

Department of Political Science Graduate Program Handbook

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Preface

Welcome to the Department of Political Science at the University of Nevada, Reno. This graduate student handbook supplements the University Catalog and offers practical guidance to help prospective graduate students familiarize themselves with the content, admissions procedures, policies, and requirements of the program. Current graduate students will also find this handbook useful for navigating the program's requirements. This handbook gives an overview of the discipline of Political Science, and introduces readers to the University of Nevada, Reno; the Department of Political Science; the department's graduate educational goals; and general academic expectations. We, as a department, hope this handbook helps graduate students achieve their educational objectives and stay on track to complete their graduate program in a timely manner. Please feel free to visit us any time in our offices or at our website (<http://www.unr.edu/political-science>) for additional information. Students are also encouraged to check graduate school website (<https://www.unr.edu/grad>) and the University Catalog (<https://catalog.unr.edu/>) for updates.

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About Us



As Nevada's flagship land-grant institution, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) has been instrumental in the history of one of the nation's fastest-growing states. Designated as a Carnegie Research 1 university, UNR is fully accredited by the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, the official accrediting agency of most Western states. UNR is also a land-grant campus of the Nevada System of Higher Education with a student population of approximately 22,000, including over 3,000 graduate students.

UNR was founded in 1874 as the State University of Nevada in Elko, Nevada, about 300 miles northeast of its present-day campus in Reno. The site for the university preparatory school in eastern Nevada (where no state institutions had previously been located) proved to be impractical, as nearly half of the state's residents lived in the Reno-Carson City area. In 1885, the legislature approved the move of the University from Elko to Reno.

The University has dynamic intellectual, artistic and sports life and a close relationship to the city of Reno, an emerging tech and innovation hub with a diverse population and a rich cultural history that hosts an active art, music and festival scene along the Truckee River. Known for its proximity to Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevada mountains, Reno is a vibrant, diverse and growing city of 300,000 located on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, about 200 miles east of San Francisco, about 100 miles east of Sacramento and 30 miles north of the state capital, Carson City. Combined with the neighboring city of Sparks, the Reno-Sparks metropolitan area has a population of 450,000. Reno is only 30-45 minutes from Lake Tahoe and major ski resorts and is rated one of the top locations in the United States for living and for outdoor recreation. It has an international airport with direct flights to many U.S. transportation hubs and to Mexico. For more information about the city and the surrounding area, please visit www.cityofreno.com and www.visitrenotahoe.com

The Department of Political Science

The UNR Department of Political Science is an energetic, collegial and exciting community of political scientists, public policy, and public administration scholars with a commitment to excellence in research and teaching. The Department is home to three graduate programs that confer MA, MPA and Ph.D. degrees. It also offers a BA in Political Science and coordinates the International Affairs major and minors in Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, and Renewable Energy. Faculty are linked with a variety of College and University-wide initiatives, such as the [Cybersecurity Center](#), the [Gender, Race and Identity Program](#), and the [Ozmen Institute for Global Studies](#). Additional information about the Department can be found at: <https://www.unr.edu/political-science>. In accordance with the University's land grant, tier-one research institution mission, our faculty contribute to the diversity and excellence of the academic community through research, teaching, and service in a pluralistic environment.



Admission Requirements

Admission to the Political Science graduate program is competitive. A departmental Graduate Committee is in charged with evaluating applicants and making admission recommendations to the Director of Graduate Studies. Admission to the program is at the discretion of the Department of Political Science, while final offers of admission must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School. Meeting minimum requirements does not guarantee admission to the program. We take into consideration multiple factors when making an admission decision. These may include a student's overall record, as well as fit with departmental faculty areas of expertise and research/teaching interests.

To be considered, prospective students must submit all application materials according to the deadlines listed below. Ph.D. and MA applications are only accepted in January (for admission the following fall), while MPA applications are accepted twice each year. Any student seeking graduate assistantship must complete application by January 15. Incomplete applications will not be considered for admission. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all materials are delivered to the Graduate School before the deadlines for consideration. The Department of Political Science and the Graduate School do not assume responsibility for missing application materials.

Please note that the Graduate School, which also must approve all applicants, has its own deadlines and regulations. Students are expected to know these, and meet and follow them.

Application Deadlines

- Graduate Assistantship Application for Ph.D., MA, and MPA: January 15
- Ph.D. and MA program for Fall Admission: January 15.
- MPA Priority Fall Admission (With Graduate Assistantship Application): January 15
- MPA Fall Admission: April 15
- MPA Spring Admission: November 15

M.P.A. Minimum Admission Requirements

- Undergraduate Degree (B.A./B.S)
- Minimum 2.75 overall GPA (B.A./B.S.) or a 3.0 GPA for last two years of B.A./B.S.
- 18 previously-completed credit hours (6 courses) in social science courses (broadly defined)
- GRE Scores: GRE scores must be from an examination taken in the previous 5 years. The GRE scores are required by the department and the Graduate School and cannot be waived. The department is willing to accept GMAT scores in substitution.

