



Doctor of Philosophy -Political Science Program Handbook

Welcome

Mission Statement

The Department of Political Science offers a general Ph.D. degree with concentrations in American Politics (including public policy and public law), Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Beyond mastering the substantive content in these fields of study and developing their own research agendas, students are expected to develop a strong understanding of the tools and approaches central to the scientific study of politics. The program requires students to complete 60 credits beyond the Bachelor of Arts or 48 credits beyond the Master of Arts. The program seeks to prepare students for both academic and non-academic careers. The former includes academic positions at colleges and universities, and the latter includes employment with public, private, and non-profit organizations and institutions. It is expected that the students will complete the program in five to six years.

Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#), as well as the NSHE Code, UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: gradrebel@unlv.edu or GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu.

Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the [UNLV Graduate Catalog](#). Faculty must hold appropriately approved levels of graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the [Graduate Faculty Status Webpage](#).

Program Information

[Doctor of Philosophy - Political Science](#)

Contact Information

UNLV Political Science

Department Chair

David Damore, Ph.D, WRI B213, david.damore@unlv.edu

Graduate Coordinator

Christian Jensen, Ph.D, WRI B215, christian.jensen@unlv.edu

Department Main Office

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Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admissions, coursework, and culminating experience](#) are found in the [graduate catalog](#).

Degree requirements (Official Degree requirements are listed in the Graduate Catalog)

Students may take courses in American Politics (including public law and public policy), Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Completion of the program requires a minimum of 60 credits beyond the BA or 48 credits beyond the MA (in the latter case, the department will determine the distribution of the 48 credits, based on the student's transcripts of prior work). In the former case, the 60 credits are to be distributed as follows:

a. Core curriculum (at least 18 credits)

(i) Methods in political science (six credits)

(ii) Research Tool: The research tool can be fulfilled with one of three options:

a. Foreign Language: Students must demonstrate knowledge of the equivalent of two years of a single foreign language, through either an examination or 12 credits of college-level course work. Those credits would not count toward the required total. This requirement must be met prior to admission to candidacy. No grade below —B will be accepted (with the exception of foreign language course in which B- or better will be accepted). The foreign language selected must be approved by the department as relevant for the student's research.

b. Quantitative Methods: With approval from the department, a student may demonstrate advanced quantitative methods necessary for his or her doctoral research.

c. Qualitative Methods: With approval from the department, a student may demonstrate advanced qualitative methods necessary for his or her doctoral research.

(iii) Proseminars (12 credits): American Politics (including public law and public policy), Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory.

b. Major fields (18 credits, not including proseminars): students select two of the four fields as their major fields of study

Electives:

(i) A maximum of six credits outside the department, which must be at the 700-level.

(ii) A maximum of six credits of independent study addressing a topic of interest to students that is not covered by other courses in the program and for which students are able to find a professor willing to oversee their efforts. Specifically, students and the sponsoring faculty member are responsible for drawing up a schedule of reading and writing assignments and list them on the Graduate Independent Study form (available from the department's Web site). Independent studies can be taken for one, two, or three credits; the amount of work for a three-credit independent study should be the same as that for a graduate seminar (approximately six books read and thirty pages written), with the amount of work for fewer credits reduced proportionately. The professor determines the number and length of writing assignments.

c. Dissertation (12 credits; more credits may be taken, but only 12 units will count toward degree)

GPA Requirement Students must maintain a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for all course work. No course in which a student makes a grade below B will count toward the degree. The only exceptions to this are foreign language courses, in which no grade below B- will satisfy the requirement.

Advisory Committee Guidelines

An Advisory Committee consisting of three faculty members from the department and one faculty representative of the Graduate College (until students have formed their Advisory Committee, the Graduate Coordinator acts as students' temporary advisor). One of the three departmental members serves as chair and, from that point, as the primary advisor. The chair of the Advisory Committee should be a faculty member with appropriately approved chair privileges from one of the student's major fields.

With the Advisory Committee's approval and that of the Graduate Coordinator, students establish a program of study for their remaining credits.

Degree Program Benchmarks

Comprehensive Written and Oral Examinations

An important aspect of earning a doctoral degree is demonstrating depth and breadth of knowledge of content and methods. To this end, the department administers comprehensive field examinations. These examinations are designed to assess competency in formulating cogent answers to complex questions in students' declared fields of study. Only after this competency is demonstrated, can students move on to the more specialized research associated with the completion of a dissertation.

Students are required to complete both exams in the same semester, preferably the semester in which required course work is being completed. A student taking exams needs to inform the graduate coordinator that he or she intends to do so no later than end of the first week of the semester. The written component includes an exam in each major field that is administered during the same week, generally during the fifth week of the semester.

