

Graduate Handbook

Political Science

University of Victoria



Last Updated: Summer 2026

We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Xwsepsəm/Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.



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I. Introduction

This handbook describes the MA and PhD programs in the Department of Political Science at the University of Victoria. It presents guidelines, expectations, timelines for each degree stream, and a variety of other resources you may need during your studies.

All students should read the [University of Victoria Graduate Calendar](#). The Calendar contains information on general university policies, admissions, registration, academic regulations, student services, degrees and programs, course listings, requirements for degree completion and graduation, tuition and other fees, co-operative education options, and awards for graduate study.

This handbook is not a substitute for the Calendar. It is intended to supplement its contents. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the rules, regulations, and expectations relating to your program. When you have questions about your program, consult this handbook first, then reach out to the Graduate Advisor or Graduate Secretary.

II. Department of Political Science

The Department of Political Science office is located on the third floor of the [David Turpin Building \(DTB\)](#) in A-wing (A316).

Several faculty and staff in the department have responsibilities relating to graduate students:

Role	Name	Email
Department Chair	Dr. Feng Xu	chairpol@uvic.ca
Graduate Advisor	Dr. Simon Glezos	gradpol@uvic.ca
Graduate Secretary	Rachel Richmond	rachrich@uvic.ca
Chair's Assistant	Joanne Denton	jdenton@uvic.ca
Administrative Officer	Matt Davies	mattdavies@uvic.ca

Administrative Roles and Responsibilities

Department Chair

The Chair is the chief executive officer of the department. They have primary responsibility for the academic leadership of the department, including encouraging excellence in teaching and research, and for all administrative decisions within the Chair's jurisdiction. The Chair manages the department, including allocating teaching responsibilities, making recommendations to the Dean for faculty career progress (tenure and promotion), and addressing matters of academic integrity. The Graduate Advisor is delegated responsibility for the graduate program; students should consult with the Graduate Advisor about matters related to their programs.

Graduate Advisor

The Graduate Advisor is the formal liaison officer between the academic unit and the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS). They review and approve your graduate program, including special requests such as permission to take undergraduate seminars or graduate seminars outside the program. The Graduate Advisor makes recommendations to FGS on admission to graduate programs, awards, changes to the student record including degree program, supervisory committee, and registration. The Graduate Advisor must also sign requests for oral examination.

Graduate Secretary

The Graduate Secretary is your main point of contact in the Political Science office for all matters relating to the graduate program. Responsibilities include responding to admissions inquiries, processing graduate student defenses and comprehensive exams, tracking student progress and records, booking rooms, managing graduate student space and keys, and liaising with FGS and GARO on policies, registration, and degree completion requirements. This position also coordinates the TA hiring process, TA evaluations, and graduate events.

Chair's Assistant

The Chair's Assistant coordinates textbook and course pack orders, provides some administrative financial paperwork support to graduate programs, and supports the Graduate Secretary duties when they are away.

Administrative Officer

The Administrative Officer oversees department operations, budgets, and academic programs. Graduate students may interact with the Administrative Officer regarding funding accounts, sessional appointments, updates to web pages, or anything else that falls out of the scope of the Graduate Secretary or Chair's Assistant.

Graduate Spaces and Keys

Upon arriving on campus, you will be assigned shared graduate office space (MA students in years 1–2; PhD students in years 1–4), along with keys to your assigned room, the building exterior, and the shared Graduate Lounge. These keys are yours for the duration of your program; however, you will be asked to return them if you choose to complete your degree remotely.

Students holding a TA appointment will also receive two additional keys for the duration of each term: one for the departmental TA office and one for the AV storage boxes located across campus, which you will use when running tutorials. These keys are to be returned at the end of each TA term.

Note: *Students who are past year 2 of the MA, or year 4 of the PhD that would still like access to office space are welcome to speak with the department. We are happy to discuss availability on a case-by-case basis.*

III. Registration Process and Requirements

Registration Requirements

Once you have become a graduate student, you must be registered year-round. Students are defined as full-time if they are enrolled in courses totaling a minimum of 3 units or enrolled in a Candidacy Exam (POLI 693), dissertation (POLI 699), thesis (POLI 599), major research paper (POLI 598) or [co-operative education work term](#). Students not falling into any of these categories are considered part-time, unless special permission has been granted by the Dean of FGS.

MA students not taking any other courses in a particular term should register for POLI 598 or POLI 599 so you can maintain full-time status. PhD students should be registered in either POLI 693 or POLI 699.

Part-time study is permitted, but the MA degree must be completed within five years of initial registration and the PhD degree within seven years from the date of first registration. Students that cannot meet these time limits must obtain a program extension before the program expiry date.

Program Planning and CAPP/Degree Works

All graduate students, including those in CSPT, must have their graduate program approved by the Graduate Advisor. A walk-in session will be set up for this purpose in September. Please have the Graduate Secretary print a copy of your CAPP report and bring it with you. CAPP reports provide a summary of academic requirements for your declared program. When all program requirements are complete, students are expected to review and approve their final CAPP report before applying to graduate.

Your program can be changed at any time with permission from the Graduate Advisor. Although you can use My Page to register for Political Science graduate seminars, you will need special permission to register for Political Science undergraduate classes or for graduate seminars outside the Political Science Department (including CSPT seminars unless you are a CSPT student).

Note: Current graduate students use the CAPP system. UVic plans to implement Degree Works for new graduate students later in 2026. [More information about Degree Works can be found here.](#)

Registration After Your Dissertation or Thesis

After successful completion of a dissertation or thesis final oral defense, students are not permitted to be enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Graduate Studies except as follows:

- Registration in dissertation or thesis until required revisions are complete
- Co-op work terms as required to receive the Co-op designation for the graduate degree
- Graduate Studies Internship Program placements
- Registration in a course that may be required to complete degree requirements
- Other registration as approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies

Leaves of Absence, Incomplete Grades, and Accessibility Support

[There are four types of leave of absence available to graduate students:](#) Personal, Parental, Medical, and Compassionate.

MA students in approved one-year programs, such as Political Science, may take only one term of personal leave unless a second term has been approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. CSPT students are in a two-year program and are eligible for up to three terms (4 months each) within a five-year period. PhD students are allowed six terms (4 months each) within a seven-year period. After these allowances are used, students are required to maintain continuous registration and pay fees accordingly.