MI.A. Minimum Admission Requirements

- Undergraduate Degree (B.A./B.S)

- 18 previously-completed credit hours (6 courses) in social science courses (broadly defined)
- Minimum 2.75 overall GPA (B.A./B.S.) or a 3.0 GPA for last two years of B.A./B.S.
- GRE Scores: GRE scores must be from an examination taken in the previous 5 years. The GRE scores are required by the department and the Graduate School and cannot be waived. The department is willing to accept GMAT scores in substitution.

Ph.D. Minimum Admission Requirements

- Undergraduate Degree (B.A./B.S.)
- GPA: Minimum overall GPA of 3.25 or higher (on a 4.0-point scale) for all prior coursework at the undergraduate level.
- 18 previously-completed credit hours (6 courses) in social science courses (broadly defined)
- GRE Scores: GRE scores must be from an examination taken in the previous 5 years. The GRE scores are required by the department and the Graduate School and cannot be waived. The department is willing to accept GMAT scores in substitution.

Admission Materials

- Undergraduate and Graduate School transcripts (if applicable)
- Test Scores:
 - GRE scores. The department is willing to accept GMAT scores in substitution
 - For international students studying under a student visa, the Test of English as a Foreign Language test (TOEFL) is required and you must have a minimum TOEFL score of 500 on the paper-based exam; 79 on the internet-based exam, or 173 for the computer-based exam. The Graduate School now also accepts DuoLingo scores (minimum 105) and IELTS scores (minimum 6.5 overall). Students must also meet all other requirements for International Students, as established by the Graduate School and the Office of International Students and Scholars/ 0074, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada 89557-0074.
 - If admitted, international students should get in touch with the Office of International Students and Scholars immediately to make sure that all needed paperwork is processed as quickly as possible. Because of current policy issues with US immigration policy and the Department of Homeland Security, this should be done as soon as possible. Likewise, some necessary paperwork, such as application for a Social Security card, can take weeks to complete, so students are encouraged to start this process immediately after they are informed of their accepted application.
 - Department of Political Science reserves the right to request that the English skills of incoming international students be evaluated by the Intensive English Language Center on campus. The results of that evaluation will be used to determine if the student needs to take additional English or other classes to facilitate their success in the program. International students awarded funding through an assistantship will need to pass an oral English examination prior to the semester they start their graduate program. *Failure to pass the examination will result in cancellation of the student's teaching assistantship.*

- Three letters of recommendation, of which at least one is from a professor with whom you have taken and completed coursework. People with 5 years of work experience may submit all three letters from people in a position to judge your work experience and aptitude for graduate work.
- Statement of Purpose or Statement of Research Interests: the 500-word statement should explain to the Graduate Committee why you have chosen the department for your graduate program, your potential research agenda and interests, how your research fits with the department's research and teaching emphases, and any faculty members with whom you have an interest in working. For the MPA applicants, statement should explain to the Graduate Committee a bit about your background, why you have chosen the department for your program, your career and educational goals, and how the MPA will help your career objectives.
 - The Personal Statement should be double spaced, use a standard 12pt font and have your name at the top of each page.
- Students applying for funding through an assistantships must complete the department-specific application for an assistantship, due by January 15th regardless of which degree the student is applying for.
- All applications must begin with an electronic application account. You can begin this process at the Graduate School's website.
- All additional application materials, unless uploaded directly to the Graduate School application system, must be mailed to the Graduate School by the appropriate application date.

University of Nevada, Reno
 Graduate School/0326
 Reno, NV 89557-0326

Please *do not* mail application material to the department without consulting with the department's Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate School evaluates all applications for completion and then electronically forwards them to the department's Graduate Committee for evaluation. Materials sent to the department cannot be guaranteed to be included in a student's application file.

Regular Admission

The department's Graduate Committee reviews files and makes recommendations to the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies forwards recommended applications to the Graduate School for final approval. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee reserve the right to specify additional application materials if necessary.

It is possible that the Graduate Committee may recommend admission for a student contingent upon the student taking additional coursework to make up for deficiencies in the student's record. Such recommendations may be tailored specifically to the student's background and will reflect preparation or skills that the Graduate Committee believes the student should improve before matriculating into the program. In doing so, the Graduate Committee reserves the right to set standards for the completion of the coursework, such as requiring a specific grade level at which the course must be completed. Such coursework can generally be completed while the student is pursuing an approved program of graduate study.

Admitted students will receive an email welcoming them to the department, but the official letter of admission will come directly from the Dean of the Graduate School. The Graduate Dean's letter is the official offer of admission. Accepted students must confirm that they are accepting the admission offer through their application account with the Graduate School. This communication will allow the department to establish department records and to add the student to the department's communications. If the student does not respond to the department's offer of admission by the established deadline, they will forfeit their seat for the incoming class. Students must also adhere to internal deadlines for accepting an offer of funding, otherwise the funding will be forfeited.

If a currently enrolled MA or MPA student wishes to enter the PhD program, the student must apply to the program through the regular PhD admission process. Their application will be considered with all other prospective students during the next admission cycle. If admitted, they will be considered for funding on the same basis as the other newly admitted students. If the MA or MPA student had been on funding, with admission to the PhD program, that funding does not automatically carry over.