To prepare for the exams, a student is expected to consult with his or her graduate committee chair and faculty members serving on the exam committees and who are responsible for writing the exams and serving as exam readers, as well as review past syllabi for courses in the exam fields. Unofficial reading lists may be available from faculty members. Note that the field exams may include material not listed on past syllabi and reading lists. Generally speaking, examinations cover theoretical, methodological and substantive debates. Preparation should begin at least six months prior to the examination date.

The field exams are take-home and open book. Failure to return an exam by the appointed time results in automatic failure. Students should anticipate that the responses to each field exam will be between 8,000 and 12,000 words in length, excluding endnotes, figures, and references. Exams must include full references for each source cited in each response. The answers written by students have to be original and directly answer the questions being asked on the exam. All responses are assessed for originality via plagiarism software detection and any evidence of plagiarism or academic misconduct – including but not limited to inclusion of material taken from coursework or prior writings such as a MA thesis, a conference paper, or other research; inclusion of material that is paraphrased; or inclusion of material that is unattributed – will be referred to the UNLV Office of Student Conduct for investigation, potentially with a recommendation that the student be removed from the program, and the student will receive a failing grade for the relevant exam question(s).

Within two weeks from the submission of the written responses, students will receive a grade for each field exam and each response within each field exam. The possible grades are: Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail. To pass a field exam, a student must pass all questions on the exam. In instances when the two readers are not in agreement, the response will be graded by a tiebreaker. Any student who receives a Fail on any response from only one of the two readers is required to sit for an oral examination. The exam committee including the tiebreaker administers the oral examination. Although the oral exam primarily focuses on the written responses, material outside of the written exam may be covered. A student who receives a Fail grade from both readers on a written response fails the exam and if this is the student's first failure, the student is required to sit for an oral review administered by the readers.

Based upon the written examination and the oral examination (if applicable), the exam committee, including the tiebreaker (if applicable), renders a final grade (Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail) for each response. Students receiving a failing grade on at least one question will have failed the exam. A student who fails an exam has one opportunity to retake the exam in the next semester. After the first failed attempt, the students will be placed on probation via the Graduate College process. A second failure of any field exam results in separation from the program. A grade of Pass with Distinction requires a majority

of all readers (e.g., the exam committee plus the tiebreaker if applicable) grade all responses as Pass with Distinction.

Another part of the comprehensive examination is an oral defense of the dissertation prospectus. During the semester a student plans to take the written exam, he or she should consult with his or her dissertation committee chair regarding the preparation of the dissertation prospectus and the scheduling of its defense. Note that the defense does not have to take place during the same semester as the written comprehensive examination. The defense can only occur if a student has passed their field exams. In consultation with their advisor and other relevant faculty members, students select an appropriate topic from which a specific research question of theoretical import can be derived. After conducting preliminary research, students submit a written prospectus, outlining the research question, the methods used to treat the research, the organization of the dissertation project, and the significance of the study to the discipline of political science. Once students have successfully written their prospectus, they need to file the Prospectus Approval Form with the Graduate College

In order to apply for candidacy (i.e., ABD -all but dissertation status) a student needs to complete his or her coursework, pass their field examinations, successfully defend his or her dissertation prospectus, complete the research tool requirement, and successfully defend the prospectus. They must also file the appropriate forms with the Graduate College. After doing so, students are considered “Advanced to Candidacy” and then able to enroll for dissertation credits.

Dissertation

After the dissertation research is under way, each member of the Advisory Committee reads the dissertation and may require revisions. In writing the dissertation, students should follow the Guide to Preparing and Submitting a Thesis or Dissertation (available on the Graduate College’s Web site); as noted above, the department has no formatting or stylistic requirements of its own, but the Advisory Committee may have such requirements. Twice a year the Graduate College holds a seminar to explain its requirements for writing a thesis/dissertation. Students are strongly encouraged to attend one of those seminars.

The dissertation must be unanimously approved by the Advisory Committee. After the dissertation has been approved, an oral defense of the thesis is held. Students are responsible for arranging a location, date, and time at which all members of the student’s committee may attend. The committee may require students to make substantive or stylistic revisions, or both, to the dissertation.

When students have successfully defended the dissertation, made any necessary further revisions, had those revisions approved by the Advisory Committee, and submitted final copies and any required forms to the Graduate College, students are required to give the department one copy of the dissertation, bound in black cover.

Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

The Department of Political Science has high expectations of its students, among which are adherence to standards of integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, oral and written, honestly. To this end, students should be familiar with the statement on the subject in the [Graduate Catalog](#).

UNLV also requires all members of the university community to be familiar with the honor code and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. Students are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend students nor assume any responsibility for violations of fair use laws. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, visit the [UNLV copyright Web page](#).

One aspect of integrity is providing adequate citations in written work. The department does not have one required format for citations, although professors may impose such a requirement in their courses. If the professor does not do so, students should use a method specified in a style book (e.g., Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*) or make use of the *Style Manual for Political Science*, which is available from the American Political Science Association.

Annual Mandatory Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form [Formerly known as the Student Annual Review]. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead.