While on leave, students do not pay tuition fees and supervisory processes are suspended. Students may not undertake academic or research work or use University facilities during this time. Students with exceptional circumstances that exceed these limitations should speak with their supervisor and Graduate Advisor.

Students may register for personal leave online. All other leaves require submission of a [Graduate Academic Concession \(GAC\) form](#).

If additional time is needed to complete a course, an instructor may submit an Incomplete (INC) designation. The INC will appear on your transcript until a final grade is recorded. If you feel you may need this accommodation, speak with your instructor as early as possible.

For students experiencing challenges related to physical health, mental health, or a disability, we encourage you to reach out to your supervisor, Graduate Advisor, or directly to the [Centre for Accessible Learning \(CAL\)](#).

CSPT and Political Science

A frequent point of confusion concerns the relationship between CSPT and Political Science. When applying for the CSPT program, you apply to Political Science and specify CSPT. In the application process, you are accepted to Political Science first before your application is forwarded to CSPT.

Your place in the Political Science program is independent of your place in the CSPT program. If you want to leave CSPT, you are not required to leave Political Science. Conversely, if you would like to add the CSPT program, you do not have to reapply to Political Science. [Check out the CSPT website for more specific information about these programs.](#)

Indigenous Nationhood (IN) and Political Science

The same principle applies to the Indigenous Nationhood certificate. You apply to Political Science first and specify IN. Your place in the Political Science program is independent of your place in the IN certificate. [Check out the academic calendar for more information about this certificate.](#)

IV. Graduate Programs

The Department of Political Science offers the following graduate streams. Use the sections below to find the information most relevant to your program.

MA (Thesis-Based)

Courses and Requirements

Please refer to the [University of Victoria Graduate Calendar](#) for up-to-date information on MA degree requirements. In brief, the thesis-based MA requires 6.0 units of coursework including completion of required field courses, elective courses, and then the thesis POLI 599 (9.0 units).

Elective Courses: MA

One of the two elective courses must be a Political Science graduate seminar (either another field course or a specialized topic). The remaining elective may be another Political Science graduate seminar, a graduate seminar in another department, a senior undergraduate course in a relevant field, or a directed reading course with a regular faculty member in Political Science. CSPT students must meet the Political Science requirements for their non-CSPT elective.

MA students are eligible to take one senior undergraduate seminar in Political Science at the 300 or 400 level. Some undergraduate courses can be upgraded to graduate level as a directed reading but note that only one directed reading is permitted in fulfilling MA degree requirements.

Auditing Courses

Graduate students may request permission to audit a course. It is possible to change your registration from audit to credit, or credit to audit, up to the last day to add courses for the term. Audited courses will not appear on the official transcript and will not count toward degree requirements.

Directed Readings

Directed Readings (POLI 590) are courses related to a topic on which a professor has particular expertise, and must be offered by a member of FGS. It is recommended that directed readings relate closely to your thesis topic. MA students are only permitted to take one directed reading in fulfilling their degree requirements.

Out of Department Courses

MA students are eligible to take one senior level (300 or 400) undergraduate course or a graduate seminar outside the Political Science department. If a Political Science professor teaches a graduate seminar under an interdisciplinary program such as CSPT or Indigenous Governance, the Graduate Advisor may grant permission to count it as a Political Science seminar.

Letter of Permission for Study Elsewhere

Students registered in the graduate program who wish to undertake studies at another institution for transfer credit must apply in writing to the Graduate Admissions and Records Office, specifying the host institution, the exact courses of interest, and their unit values. The application must be supported in writing by the supervisor.

MA Thesis Requirements

When research is completed, and before the thesis is written, [download a copy of the Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines](#) from the FGS website. This publication specifies academic and technical requirements to ensure acceptability of the document to the University and Library and Archives Canada.

A master's thesis is an original lengthy essay that demonstrates the student's understanding of, and capacity to employ, research methods appropriate to their discipline(s). It should normally include a general overview of relevant literature in the field of study, be well organized and academically written. The work may be based on original data produced by the student or an original research exercise using scholarly literature or data produced by others.

In general, a master's candidate must demonstrate a command of the subject of the thesis. A thesis demonstrates that appropriate research methods have been used and critical analysis have been applied. It provides evidence of some new contribution to the field of existing knowledge or a new perspective on existing knowledge.

You and your committee decide on a date for your oral examination far enough in advance to allow time to submit the request for oral examination (ROE) form to the dean's office a minimum of 20 working days for MA prior to the examination. Your ROE must be completed and signed by each member of your supervisory committee.

Supervisory Committee: MA

All members of the MA supervisory committee must be on FGS membership list or be specifically approved by the Dean. MA students in Political Science are required to have at least one committee member from their home department. The supervisory committee consists of a minimum of two members:

- Member 1: The primary supervisor — must be from the home academic unit
- Member 2: May come from inside or outside the home department; may be a co-supervisor

For CSPT students, one member must be associated with Political Science and at least two members must be drawn from faculty affiliated with the CSPT program.

MA (Major Research Paper)

Courses and Requirements

Please refer to the [University of Victoria Graduate Calendar](#) for up-to-date information on MA degree requirements. In brief, the project-based MA requires 9.0 units of coursework including completion of required field courses, elective courses, and then the major research paper POLI 598 (6.0 units).

The Major Research Paper (MRP) is based on an independent research project, normally 40–50 pages in length. At the initiative of the student and with the approval of the supervisory committee, it may also consist of a research paper on a topic in political science completed for an external organization (e.g., an employer or a voluntary non-profit organization). The paper will be graded by the students' supervisory committee.

MRP Process and Expectations

When you complete your coursework in April, you should turn your attention to your Major Research Paper. Your first step should be to settle on a topic or problem and a way of approaching it. Discuss these matters with your supervisor and construct a five-page proposal. Get feedback from your supervisor on what you will need to do to turn the plan into a successful research paper.

Typically, one of your graduate course essays can serve as the starting point for your MRP. Imagine turning it into a paper for a scholarly journal: what needs to be done to expand upon the original research and pursue more fully the lines of inquiry first attempted? Discuss this with your supervisor, and keep in mind that you will need to complete at least two drafts in order to submit a thoughtful and polished piece of work. Your supervisor is your most valued resource regarding what the composition of your paper should be, and what milestones you should be reaching during each term.