Special Admission

For students who are not sure about graduate school and want to try a few classes before submitting a full application, the Graduate School allows students to apply for Graduate Special status. This status allows students to take up to twelve credits without being formally admitted to the program. This program can be useful for students who want to try a few classes before making formal application to any graduate program. It can also slowly introduce students back into the classroom environment if they have had a long absence from the classroom. The twelve credits can be applied to a degree program once a department admits the student.

Application for Graduate Special status must be made directly to the Graduate School, not through the department. Students can receive additional information and an application from the Graduate School's website. A student admitted as a Graduate Special Student should get in touch with the Director of Graduate Studies immediately to discuss which courses the student should take, given the student's background and objectives.

At the discretion of the Graduate Committee, the committee may recommend admission with a Prescribed Program of Study. Generally, students whose application does not meet standard admission requirements for the department, but show academic promise in their ability to complete graduate work, can be admitted under this option. A prescribed program admission requires the completion of one semester of full-time study of 9 credits or 12 credits over two semesters for those completing the program part-time. The student must attain a grade of at least "B" in each course taken over the probationary period. The courses prescribed may be graduate or undergraduate classes the Graduate Committee has identified as needed to strengthen the student's skills and academic background. Undergraduate courses cannot be applied as credit toward the graduate degree. Students who successfully complete the prescribed program then continue with regular graduate studies. Students admitted under a prescribed program should complete the Prescribed Program Form in conjunction with the Director of Graduate Studies

Financial Aid & Graduate Student Assistantship

The Department of Political Science offers a limited number of paid graduate research (GRA) and graduate teaching (GTA) assistantships for graduate students. Priority is given to Ph.D. students for funding. Assistantships are competitive and available only for full-time students. All funding is renewable on a yearly basis. Students are discouraged from holding other jobs while on an assistantship, and doing so may jeopardize funding renewal.

All graduate students holding an assistantship (GTA or GRA) are considered Nevada residents for tuition purposes. Non-resident tuition is only waived for the duration of the assistantship. To be eligible for an assistantship, the student must be admitted to a degree-granting program and be in good academic standing.

It is mandatory that all funded students must take, prior to the start of their first semester at UNR, the Graduate School's short course on teaching. This course is typically offered as a workshop shortly before the start of new semester. You should check with Director of Graduate Studies and Graduate School for updates.

In addition to satisfying the minimum requirements of continuous enrollment by the Graduate School, all funded students must satisfy departmental expectations to receive continuous funding. To retain funding, students will be evaluated on the following dimensions: 1) minimum GPA for department funding (3.30 or above); 2) sufficient, timely progress toward degree; 3) satisfactory performance in the Graduate Assistantship position to which they have been assigned. In addition, unprofessional behavior and misconduct (such as plagiarism) might also lead to termination or non-renewal of graduate assistantship. Funding decisions are also based on budgetary considerations, and other conditions that may affect the availability of funds. If a student fails to satisfy departmental expectations, the Director of Graduate Studies, after consultation with Department Chair and/or Graduate Committee, will send a formal warning letter to the student. After receiving the warning letter, the student will be automatically put on probationary status for funding. The continuous funding of the student will be contingent on a reevaluation of the student at the end of the term in which the student was put on probationary status. A student's funding may be terminated without probation if an extreme case of misconduct or misbehavior occurs.

While the Graduate School's assistantship requirements are that students must be enrolled for a minimum of six graduate credits throughout the duration of the assistantship, students on a full-time assistantship with the department (20 hours a week) must register for nine credits of coursework unless they receive a waiver from the Director of Graduate Studies. Students on a partial assistantship may register for the minimum of six credits. The first semester a student is assigned a GAship, the student must take the Graduate School's mandatory Teaching Assistantship training, whether or not the student will be assigned as a TA in their first semester on funding.

State-funded assistantships (GTA/GRA) may be held by the student for a maximum of five (5) years for Ph.D. students and three (3) years for master's degree students. General information concerning graduate

assistantships can also be found on the Graduate School's website. Students awarded a graduate assistantship should read the Graduate Assistantship handbook on the Graduate School's website.

The university provides a range of additional financial assistance options for graduate students. Interested applicants should contact Financial Aid. Students should also explore other sources of scholarships from private foundations and government agencies where available.

Graduate Student Health Insurance

All domestic degree seeking graduate students, who are enrolled in six or more credits (regardless of the course level) in a semester, will be automatically enrolled and billed for the University-sponsored health insurance for each term they are eligible (fall & spring/summer). If a student has other comparable coverage and would like to waive out of the student health insurance, it is the student's responsibility to complete the University online waiver form prior to the deadline. If approved, a health insurance waiver is good for the current academic year only. A new waiver must be submitted each academic year. All international graduate students are required to carry student health insurance, and the cost will be automatically added to your student account. Any international graduate students with insurance questions must contact the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) directly. For additional information, please see the Graduate School's health insurance website.

Graduate Student Enrollment & Leave of Absence Policy

Continuous Enrollment: To maintain "good standing," all graduate students are required to enroll in a minimum of three (3) graduate credits each fall and spring semester until they graduate. International students may be required to enroll in nine graduate credits each fall and spring semester depending on the requirements of their visa.

