online Employment Resources for Political Scientists

An extensive list of online resources, including the links listed here, is available at the Association's website: <http://www.apsanet.org/eJobs>

Federal Government
Office of Personnel Management:
<https://www.usajobs.gov/>

Independent Sector
Links to hundreds of non-profit organizations:
<https://www.independentsector.org/>

Public Administration
Careers in Public Service:
<http://publicservicecareers.org/>

Fundraising
Philanthropy Journal Online - Links to organizations, educational programs, and job listings:
<http://www.philanthropyjournal.org/>

Political Research
American Association for Public Opinion Research:
<http://jobs.aapor.org/>

Foundations
An extensive list of foundations, with brief descriptions and links:
<http://www.foundationlist.org/>

Think Tanks
An extensive list of think tanks: <http://www.citizensource.com/Opinion&Policy/ThinkTanks.htm>

Journalism

<http://www.journalismjobs.com/index.php>

NGOs

NGO Locator:

<http://www.ngopulse.org/vacancies>

JournalismNext.com

Emphasis on employment for minorities and women:

<http://www.journalismnext.com/>

Lobbying

LobbyingJobs.com:

<http://www.lobbyingjobs.com/>

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement Links:

<https://www.montclair.edu/chss/justice-studies/resources/law-enforcement-career-links/>