MRP students have a second reader who with the supervisor will assess the final paper submitted to complete the program. Once they have graded the final paper the grade is given to the Graduate Secretary who sends paperwork to GARO for completion of the student's program.

MA MRP with a Concentration in Politics of Global Challenges (PGC)

The [PGC stream](#) provides advanced training in theoretical and methodological approaches to critical global political challenges. The program is centered on four key global challenges: migration and contested borders; political economy and development; (in)security and surveillance; and democracy, diversity and human rights. Students specialize in one of these

challenges. The research project-based degree is structured to be completed in a single academic year (September–July). [Please see the PGC program information](#) for full details.

MA with a Concentration in CSPT

Students in the CSPT concentration complete the same Political Science requirements for their non-CSPT electives and must also fulfill CSPT-specific requirements. [Please see the CSPT program information](#) for full details and refer to the CSPT and Political Science section under Registration for information on program independence.

PhD Program

Overview and Timeline

Please refer to the [University of Victoria Graduate Calendar](#) for up-to-date information on degree requirements. The PhD program takes approximately 4-5 years to complete. The first year is for coursework: five graduate courses plus a professional development seminar (POLI 600). In the second year, students will normally take two candidacy examinations. The student will then prepare and defend a dissertation proposal. Students should aim to have their dissertation proposal approved by the end of their second year of study. Once approved, the dissertation should take approximately two years to complete, though this often takes longer.

Courses and Requirements

Elective Courses: PhD

Elective courses must be a Political Science graduate seminar (another field course or a specialized topic), a graduate seminar in another department, or a directed reading course with a regular faculty member in Political Science. PhD students are not eligible to take undergraduate courses for degree credit, though it may be possible to upgrade an undergraduate course to a graduate course as a directed study. CSPT students must meet the Political Science requirements for their non-CSPT electives.

Field Courses

Field courses are exclusively for graduate students. Some will be MA students registered in the 500-level version; others will be PhD students registered in the 600-level version. PhD students will have additional readings and more onerous assignments but participate in the same seminar discussions. To take a candidacy exam, PhD students must have first completed that field course.

Professional Development Seminar (POLI 600)

POLI 600 is a compulsory seminar worth 1.5 units for PhD students that runs from September until April. This is a pass/fail course. Students are introduced to professional aspects of the discipline including how to write grant applications, how to teach effectively, how to design a syllabus and a CV, and how to contribute to the administrative and intellectual community of the

department and the discipline. Offered every second year, students intending to undertake fieldwork should try to fulfil the requirement in the first two years of their program.

Candidacy Examinations

Field seminars help prepare students for candidacy written and oral examinations. Normally, students will complete a field seminar in each area in which they will write a candidacy exam. Although the seminars contribute to exam preparation, they are not sufficient on their own. Preparation is meant to go well beyond the field seminar and should be the focus of the students' time between the end of Spring term of their first year and the end of Spring term of their second year. In general, adequate preparation for the exam will take five to six months.

The purpose of the exams is to provide all students receiving a PhD in Political Science at UVic a broad understanding of the literature and issues in the discipline, to expose students to concepts in different areas, and to prepare students for teaching competence in their two chosen fields. The exams are meant to be generalist in orientation, in contrast with the specialist focus of dissertation research.

Students must successfully complete candidacy examinations in two of the following fields: Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Students may substitute one of these for an interdisciplinary examination in Comparative Public Policy and Governance, Indigenous Nationhood (IN), or Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT). Students may not take candidacy exams offered by any other department.

Each PhD student must enroll in POLI 693 (Candidacy Examinations) for the duration of their preparation. Exams are offered in the Fall and Spring of each year — the Fall exam is normally in early October, and the Spring exam is normally in early March. Students must give written notice to the Graduate Advisor of their intention to write by May 1 for the October exam, and by November 1 for the March exam.

Each candidacy exam is composed of a written exam followed by an oral exam within two weeks. Students are given questions for the written portion 24 hours in advance. It consists of at least six questions, with students required to answer no more than four and no fewer than three. The written component is completed in a sit-down five-hour period (or six hours if a lunch break is preferred).

If a student fails either component of the candidacy exam, a retake will be allowed within two to four weeks or in the following term. If a student fails an exam and the retake, they must leave the program.

Note: FGS regulations stipulate that all students must complete both exams within three years of their initial registration in the PhD program. If you cannot be ready due to exceptional circumstances, complete the Request for Extension: Candidacy form and forward it to the Dean of Graduate Studies via the Graduate Secretary.

Canadian Politics

The Canadian Politics exam provides students with a foundation in a broad range of important studies, conversations, debates, methods, and approaches in the subfield. The reading list will

comprise core components, expanded sections, and a special topic based on your interests. Sections include: Texts and approaches; Political culture; Federalism, Regionalism, and Intergovernmental Relations; Canada in the World; Quebec; Government (Parliament, the Executive, and the Bureaucracy); Parties, Elections, and Electoral Systems; Public Policy; Interest Groups and Social Movements; The Charter and the Courts; Constitutionalism; Aboriginal Politics; Political Economy; Women and Gender; Multiculturalism and the Politics of Diversity.

Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics is a vast subfield, and the exam covers a wide range of literature. The reading list is designed to assist students in identifying major works in the field across eight key subject areas: Theory and methodology of comparative politics; Citizenship, culture, ethnicity, identities, immigration, and nationalism; Social movements and revolutions; Elections, media, parties, and representation; States and institutions; Authoritarianism, democracy, and democratization; Comparative political economy; Politics of development. The written exam comprises three questions: one on methodology and two from the remaining subfields.

Comparative Public Policy and Governance

Political Science and Public Administration jointly administer the candidacy exam in Comparative Public Policy and Governance. This is a take-home exam comprising three general questions drawn from material covered in POLI 607 and POLI 610. Students receive the exam on a Monday morning and submit answers the following Monday. The examining committee is comprised of faculty from both academic units.

Cultural, Social and Political Thought (CSPT)

The CSPT Candidacy Exam evaluates the student's knowledge in the interdisciplinary field of cultural, social and political thought. In coordination with their supervisor, the student defines five problematics and identifies 40 texts for examination. The examination can take one of three formats: (1) questions provided 24 hours in advance, followed by a five-hour written exam; (2) questions provided with a short paper due 72 hours later; or (3) questions provided at 9 a.m. with a fully referenced, extended theory paper due precisely one week later.