Leave of Absence: Students in good standing may request a leave of absence by completing a Leave of Absence form available on the Graduate School website, during which time they are not required to maintain continuous registration. Usually, a leave of absence is approved for one or two semesters. The leave of absence request may be extended by the student filing an additional leave of absence form. Students applying for a leave of absence should not have any "incomplete" grades which could be changed to "F" and have a detrimental impact on their cumulative GPA. Requests for leave of absences must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the leave is to begin.

Reinstatement: When a student has been absent for one semester or more without an approved leave of absence, he or she may request reinstatement via the Reinstatement form (available on the Graduate School website). This form allows the program the option to recommend the student be re-admitted to their graduate program based on their previous admission OR require the student to re-apply for admission which would require students to submit a new application for admission and pay the application fee. The Notice of Reinstatement to Graduate Standing must be received by the Graduate School no later than the last day of enrollment for the semester the reinstatement is to begin.

M.P.A. Program Description

M.P.A. Program Goals

The Masters in Public Administration program's mission is to educate public sector professionals to assume leadership positions in public service and to improve the governance and management of local, state, and federal agencies and nonprofit organizations. To accomplish this mission, the program has the following objectives for students:

- Prepare students with skills and knowledge for effectively leading and managing organizations that ultimately serve the global public good
- Develop and explain advanced professional practices and analytical skills through classroom instruction and other learning activities
- Prepare students to work within public and non-profit sectors
- Apply critical thinking and appropriate technology for public policy analysis
- Use critical thinking skills to solve problems in public and nonprofit settings in a manner that will improve the public good

The MPA program is a non-thesis degree designed to provide students with competency in both public administration and public policy formation and analysis. The courses in public administration are designed to increase the student's understanding of the public sector's internal organizational environment, and to help the student develop needed managerial skills to operate within that environment. Additional courses in public policy give the student an understanding of the social, political, and economic environment in which public programs develop and operate. Courses in research methodology and statistics provide the empirical skills necessary in today's complex government agencies and activities. Elective courses provide the student with additional competence in an area linked to student interests and career goals.

M.P.A. Degree Coursework

The M.P.A. program does not require a thesis.

All M.P.A. students are required to complete 30 credits of course work, including general core courses (21 credits) and elective courses (9 credits). For most updated course offerings, please check "Master of Public Administration Program" at the University General Catalog. You might also discuss with your advisor and/or director of graduate studies.

Maintaining Academic Standing in the MPA Program

To complete the MPA degree, students must be in good academic standing with the Department of Political Science and the Graduate School; all students must meet the graduation requirements of both the Department of Political Science and of the Graduate School.

Timeline to M.P.A. Degree Completion

Students who enroll full time in the MPA program can expect to complete their degrees within two years. However, many of our students hold full time jobs or other obligations and they pursue their degree part-time. In the case of part-time students, the time to degree completion will vary with the student's course load per semester.

When available, students may take summer and wintermester courses that would shorten this plan of study. Students should note that some required method courses are only offered in fall or spring semester. Other core courses are offered on a rotating basis.

By the rules of the Graduate School, all requirements for the MPA must be completed within six years of matriculation into the program. The Department of Political Science will not request nor support extensions of this time. Students not meeting the six-year degree completion requirement will be dismissed from the program.

M.P.A. Advisors and Graduate Committee

Upon admission to the MPA program, students are required to sign a declaration of advisor form for the department. Please be noted that Graduate School increasingly uses DocuSign to handle forms electronically (<https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms>). Based on the student's interests in the program, an advisor is assigned to each student entering the program. This advisor is your point of contact to begin receiving advice about course selections and program requirements going into your first semester. The student may, at any time, change their advisor if they prefer to work with another professor. The initial advisor form allows the department to inform the Graduate School that you have an advisor that is assisting you and that you are engaged in a structured program that will meet both departmental and Graduate School requirements.

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs offered by the Department of Political Science must form a committee. Based on new rules of Graduate School, graduate students in non-thesis programs such as MPA only need to have a 2-member committee (typically your advisor plus director of graduate

studies). The purpose of the committee in the MPA program is to assure that the student has advice on course selection and degree completion trajectory.

Students should see their advisor once a semester to make sure they are on track, know course availability, and be made aware of any programmatic changes. Students should also feel free to make an appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies if they have questions about their progress.

M.P.A. Program of Study

Your committee is formed when you complete the Program of Study form. Each student in the MPA program *must* complete a Program of Study form by the end of their second semester (this is earlier than the Graduate School's deadline of the third semester of study). The Program of Study form serves as the guide to completing your degree. The form is on the Graduate School webpages. It is important to note that the Program of Study form can be amended, depending on course availability and student needs. Thus, the Program of Study is not "written in stone," but it provides an anticipated path to degree completion to the department and to the Graduate School.

M.A. Program Description

M.A. Program Goals

The M.A. program prepares students for entry to doctoral programs in political science and law school, for working with political campaigns, interest groups, non-profit organizations and policy think tanks, and for positions in local, state, and federal legislative and bureaucratic offices. The Master of Arts program has the following general goals:

- To offer students an opportunity for advanced, specialized courses in the discipline of political science, leading to a graduate degree.
- To prepare students for additional graduate work leading to a doctoral degree and a career as a political scientist.
- To offer students the opportunity to prepare for a career in teaching, politics, public service and government or to complement their present careers.
- To support of university-based research involving issues of politics and public policy.