Faculty Advisors/Graduate Coordinators have the option to provide feedback to each students' submitted IDP and provide acknowledgement that they have reviewed the IDP.

Reported student data are shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner.

Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track UNLV metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.

Probation and Separation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Please see the [Probation and Separation](#) section of the [Graduate Catalog](#) for more information.

Examples of failure to successfully progress include but not limited to:

Receiving an unsatisfactory grade, as defined by the program in which the course is offered, in any graduate course.

Being sanctioned by the Office of Student Conduct

Failure to satisfactorily pass required courses or meet program benchmarks (such as passing comprehensive exams or advancing to candidacy) in a timely manner such that progress towards degree is delayed

Advisory Committee Chairs may also request that their advisee be put on probation if progress on a dissertation has stalled.

Students may be recommended for dismissal/separation from their program with approval from the Graduate college for the following reasons

Failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided.

Receiving two unsatisfactory grades, as defined by the program in which the course is offered, in the same semester.

Being sanctioned by the Office of Student Conduct while on probation

Failure to satisfactorily pass required courses or meet program benchmarks (such as passing comprehensive exams or advancing to candidacy) in a timely manner such that progress towards degree is delayed

The Graduate Studies Committee may recommend immediate separation if after being placed on probationary status, for students who receive two unsatisfactory grades in the same semester only with final approval from the Graduate College

Additional Program Information

Graduate Assistantships

The information here supplements that in the [Graduate Assistant Handbook](#).

The number of assistantships offered by the department may vary from year to year and is subject to budgetary constraints. The number of vacancies varies from semester to semester. Selection of recipients is made by an ad hoc committee of departmental faculty. Contracts for Graduate Assistants (GAs) begin at the beginning of the week before instruction begins in a semester and end at the end of the final examination period.

Assignments held by Graduate Assistants vary from semester to semester. Assignments are normally made in the week before the contract for the semester begins. Depending upon the faculty member to whom graduate assistants are assigned, they will be either assisting faculty with teaching at the undergraduate level only or research or both. Graduate Assistantships are awarded on a competitive basis and to maintain an assistantship student must remain in good standing (e.g., maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average and make continuous progress toward their degree). Please see the Graduate College Graduate Assistant Handbook for more information.

Recommendation for renewal of a Graduate Assistantship (GA) is at the discretion of the Department of Political Science (see description of ad hoc committee above) subject to the constraints of University and Graduate College rules.

The following are examples of reasons the Department of Political Science may decide not to recommend renewal of GA funding:

The student has already been employed as a Graduate Assistant for 8 semesters. Recommendation for funding beyond 8 semesters is possible in extraordinary circumstances at the Department's discretion.

A pattern of unsatisfactory evaluations in their performance as a GA.

A student is sanctioned by the Office of Student Conduct.

Failure to satisfactorily pass required courses or meet program benchmarks (such as passing comprehensive exams or advancing to candidacy) in a timely manner such that progress towards degree is delayed

The student is not in good standing

Forms and Deadlines

All of the forms listed below are available on the Graduate College's or the Department of Political Science's Web sites. For an up-to-date list of deadlines, see the Graduate College's Web site.

1. Appointment of Advisory Committee.
2. Proposed Doctoral Degree Program, Parts 1 and 2 (Part 2 is on the UNLV Degrees Directory website) —after completing course work and before taking the comprehensive examinations. Any change in the proposed degree program must be submitted to the Graduate College on a Change in Proposed Degree Program Form.
3. Prospectus Approval—before enrolling for dissertation credits.
4. Advancement to Doctoral Candidacy—along with the Prospectus Approval.
5. Application for Graduation—early in the final semester of work on the dissertation.
6. Culminating Experience Results—after successfully defending the dissertation

University Resources

The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

Alumni Engagement

With an alumni base 150,000+ strong, the UNLV Alumni Engagement offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

Institutional Engagement and Experience

The vision of the [Institutional Engagement and Experience](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's engagement mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office is housed under the Division of Human Resources and also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

Graduate Appeals and Issue Resolution

The Office of Graduate Student Services at the Graduate College assists graduate and professional students with addressing concerns and overcoming personal, academic, or financial challenges that might hinder their ability to be successful in their program. The office also provides information and student-centered issue-resolution services and offers guidance, information, and assistance when regular channels have failed to provide graduate students with the information they need to solve problems. Please see website for more information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/graduatecollege/appeals-issue-resolution>

UNLV Global and the Office of International Student and Scholar Compliance

[International Student and Scholar \(ISSC\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

The Care Center

The [Care Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

The Intersection

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax, flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities

The [Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

Military and Veteran Services Center

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits-experienced staff to assist more than 1,800 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists attending UNLV. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)

- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu, by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.

Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Changes summary
May 2016	David Damore	Update sections for consistency with current program requirements
March 2026	Chris Jensen	Updated requirements