International Relations

The International Relations exam covers a diverse range of material broken into two sections. The first contains influential and exemplary texts from five substantive research fields: The interstate/international system; The state/nation in IR; War and security; International/global political economy; World/global politics. The second focuses on three broad categories of contemporary debate: Metatheoretical; The state and its others; Normativities. Students are expected to select, in consultation with their committee, two of the five substantive fields and one broad area of contemporary debate on which to focus.

Political Theory

The Political Theory exam requires students to engage with classic texts in (primarily Western) political thought, historical accounts of influential traditions, and key texts in contemporary political theory. There are three components: Classics of Political Thought; Contemporary

Approaches to Political Theory; and Special Topics in Political Theory. Students will answer four questions in the written exam and will work with their supervisory committee to produce an individualized reading list.

Candidacy Exam Checklist

Required Steps

- ✓ Complete all coursework before sitting a candidacy exam
- ✓ Respond affirmatively to the Graduate Secretary's call for those who will write in the next sitting and indicate the area
- ✓ Meet with the field coordinator to receive the most updated reading list, discuss the exam process and goals, how to study, and the composition of the examining committee
- ✓ Meet with each committee member at least once within a month of the committee being formed

Best Practices

- If possible, coordinate writing the same exam at the same time as other students and form a study group
- Preparation is designed to take approximately five months of full-time study; use any additional time available
- Read all the readings on the list as directed by the field coordinator and committee members
- Pause regularly during your reading to try to answer potential essay questions and see connections between material
- Focus not only on knowing the material but on analyzing how it fits within larger debates and trends in the field
- Remember the comprehensive exam aims to showcase breadth of knowledge, not your particular research topic

Dissertation Proposal

Before a student can move on to their dissertation they are first required to write and defend a dissertation proposal before their supervisory committee, normally within 3-6 months after passing the candidacy examinations, though this often takes longer.

The committee must consist of three members of the FGS, two of whom must be from the Department of Political Science. Normally, proposals should be between 20–30 pages and will consist of: a description of the research project, a review of relevant literature, the original contribution to the field, and an explanation of the methodology or approach. The proposal and oral defense must be considered satisfactory before the student may proceed to the dissertation.

Upon satisfactory completion of all coursework, candidacy exams, and dissertation proposal, students achieve All But Dissertation (ABD) status and become eligible for teaching appointments in the department.

Graduate Studies provides a guide to writing thesis or project proposals that may be helpful. Some students have also found POLI 605 (political science methodology) useful in developing their dissertation proposal. This course, which focuses on political science methodology, typically assigns a draft thesis proposal for its final assignment instead of a term paper. This however, is not intended to product a final dissertation proposal as student will need to consult with their supervisor, and, in some cases, their dissertation committee as to the final direction.

It is worth noting that the dissertation proposal process looks quite different from student to student. The nature of your research, your chosen methodology, and your field will all shape what a strong proposal looks like for you. There is no single template that fits all cases, and your supervisory committee is your best guide to what is expected in your particular area.

This makes communication with your supervisor and committee especially important at this stage. Regular check-ins, even informal ones will help ensure that your developing ideas are on track before you invest significant time in writing in a particular direction. Do not wait until you have a full draft to seek feedback; sharing rough outlines or early sections can save considerable effort and help you catch misalignments in expectations early.

Some practical guidance that tends to apply broadly:

- **Start from your candidacy exam work.** Your reading lists and exam essays have already given you a foundation in your field's literature. The proposal is an opportunity to build directly on that work and sharpen it toward a specific research question.
- **Be clear about your contribution.** The proposal should make explicit what gap in the existing literature your dissertation will address and why that gap matters. Your committee needs to be convinced not only that your project is feasible, but that it is worth doing.
- **Address methodology concretely.** Vague statements about your approach are a common weakness in early proposal drafts. Where possible, be specific: what sources will you use, how will you access them, and how will your method allow you to answer your research question?

Dissertation

The doctoral dissertation must embody original work and constitute a significant contribution to knowledge in the candidate's field of study. It should contain evidence of broad knowledge of the relevant literature and demonstrate a critical understanding of the works of scholars closely related to the subject of the dissertation. Material embodied in the dissertation should, in the opinion of scholars in the field, merit publication. [FGS has a webpage dedicated to resources for the thesis & dissertation process that can be found here.](#)

The general form and style of dissertations may differ from academic unit to academic unit, but all dissertations shall be presented in a form that constitutes an integrated submission. The dissertation may include materials already published by the candidate, whether alone or in conjunction with others. Previously published materials must be integrated into the dissertation while distinguishing the student's own work from that of other researchers. At the final oral examination, the doctoral candidate is responsible for the entire content of the dissertation, including those portions of co-authored papers that comprise part of the dissertation.

When research is completed, and before the dissertation is written, [download a copy of the Thesis/Dissertation Guidelines](#) from the FGS website. This publication specifies academic and technical requirements to ensure acceptability of the document to the University and the National Library. Within these guidelines, information can be found regarding dissertation basics, ethical issues and copyright considerations, score, structure and formatting, checking your dissertation, oral examinations, final submission of your dissertation, and withholding your dissertation.

You and your committee decide on a date for your oral examination far enough in advance to allow time to submit the request for oral examination (ROE) form to the dean's office a minimum of 30 working days for PhD prior to the examination. Your ROE must be completed and signed by each member of your supervisory committee.

Research Resources

Human Research Ethics

The Human Research Ethics (HRE) team ensures that UVic research involving human participants or human biological materials meets required ethical standards. If you are unsure whether your research requires ethics approval, [contact the HRE team as soon as possible](#).

Ethics approval is required for projects involving: individual interviews; group discussions; questionnaires and surveys; self-reflective research (autoethnographies, autobiographical narratives); audio/video recording or photographing people; observations; linked data; human biological materials; some forms of internet research; and secondary data used in research (e.g., health records, grades, course assignments).

You must apply for and receive ethical approval before you begin your study and maintain the approval during recruitment and data collection.

Human Research Ethics Approval is granted for one year and must be renewed annually as long as there is the potential for contact with participants.

Note: For graduate students in particular, failing to obtain research ethics approval could have serious implications for your thesis or dissertation defense and your ability to graduate.