The courses in political science cover a full range of the discipline, both in terms of substance and methodology. Courses in research methods provide the skills necessary for sophisticated analysis of political processes, institutions and policies. More specialized interests are developed through independent courses and projects students take as part of the curriculum.

The MA program in Political Science at UNR is unique because of its sustained commitment to mentorship. The small size of our MA program – with incoming cohorts of less than five students – provides students with regular opportunities to work directly with our faculty.

M.A. Degree Coursework

The M.A. program requires the student to fulfill specified coursework over the course of the degree. Students have two track options to complete the M.A. degree, and the number of credits required depends on the track the student takes to complete the degree. Students should discuss with their advisor which track is appropriate for them given their academic and career objectives.

The Department offers five fields of study for the M.A.:

1. American Politics
2. Political Theory
3. International Relations
4. Comparative Politics
5. Public Policy and Administration

Each student is expected to select one of these fields as their major field of study. Students primarily interested in Public Administration should apply to the department's MPA program.

Track One: Thesis Option (Total 30 Credits)

The Thesis option is highly recommended for students who think they may go on later to graduate work at the Ph.D. level. For students who may pursue a Ph.D. later, the thesis option gives them experience with writing a significant piece of original research that may lay the foundation for work at the Ph.D. level. This writing is crucial for professors to evaluate your ability to do work at the Ph.D. level and will often form the basis for letters of recommendation to our or other's Ph.D. programs. Students selecting this option do not take comprehensive examinations.

Course Requirements:

- Scope and Methods: 9 Credits
- Field Seminars: 9 Credits in 700 Level courses
- General Electives: 6 Credits in 600/700 level courses
- PSC 797 Thesis: 6 credits
- For most updated course offerings, please check "Political Science, MA Program" at the University General Catalog. You might also discuss with your advisor and/or Director of Graduate Studies.

Completion of a Thesis: Students in this track are required to write a prospectus (a research plan for the thesis) for their thesis committee, which may accept or reject the prospectus or require revisions to the prospectus. Students should arrange a prospectus meeting in consultation with their committee chair and members. The prospectus is crucial for students because it is the plan of research that the committee believes will produce a successful and defensible thesis.

The thesis must represent original and independent investigation that is a contribution to knowledge. The thesis must demonstrate the student's ability to select and delimit a topic for analysis, to assemble pertinent empirical data, to ground the analysis in a relevant body of theory and literature, to execute a research design, and to express the findings effectively both in written form and in an oral defense. The committee will collectively decide whether the student has passed their oral defense; passage of the defense may be contingent upon revisions to the written thesis.

Track Two: Non-thesis Option (Total 36 Credits)

The Non-Thesis option is highly recommended for students who are already engaged in their career fields and are seeking to use their degree for professional advancement. A thesis is not required, but additional coursework is needed to demonstrate appropriate knowledge in the student's major field. Once the student completes most course work, they may schedule their comprehensive examination.

Course Requirements:

- Scope and Methods: 9 Credits
- Field Seminars: 9 Credits in 700 Level courses
- General Electives: 15 Credits in 600/700 level courses
- PSC 795 Comprehensive Examination: 3 Credits
- For most updated course offerings, please check “Political Science, MA Program” at the University General Catalog. You might also discuss with your advisor and/or Director of Graduate Studies.

M.A. Comprehensive Exams

(Non-Thesis Track)

Students in the non-thesis track must have three credits of comprehensive examination in their chosen sub-field. We expect MA students to take exams after the third semester in the MA program. MA comprehensive exams must be taken in January. In rare cases and with justifiable reasons, a student might request to take the exams in May instead of in January. Such a request must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies before the end of the fall semester. However, approval is not guaranteed.

The Director of Graduate Studies will form comprehensive examination committees that will have the responsibility to construct and grade the examinations. The comprehensive examination committee will consist of two graduate faculty members qualified to read the examinations. The form of the exam is an open-book, take-home examination that the student has several days to complete. Students who do not return the examination will automatically fail the examination. Committee members will read the examinations and assign a grade of 1-5 for each essay answer. The grades from each committee member will be averaged to give an overall score for each question on the examination. The overall scores from each committee member will then be averaged to give the student their final grade. Students must achieve a 3.0 average across the committee members on each question to pass the examination.

Examination scores that are significantly disparate among the committee members in the view of the Director of Graduate Studies *may* be subject to review by a third faculty member. In such instances, the third faculty member’s scores will be averaged with the two committee members’ scores, but the Director of Graduate studies will have the discretion to weigh all commentary from faculty members in deciding whether the student has passed the examination.

If a student fails their comprehensive examination, the student **CANNOT** backtrack and take a thesis option to complete the degree. As a consequence, the student is subject to dismissal from the program. At the discretion of the Graduate Committee, the committee *may* authorize the student to retake the examination. If the committee grants permission for the student to take the examination again, and the student fails the examination a second time, the Graduate Director will dismiss the student from the program. The Graduate Director will notify the Graduate Committee of the decision to dismiss the student; however, approval of the Graduate Committee is not necessary and the decision cannot be appealed within the department.