Policy on Inclusion of Copyrighted Material

Copyright is distinct from plagiarism. Plagiarism involves representing another's work as your own; copyright concerns the reproduction of a work. At a minimum, when more than one full page or 10% of a work is reproduced in a thesis or dissertation, the student should attempt to obtain copyright clearance from the owner. Copyright clearances should also be obtained for reproduction of the whole of any map, diagram, chart, drawing, survey, questionnaire, computer code, painting, photograph, or poem. [For questions, consult the FGS Ethical Issues and Copyright guidelines](#).

Supervisory Committee: PhD

The doctoral supervisory committee must have at least three members, one of whom is the primary supervisor. One of the three members must be from outside the home department.

- Member 1: The primary supervisor must be from the home academic unit
- Member 2: Inside or outside the home academic unit; may be a co-supervisor
- Member 3: Inside or outside the home department

For CSPT students, at least two members must be affiliated with the CSPT program and students must have a supervisor from the CSPT program.

PhD with a Concentration in CSPT

PhD students with a CSPT concentration complete the Political Science requirements alongside CSPT-specific requirements including the CSPT candidacy examination. See the CSPT section under Candidacy Examinations for exam format details, and the CSPT and Political Science section under Registration for program independence.

Co-op

Co-op has long been a bridge between academic learning and the working world and many Co-op work placements have led to post-graduate job opportunities. With permission from their supervisor, and admission by the Co-op department in Social Sciences, grad students can benefit from hands-on experience in areas of interest. [Learn how to apply through UVic Co-op.](#)

V. Supervisory Relationships

Overview

Effective supervision is a joint effort and partnership involving the supervisory unit, supervisory committee members, the student, the Graduate Advisor, and the Graduate Secretary. The following sections outline the responsibilities of each party. The full [Graduate Supervision Policy](#) is also published by FGS.

Primary Academic Supervisor

Students in all doctoral and master's programs will have a member of FGS assigned as primary academic supervisor. The primary academic supervisor must be from the academic unit offering the degree program and must be aware of Calendar and FGS regulations.

The primary academic supervisor should maintain contact with the student through mutually agreed-upon regular meetings and be accessible for advice and constructive criticism. Supervisors who expect to be absent for an extended period are responsible for making suitable arrangements for continued supervision of the student.

Co-Supervisor

One co-supervisor may be designated in cases where the level of supervision to be provided is greater than normally expected from regular committee members. The co-supervisor must be a member of FGS. Co-supervision is limited to one primary supervisor and one co-supervisor.

Responsibilities of the Academic Supervisor

The academic supervisor is a mentor and advisor who develops a professional relationship with the graduate student conducive to scholarly activities and intellectual enhancement. Key responsibilities include:

- Assisting the student in forming a supervisory committee
- Being aware of FGS rules and advising the student accordingly
- Maintaining regular contact through mutually agreed-upon meetings
- Helping select appropriate coursework and involving the supervisory committee when appropriate
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, student research involving human subjects has been submitted to the HREB for approval before research begins
- Assisting the student in negotiating a realistic timetable for completion of all program requirements
- Providing timely and constructive written comments on student work
- Acknowledging the student's contributions in published material
- Encouraging and assisting the student to attend conferences and meetings in their field

Responsibilities of the Supervisory Committee

Each student's supervisory committee consists of the academic supervisor and from one to three additional members depending on the student's program. Committee responsibilities include:

- Being aware of FGS rules and advising the student accordingly
- Recommending an approved program of study to FGS
- Ensuring the student is aware of expectations concerning the length, quality, style, and presentation of the paper, thesis, dissertation, or creative project
- Guiding and evaluating the student's progress in implementing the work plan
- Aiding in the arbitration of problems between the student and the supervisor
- Evaluating drafts of the thesis, dissertation, or creative project

Responsibilities of the Student

In entering a graduate degree program, a student is making a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to complete the program. Key responsibilities include:

- Developing, in conjunction with the supervisor, a plan and timetable for completion of all degree requirements, and adhering to it
- Maintaining contact with the supervisor through mutually agreed-upon regular communication
- Maintaining registration throughout the program

- Giving serious consideration and responding professionally to advice and criticism from the supervisor and committee
- Conforming to professional standards of honesty and academic integrity
- Addressing situations that are not working — students are encouraged to deal directly with the supervisor and committee, and if this cannot be resolved, to consult the Graduate Advisor or the Office of FGS

Responsibilities of the Dean of Graduate Studies

In the case of alleged non-compliance with supervisory guidelines, the Dean of Graduate Studies may: request a written report, review it, provide a consultative process with the parties involved, and determine whether the matter constitutes misconduct under the Policy on Scholarly Integrity. Where a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the Dean may refer the issue to the Peer Review of Supervisory Practices Committee.

VI. Funding

Fellowships, Donor Awards, and Scholarships

When students are admitted to their program, the offer letter normally includes some fellowship or scholarship funds offered by the Department of Political Science, FGS, or both. The value of these scholarships is highly variable.

UVic Graduate Fellowships

The primary form of FGS funding is the UVic Graduate Fellowship. Graduate Fellowship renewal is dependent on the student maintaining a minimum GPA of 6.00/9.00.

UVic Graduate Entrance Awards (GEA)

Students entering a graduate program with a first-class GPA (7.00/9.00 or higher for domestic students or *First Class* for international students) may be eligible for a one-time Graduate Entrance Award. These awards are non-renewable and are awarded in the year of entry. Students must be registered in a minimum of 3.0 units per term to receive funds.

International Doctoral Entrance Fellowship (IDEF)

International students entering a PhD program may be eligible for an International Doctoral Entrance Fellowship (IDEF). Students who are currently in-program, transferring directly from a master's to a PhD, or entering a master's program are not eligible.

Presidents Research Scholarship (PRS)

Students who hold a Tri-Council fellowship automatically receive a Presidents Research Scholarship. This award is administered directly by FGS.

Payment of Awards

FGS awards are paid directly to students on a schedule based on the total award amount. Smaller awards are paid in one or two installments; larger awards are paid monthly. Students taking a Personal Leave will forfeit the balance of any FGS-funded award. Students on Compassionate, Parental, or Medical Leave will have their funding deferred until they return and resume registration in the required number of units.

Donor Awards and Other Opportunities

The department also administers a number of donor-funded awards on an annual basis. These are separate from FGS fellowships and are typically nominated through the department. Information about available donor awards is circulated by the Graduate Secretary each year. Students may also hold fellowships or funding through other centres or departments at UVic.

Teaching Assistantships (TA)

TAs are hired to assist with teaching and grading. These are unionized positions with CUPE, Local 4163. There are several types of TA positions available in Political Science:

- **Teaching Assistant (1st and 2nd year courses):** These positions are approximately 124 hours and involve running tutorial sections, holding office hours, and grading. Some professors may also require attendance at lectures. New students will be required to attend 8 hours of paid TA training so will be allocated 116 hours for the actual time given to the instructor for their TA position.
- **Grading Positions (3rd year courses):** These positions have fewer hours (typically 20–40) with responsibilities limited to grading.
- **Teaching Assistant Consultant (TAC):** The TAC is typically a senior graduate student with considerable teaching experience. The TAC's primary role is to facilitate the professional development of TAs in the department, primarily by offering a discipline-specific TA seminar and providing one-on-one consultations. This position is typically 40 hours.

The department posts Winter and Spring term TA positions the preceding summer (typically June), with Summer term positions posted in late winter/early spring. You must apply to be considered for positions.

Note: *Second year MA students will only be considered for TA positions if the department has a copy of their thesis proposal outline and their supervisor provides a memo indicating satisfactory progress.*

The Political Science Department appoints TAs according to the Appointment Priority Policy – Variance 1:

Priority Group	Level
Masters Year 1 and PhD Year 1. PhD Years 2 and 3 (where previously appointed to a bargaining unit)	1

Priority Group	Level
Where previously appointed to a bargaining unit position, Masters Year 2 and PhD Year 4 or 5	2
Other graduate students (in other years, not previously appointed, or from other departments)	3
Undergraduates	4
Others/non-students	5

The grading-only positions are not filled according to the Appointment Priority Policy and are advertised shortly before the term begins. PhD students often receive preference for these positions. Students may also apply for TA positions in other departments and at other universities.

From time to time, problems arise between professors and their teaching assistants. The department recommends that you first discuss the matter with the Graduate Advisor. You also have the right to contact your CUPE representative for advice or representation.

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Local 4163

In your employment role as a teaching or academic assistant, you are automatically a member of CUPE Local 4163. The full collective agreement, governing your rights and responsibilities, including pay scales, can be found at 4163.cupe.ca. This agreement covers appointment priorities, funding for conferences, discrimination and harassment, grievance representation, and many other fundamental workers' rights.

A union representative will visit the department in September to provide information regarding your contract. General membership meetings are held in October and March of each year.

CUPE 4163 Office: office@cupe4163.ca | Phone: 250-472-4778 | 4163.cupe.ca

Research Assistantships (RA)

There are two types of Research Assistantships at UVic:

- **Academic Research Assistantship (ARA):** A research assistantship provided by the academic supervisor in support of research activities that will comprise part of the student's degree requirements. Funds are paid as a stipend and are not considered employment income.
- **Employment-based Research Assistantship (ERA):** A research assistantship provided by a faculty member to conduct work that does not comprise part of the student's academic degree requirements. ERA payments are employment income and subject to statutory withholding.

Many professors have funding for research assistantships, but positions may not be advertised. Most often, priority is given to a professor's own students. Discuss potential RA work with your supervisor and consider contacting professors whose work is relevant to your interests.

Note: Professors often choose students they already have a relationship with or who have been recommended by a colleague. Those recommendations are often based on a professor's experience with you as a TA.

Sessional Appointments

PhD students are sometimes hired as sessional lecturers. To be considered, students must have All But Dissertation (ABD) status. Sessional appointments may be guaranteed in a student's offer letter. The department has committed to offering advanced PhD students the opportunity to teach an undergraduate course before they graduate; however, the department is only offering one appointment per student unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Sessional appointments may be at any level of undergraduate instruction and in any of the three academic terms. The application process for the next academic year happens in the Fall of the previous year. Students may also apply to positions at other universities.

Other Funding Opportunities

Tri-Council Awards

Canada Graduate Research Scholarship – Master's Program (CGRS-M): CGRS-M is administered jointly by Canada's three granting agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Selection and post-award administration are carried out at the university level under the guidance of the three agencies. [Full information can be found here.](#)

Canada Graduate Research Scholarship - Doctoral Program (CGRSD): The CGRSD is awarded through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The CGRSD supports research excellence in a wide variety of disciplines. [Full information can be found here.](#)

If you are receiving UVic fellowship funding, you must apply for SSHRC each year in order to maintain your eligibility for upcoming years. MA students with only one year of funding are not required to apply, but it is highly recommended.

Other Funding Resources

FGS Awards: <https://webfilters.uvic.ca/fgsawards>

UVic Bursary Programs: <https://www.uvic.ca/safa/bursaries/about/index.php>

VII. Important Academic Information

Tuition and Fees

Fees are paid on a per-term basis. At a minimum: 3 fee installments for a POLI MA, 5 for a CSPT MA, and 7.5 for a PhD. After these timelines fees may be assessed differently. [Please see here for more information.](#)

For more information about tuition and estimating your fees [please visit the FGS webpage on Tuition & Costs.](#)

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to conform to professional standards of honesty in all academic work. This includes acknowledging assistance, material, and data provided by others.

UVic has a new Policy on Academic Integrity, effective September 1, 2026, designed to better reflect today's learning and teaching realities. [You can read about the full policy and its changes here.](#)

Program Extensions

Students who cannot complete their degree within the standard time limits (5 years for MA, 7 years for PhD) must obtain a program extension before the program expiry date. Discuss the matter with your supervisor and Graduate Advisor well in advance.

VIII. Frequently Asked Questions

The Most Important Question

Q: If I'm having problems, whom do I talk to?

A: It depends on the problem. In general, your [supervisor](#), the [Graduate Advisor](#), or the [Graduate Secretary](#) should be able to address most issues covered in this handbook. Your supervisor can give direction in academic areas. The Graduate Secretary coordinates all matters pertaining to the graduate program. The Department Chair will generally not be the first point of contact, as the Graduate Advisor has been delegated responsibility for the graduate program, though the Graduate Advisor may sometimes direct matters to the Chair's attention.

Candidacy Exams

Q: Do I need to complete all my coursework before proceeding to the candidacy exams?

A: Yes, with at least a B+.

Q: Do I need to take the field seminar before the candidacy exam?