Timeline to M.A. Degree Completion

Students who enroll full time in the M.A. program can expect to complete their degrees in two years or four semesters. However, many of our students hold full time jobs or other obligations and they pursue their degree part-time. In the case of part-time students, the time to degree completion will vary with the student's course load per semester.

By the rules of the Graduate School, all requirements for the M.A. must be completed within six years of matriculation into the program. The Department of Political Science will not request nor support extensions of this time. Students not meeting the six-year degree completion requirement will be dismissed from the program.

M.A. Advisors and Graduate Committee

Upon admission to the M.A. program, students are required to sign a declaration of advisor form for the department. Please be noted that Graduate School increasingly uses DocuSign to handle forms electronically (<https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms>). Based on the student's interests in the program, an advisor is assigned to each student entering the program. This advisor is your point of contact to begin receiving advice about course selections and program requirements going into your first semester. The student may, at any time, change their advisor if they prefer to work with another professor. The initial advisor form allows the department to inform the Graduate School that you have an advisor that is assisting you and that you are engaged in a structured program that will meet both departmental and Graduate School requirements.

By Graduate School rules, all Master's programs (with the exception of the Master's of Business Administration and the Master's of Accountancy programs) require formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean.

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs offered by the Department of Political Science must form a committee. The purpose of the committee in the M.A. program is to assure that the student has advice on course selection and degree completion trajectory. For thesis-track MA students, committees must comprise three faculty members, two from within the department and *one from outside the department* that serves as the Graduate School Representative. All members must be graduate faculty members. The Graduate School Representative (also known as the outside committee member) provides an external assurance that the rules established in the program and by the Graduate School have been followed successfully. The outside member will read and participate in the defense of the thesis if you have chosen Track One for your degree completion. However, the outside member has no role in the writing, grading, or administration of the comprehensive examinations. If you do not know of a professor outside the department that can serve as your Graduate School Representative, please feel free to see your advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies to receive suggestions from them. For non-thesis track MA students, you will only need to form a 2 member committee (typically your advisor plus director of graduate studies)

Students should see their advisor once a semester to make sure they are on track, know course availability, and be made aware of any programmatic changes. Students should also feel free to make an appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies if they have questions about their progress.

M. A. Program of Study

Your committee is formed when you complete the Program of Study form. Each student in the M.A. program *must* complete a Program of Study form by the end of their second semester (this is earlier than the Graduate School's deadline of the third semester of study). The Program of Study serves as the guide to completing your degree. It is important to note that the Program of Study form can be amended, depending on course availability and student needs.. Thus, the Program of Study is not "written in stone," but it provides an anticipated path to degree completion to the department and to the Graduate School.

Ph.D. Program Description

Ph.D. Program Goals

The primary goal in the Ph.D. program is to train professional, academic political scientists. Ph.D. graduates have gone on to become faculty members at other colleges and universities. UNR graduate students routinely obtain positions at all levels of government, or use their degrees as a platform to advance their current career trajectories. In helping students achieve their goals, the program has the following objectives for students:

1. To demonstrate the ability to apply political science and other social science theories to research questions
2. To design and conduct independent analyses appropriate to research questions within the field of political science
3. To apply methodological training that addresses important political and social questions
4. To demonstrate advanced skills in professional communication appropriate for presentation to professional audiences in academia, government, or industry
5. To complete a research project involving issues of politics and public policy

The courses in the Ph.D. program cover a full range of the discipline, both in terms of substance and methodology. Foundational seminar courses provide the needed background in specific areas of training. Courses in research methodology provide the skills necessary for sophisticated analysis of political processes, institutions, and policies. More-specialized interests are developed through independent courses and projects that students take as part of the curriculum and through working directly with professors.

The strength of the Ph.D. program lies in its small size and the diversity of its faculty members. Students work closely with Ph.D. faculty members throughout their residency in the department. The department's faculty come from a range of backgrounds, with many being first generation undergraduate degree and Ph.D. degree holders. Faculty members publish in top political science and field journals; consult for local, state, federal, and international institutions; hold research grants; and conduct extensive field research in their respective areas. Faculty members are consistently rated by students as outstanding teachers, with members holding teaching and advising awards from the college, the university, and the Nevada system of higher education (NSHE). For more information on faculty, see <https://www.unr.edu/political-science/people>.

Ph.D. Degree Coursework

The Ph.D. degree requires 72 credits beyond the B.A. degree. Please see the Graduate School's webpages for Program of Study requirements, and the General Catalog. 6 credits are required for comprehensive examinations.

Whether a student pursues the Ph.D. part-time or full-time, the student must complete all requirements for the degree within the Graduate School's eight-year limit. The course requirements that follow are the minimum standards established by the Department. Students may take courses beyond the minimum in preparation for comprehensive exams and dissertation research.

Students accepted into the Ph.D. program are expected to study in two of the five fields the department offers as specializations. We do not offer a focus in Political Theory at the Ph.D. level:

- American Politics
- Comparative Politics
- International Relations
- Public Policy
- Public Administration

The Ph.D. program requires all students to fulfill the following minimum course requirements:

Scope and Methods: 12 credits

At the discretion of the Director of Graduate Studies, students with prior graduate-level training that covers the material in these courses may have some of these courses waived. Pending on approval by the Director of Graduate Studies, students may also take one or two method courses from other departments/programs to substitute some of these courses. Students still must meet minimum credit hour requirements.