A: Yes, but in some cases, you may be permitted to take the course concurrently with your exam preparation, although this is not recommended.

Q: How long does it take to prepare for the candidacy exam?

A: Typically, five to six months.

Q: Can I take a candidacy exam outside of political science?

A: Currently Political Science students can only take exams in Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. Students may substitute one of these for an interdisciplinary examination in Comparative Public Policy and Governance or Cultural, Social and Political Thought.

Q: What happens if I fail the exam?

A: If a student fails either component, a retake will be allowed within two to four weeks or in the following term. If the student fails an exam and the retake, the student must leave the program.

Q: When are the candidacy exams offered?

A: The exams are typically offered in early October and early March of each year.

Q: Can I cancel an exam after indicating I would write it?

A: There is no official time cut-off but notice of your intention to delay should be given four to six weeks prior to the exam. Notify your field coordinator, the Graduate Secretary, the Graduate Advisor, and your committee members.

Q: How does the written exam work?

A: Students are given the questions 24 hours in advance. It consists of at least six questions, with students required to answer no more than four and no fewer than three, in a five-hour sit-down period.

Q: How does the oral exam work?

A: The oral portion is scheduled within two weeks of the written portion. Often it takes the form of collegial questioning on aspects of your answers, but students should be prepared to speak to their exam and the broader reading list.

Q: How long do I have to complete the exams?

A: FGS regulations stipulate that all students must complete both exams within three years of their initial registration in the PhD program. Extensions can be obtained for extenuating circumstances.

Coursework

Q: Can I audit a course?

A: Yes, with permission from the course instructor. You may also change your registration from audit to credit or credit to audit up to the last day of the term to add courses.

Q: Can I take courses not part of my degree requirements?

A: Yes, provided that the course contributes to your research or degree program in some manner (e.g., language courses) and you have your supervisor's permission.

Q: Can I use a directed reading to fulfill my degree requirements?

A: Yes. Both MA and PhD students may only take one directed reading to fulfill their degree requirements.

Q: Can I register for courses at another university?

A: Yes, but it requires special permission. [See the Letter of Permission for Study Elsewhere section.](#)

Q: How often is the professional development seminar offered?

A: [Every other year](#). Students intending to undertake fieldwork should try to fulfill this requirement in the first two years of their program.

Q: Can I take an undergraduate course for degree credit?

A: Yes, if you are in an MA program and have the required permission. If you are a PhD student, it may be possible to upgrade an undergraduate course as a directed reading.

Q: Can I take a course in another department for degree credit?

A: Yes, but only one such course.

[CSPT Program](#)

Q: Can I add or remove the CSPT component without affecting my standing in Political Science?

A: Yes. You are admitted to each program separately so your participation in CSPT is independent of your standing in Political Science. You can, at any point, apply for admission to CSPT or withdraw from it while continuing as a Political Science student.

Q: Does Political Science offer funding for the second year of the CSPT program?

A: No. The Political Science MA is a one-year program, whereas CSPT is a two-year program. Students seeking second-year funding should approach CSPT directly.

[Dissertations and Theses](#)

Q: When do I need to submit my MA thesis proposal?

A: Full-time students are required to have a thesis proposal approved by their supervisory committee by May 15 of the academic year in which they entered the program.

Q: When do I need to defend my PhD dissertation proposal?

A: Normally, three to six months after passing your final candidacy exam, though this often takes longer.

Q: What is expected in a MA thesis proposal?

A: A 5-page proposal that includes the problem you want to investigate and the means you will use in the investigation. The hypothesis with which you start is a preliminary formulation to help orient your work.

Q: What is expected in a PhD dissertation proposal?

A: Normally, proposals should be between 20–30 pages, consisting of: a description of the research project, a review of relevant literature, the original contribution to the field, and an explanation of the methodology or approach.

Q: What are the expectations for the length of an MA thesis?

A: No more than 100 pages. A master's thesis is an original work demonstrating the student's capacity to employ research methods appropriate to their discipline, including a general overview of relevant literature.

Q: Do I need to submit an ethics approval?

A: If your research involves human participants, including interviews, group discussions, surveys, and autobiographical information, then yes. You must apply for and receive [ethical approval](#) before you begin your study.

Q: What are the requirements for my supervisory committee?

A: It depends on your degree and whether you are in CSPT. Refer to the relevant [MA](#) and [PhD](#) Supervisory Committee sections.

[Funding and Tuition](#)

Q: How many terms do I pay fees for?

A: A minimum of three for a POLI MA, five for a CSPT MA, and 7.5 for a PhD. After 6.0 installments (MA) or 9.0 installments (PhD), students are assessed lower re-registration fees. See [Tuition and Fees](#) for more details.

Q: Do I have to apply for SSHRC?

A: Yes, if you are receiving UVic fellowship funding, you must apply for SSHRC each year to maintain eligibility for upcoming years. MA students with only one year of funding are not required to apply, but it is highly recommended. See [Tri-Council Awards](#) for more details.

[Registration](#)

Q: Do I have to register for all three terms each year?

A: Yes. If not taking other courses, MA students should register for POLI 599 (thesis) or 598 (MRP), and PhD students should register for POLI 693 (candidacy exams) or POLI 699 (dissertation). See [Registration Requirements](#) for more details.

Q: What are the time limits for completion of my degree?

A: Five years for the MA and seven years for the PhD. Students needing additional time must obtain a program extension. See [Program Extensions](#) for more details.

Q: Do all graduate students need to meet with the Graduate Advisor to review their CAPP/Degree Works report?

A: Yes. An appointment will be set up at graduate orientation. See [Program Planning](#) for more details.

Q: Can I take a leave of absence?

A: Yes. There are four types: Personal, Parental, Medical, and Compassionate. Political Science MA students are eligible for one term, CSPT MA students for three terms, and doctoral students for six terms. See [Leaves of Absence](#) for more details.

Teaching and Research Assistantships

Q: What types of Teaching Assistantships are available?

A: Teaching Assistant (1st and 2nd year courses) and Grading Positions (3rd year courses). See the [Teaching Assistantships](#) section for full details.

Q: When are TA positions posted?

A: Winter and Spring term positions are posted the preceding summer. Summer term positions are posted in late winter/early spring.

Q: Do I have to apply to be considered for a Teaching Assistantship?

A: Yes. Students must always apply, even if a TA position was promised in the offer letter.