First Field: 12 credits

To be selected in consultation with the student's advisor/committee chair

Second Field: 9 credits

To be selected in consultation with the student's advisor/committee chair

Field Seminars and/or Electives: 9 credits

To be selected in consultation with the student's advisor/committee chair

Dissertation: 24 dissertation credit.

Comprehensive Examinations: 6 Credits

Typically 3 credits in the fall and 3 credits in the Spring. Also see *Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations*.

For most updated course offerings, please check "Political Science, PhD Program" at the University General Catalog. You should also discuss courses with your advisor and/or Director of Graduate Studies.

Dissertation Prospectus

Students are required to write a prospectus (a research plan for the dissertation) to be approved by their Ph.D. committee. Students should defend their prospectus within six months of passing their comprehensive exams. The prospectus is defended orally to the committee, at which time the committee may accept or reject the prospectus or require revisions to the prospectus. Students should arrange a prospectus meeting in consultation with their committee chair and members.

Completion of a Dissertation

The dissertation must represent original and independent investigation that is a contribution to knowledge. The dissertation must demonstrate the student's ability to select and delimit a topic for analysis, to assemble pertinent empirical data, to ground the analysis in a relevant body of theory and literature, to execute a research design, and to express the findings effectively both in written form and in an oral defense. The committee will collectively decide whether the student has passed their oral defense; passage of the defense may be contingent upon revisions to the dissertation. Specifications for the dissertation should be determined in close consultation with the faculty advisor.

Maintaining Academic Standing in the Ph.D. Program

The UNR Graduate School requires that all graduate students must maintain a cumulative graduate GPA of 3.0 for continuous enrolment. If their GPA drops below 3.0 they are either placed on probation or dismissed. Undergraduate courses will not count towards graduate GPA.

To complete the Ph.D. degree, students must be in good academic standing with the Department of Political Science and the Graduate School. In other words, all students must meet the graduation requirements of both the Department of Political Science and of the Graduate School of the University of Nevada, Reno. All PhD students must be making timely progress to the degree and maintain professional behavior in the PhD program. In addition to satisfying minimum requirements of continuous enrolment by the Graduate School, all funded students must satisfy departmental expectations to receive continuous funding (see *Financial Aid & Graduate Assistantship*).

In graduate studies, generally grades below a "B" (including "B-") are considered failing. These grades can seriously affect the student's progress and will certainly impact the student's ability to maintain any departmental-level funding the student may have. Grades below B do not count toward degree course requirements.

While the Graduate School uses a 3.00 cumulative GPA as the minimum threshold, the Department of Political Science may also terminate a student from the program if the student receives six or more credits of B- or lower grades, or three credits of C or lower grades. Students who do not successfully complete a course (i.e., a grade of B or better) may retake the course. However, if the student does not successfully complete the course after the second time, the student will be dismissed from the program by the Director of Graduate Studies for insufficient progress toward the degree.

Ph.D. Comprehensive Examinations

Comprehensive exams are aimed to evaluate the intellectual capacity of Ph.D. students in their specific area of interest. Satisfactory completion of these examinations is required for the satisfactory completion of Ph.D. candidacy.

We expect students to have taken and passed all their comprehensive exams after their fifth semester in the Ph.D. program. We schedule both the first field (major) and the second field (minor) exams in January. Before the exams, students must first register three comprehensive exams credits to prepare for the exams (typically in the Fall semester). In the Spring semester, students must register another three credits for comprehensive examinations. While students normally complete exams in January, faculty complete grading in the Spring semester when students will receive three of the six credits.

While the comprehensive exams must normally be taken in January, a student might request to take the exams in May instead of in January with justifiable reasons. Such a request must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies before the end of the fall semester. However, approval is not guaranteed.

The Director of Graduate Studies will form comprehensive examination committees that will have the responsibility to construct and grade the examinations. The comprehensive examination committee will consist of three graduate faculty members qualified to read the examinations. The form of the exam is an open-book, take-home examination that the student has several days to complete. Students who do not return the examination will automatically fail the examination. Committee members will read the examinations and assign a grade of 1-5 for each essay answer. The grades from each committee member will be averaged to give an overall score for the examination. The overall scores from each committee member will then be averaged to give the student their final grade. Students must achieve a 3.0 average across the committee members to pass the examination.

Examination scores that are significantly disparate among the committee members in the view of the Director of Graduate Studies *may* be subject to review by a fourth faculty member. In such instances, the fourth faculty member's scores will be averaged with the three committee members' scores, but the Director of Graduate studies will have the discretion to weigh all commentary from faculty members in deciding whether the student has passed the examination.

If a student fails a comprehensive examination, the student is subject to dismissal from the program. At the discretion of the Graduate Committee, the committee *may* authorize the student to retake the examination. If the committee grants permission for the student to take the examination again, and the student fails the examination a second time, the Graduate Director will dismiss the student from the program. The Graduate

Director will notify the Graduate Committee of the decision to dismiss the student; however, approval of the Graduate Committee is not necessary and the decision cannot be appealed within the department.

Timeline to Ph.D. Degree Completion

Students who enroll full-time in the Ph.D. program are expected to complete their coursework and examination requirements in two and a half years (five regular semesters), and are expected to complete their dissertation within another two and a half to three and a half years (five to six years total). Upon passing their comprehensive exams, students must file the Doctoral Degree Admission to Candidacy with the Graduate School. Writing of the Ph.D. dissertation prospectus should occur once the student completes both comprehensive examinations. Students should normally defend their prospectus within six months after finishing both comprehensive exams. Writing of the prospectus can begin in the middle of the third year, and should be defended no later than the end of the third academic year.

By the rules of the Graduate School, all requirements for the Ph.D. must be completed within eight years of matriculation into the program. The Department of Political Science will neither request nor support extensions of that time. Students not meeting the eight-year degree completion requirement will be dismissed from the program.

Ph.D. Advisors and the Dissertation Committee

All students enrolled in graduate degree programs offered by the Department of Political Science must form a committee. The purpose of the committee in the Ph.D. program is to ensure that the student has advice on course selection and the degree-completion trajectory. The committee is crucial in completing the Ph.D. dissertation. By Graduate School rules, all Ph.D. programs require at least five advisory committee members. All members must be graduate faculty members, or approved by the Graduate School to sit on committees. One must be designated as the Graduate School Representative (also known as an outside committee member). This person will provide an external assurance that the rules established in the program and by the Graduate School have been followed successfully. Two members, including the Graduate School representative, must be from a department or program outside of the department or program from which the student is graduating. Formal approval of all student advisory committees is made by the Graduate Dean. All committee members must participate in the defense of the dissertation.

Upon admission to the Ph.D. program, students are required to sign a Declaration of Advisor form for the department. Please be noted that Graduate School increasingly uses DocuSign to handle forms electronically (<https://www.unr.edu/grad/student-resources/forms>). Based on the student's interests in the program, an advisor is assigned to each student entering the program. This advisor is the student's point of contact to begin receiving advice about course selections and program requirements in their first semester. The student may, at any time, change their advisor if they prefer to work with another professor. The initial advisor form allows the department to inform the Graduate School that the student has an

advisor who is actively assisting him/her and that he/she is engaged in a structured program that will meet both departmental and Graduate School requirements.

Students should see their advisor once per semester to make sure they are on track, know course availability, and are aware of any programmatic changes. Students should also feel free to make an appointment with the Director of Graduate Studies if they have questions about their progress.

Ph.D. Program of Study

The student's Ph.D. committee is formed when the student completes the Program of Study form. Each student in the Ph.D. program *must* complete a Program of Study form by the end of their third semester. The Program of Study serves as the guide to completing the degree. The form is available on the Graduate School webpages. It is important to note that the Program of Study can be amended to accommodate changes in coursework. Thus, the Program of Study is not "written in stone," but rather provides an anticipated path to degree completion to inform the department and the Graduate School.

Transfer Credits

Transfer credits are credits transferred from another institution. Credits completed at UNR in another program or as a Graduate Special do not need to be transferred. Transfer credit is requested on the Graduate Credit Transfer Evaluation Request form, available on the Graduate School website and must be signed by the student, major advisor, and the Director of Graduate Studies. Transfer credits applied to a graduate program must comply with the time limitation on Ph.D. (eight years) and master's program (six year). Credits from a completed master's degree will be exempt from the eight-year time limitation for those students earning a doctoral degree. Only those courses that relate to a student's particular program focus will be approved for transfer and/or substitution. In the case of course substitutions, particularly for core-required courses, the department may request evidence of the material covered in the course. Students should discuss these issues with their advisor or the Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Graduate Studies exercises discretion over which courses may be transferred into the graduate program, ensuring that the courses fit within a coherent plan of study for the student. In most instances, graduate students will have to take the standard required courses in the Political Science Department.

Completing Your Degree

As students near completion of their coursework and comprehensive examinations, they will want to pay attention to the paperwork needed to complete their degree. Students should check graduate school website (<https://www.unr.edu/grad>) for updated deadlines and requirements.

Students should take note of the following items:

- **Graduation Application**
The Graduation Application, available on the Graduate School webpages, must be completed several weeks ahead of your anticipated graduation. This application is used to generate an audit of your degree requirements. You will receive confirmation 3-8 weeks after submission from the Graduate School that all requirements for the degree have or have not been met.
- **Notice of Completion**
After all requirements have been met, students should complete the Notice of Completion Form. This form must be signed by all committee members and administrative officials confirming that you have met the requirements for your degree. A copy of the form should also be provided to either the Director of Graduate Studies or the department's Administrative Assistant (Thompson Building, Room 233).
- **Exit Survey**
The department and the Graduate School would like you to complete the exit survey to tell us about your experience in the department and in the Graduate School.

Graduate Student Association

The Graduate Student Association (GSA) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare of the graduate students at UNR. The GSA government functions through the Council of Representatives, Executive Council and established committees. <http://www.unr.edu/gsa/>

Political Science Graduate Student Association (PSGSO) represents all graduate students and promotes the welfare of graduate students within the Department of Political Science. PSGSO also organize various culutral and academic attitites sponsored by GSA.