Q: Can I apply for TA positions in other departments?

A: Yes. In the past, programs such as Social Justice Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Continuing Studies have sought outside TAs. Students are also welcome to apply at other universities.

Q: Are there research assistantships available?

A: Yes, but they are often not advertised. Most often, priority is given to a professor's own students. See [Research Assistantships](#) for more details.

Sessional Appointments

Q: What do I need in order to be considered for a sessional appointment?

A: The PhD student must have ABD status. The application process for the next academic year happens in the Fall of the previous year. See [Sessional Appointments](#) for more details.

Q: Can I get more than one sessional appointment?

A: Most PhD offer letters only include one guaranteed appointment per student unless exceptional circumstances apply. Students that are ABD are welcome to apply to open job postings for sessional positions.

Appendix A: Timelines

These timelines below are intended as examples only. Every student's path through their program is unique, and individual circumstances including research topics, fieldwork needs, research fellowships and teaching opportunities, funding, health, and supervisor will affect your own program timeline. **Use these timelines as a general guide in conversation with your supervisor and Graduate Advisor, not as a rigid schedule.**

Overview of Graduate Program Milestones - MA

	MA Thesis 1-year	MA Thesis 2-year	MA MRP 1-year
Year 1 Fall	Complete Fall Coursework Preliminary thesis proposal Complete background research	Complete Fall Coursework	Complete Fall Coursework
Year 1 Spring	Complete Spring Coursework Expand thesis proposal Thesis writing	Complete Spring Coursework	Complete Spring Coursework Develop proposal with Supervisor
Year 1 Summer	Revise and finalize thesis (by mid-June) Thesis circulates to committee Request for Oral Examination (early July) Oral Examination (August)	Preliminary thesis proposal Complete background research	Complete research & writing Full draft complete (end of June) Revise draft (July) Final revisions (August) Submit completed MRP (August)
Year 2 Fall	Graduation	Thesis writing	Committee grades MRP Graduation
Year 2 Spring		Revise and finalize thesis Thesis circulates to committee	
Year 2 Summer		Request for Oral Examination Oral Examination (August)	
Year 3 Fall		Graduation	

***Signed Request for Oral Examination must be submitted 20 working days in advance of anticipated Oral Defense date.**

Overview of Graduate Program Milestones - PhD

	PhD 4-year	PhD 5-year
Year 1 Fall	Complete Fall PhD Coursework	Complete Fall PhD Coursework
Year 1 Spring	Complete Spring PhD Coursework	Complete Spring PhD Coursework
Year 1 Summer	Candidacy Exam Preparation	Candidacy Exam Preparation
Year 2 Fall	First Candidacy Exam (Written and Oral) Candidacy Exam Preparation	First Candidacy Exam (Written and Oral) Candidacy Exam Preparation
Year 2 Spring	Candidacy Exam Preparation Second Candidacy Exam (Written and Oral) <i>Achieve PhD Candidacy status</i>	Candidacy Exam Preparation Second Candidacy Exam (Written and Oral) <i>Achieve PhD Candidacy status</i>
Year 2 Summer	Draft and Defend Dissertation Proposal <i>Achieve PhD Candidacy (All But Dissertation) Status</i> Dissertation Research Begins	Draft and Defend Dissertation Proposal <i>Achieve PhD Candidacy (All But Dissertation) Status</i> Dissertation Research Begins
Year 3 Fall	Active dissertation research, fieldwork (if applicable)	
Year 3 Spring		
Year 3 Summer	Dissertation writing and regular circulation of chapter drafts	Active dissertation research, fieldwork (if applicable)
Year 4 Fall	Complete Full Dissertation Draft Circulate to Supervisory Committee	Dissertation writing and regular circulation of chapter drafts
Year 4 Spring	Revise from feedback Finalize Dissertation Draft	
Year 4 Summer	Submit Signed Request for Oral Examination (July) Oral Examination (August) Submit revised/approved dissertation to Graduate Studies	Complete remaining dissertation chapters and regular circulation of chapter drafts
Year 5 Fall	Graduation (if graduation submitted in July, dissertation defended May-August)	Complete Full Dissertation Draft Circulate to Supervisory Committee Revise from feedback Finalize Dissertation Draft Submit Signed Request for Oral Examination Oral Examination Submit revised/approved dissertation to
Year 5 Spring		

		Graduate Studies
Year 5 Summer		Graduation (if graduation submitted in November, dissertation defended by April)
Year 6 Fall		Graduation (if graduation submitted in July, dissertation defended May-August)

***Signed Request for Oral Examination must be submitted 30 working days in advance of anticipated Oral Defense date.**

MA Thesis – 1 Year Completion

Period	Activities
September	New student orientation; consultation with Graduate Advisor; finalize course selection; formalize supervisor; review CAPP/Degree Works report.
September-December	Complete Fall coursework
October 1-15	Prepare preliminary thesis proposal (3-5 pages): explain the problem and the investigative approach. Develop in consultation with supervisor.
October 15-November 1	Develop a timeline with your supervisor. Select thesis committee
December 15	Submit 5-page thesis proposal and timeline to supervisor, then to Graduate Advisor. Give a copy to the Graduate Secretary for your student file
December 16-January 15	Complete background research. Identify key material and begin reading closely. Work on thesis-related ideas in course papers.
January-April	Complete Spring Coursework. All coursework must be completed by April at the conclusion of Spring term Year 1.

January 16-February 15	Expand thesis proposal from 5 pages to a 25-30 page paper. Consult Graduate Studies website for thesis resources, thesis checklist, and formatting guidelines
February 16-April 15	Elaborate your analysis according to the analytic plan. Begin writing early, draft material as you go Aim to have the proposal and about half the thesis body written by mid-April.
April 16-June 15	Crunch period. All coursework should be completed by mid-April. Focus fully on the thesis. Aim to have a version your supervisor considers more or less acceptable by mid-June.
June 16-July 1	Thesis circulates among supervisory committee. Receive comments and make revisions. Re-write introduction, cut redundant sections, add material as needed
July	When committee is satisfied, sign Request for Oral Examination (ROE). Submit signed form, thesis PDF, and ethics approval (if applicable) to Graduate Secretary at least 20 working days before the exam. Take a break.
August	Oral examination (2-3 hours). 15-minute presentation, followed by rounds of questioning. Expect to be asked for revisions.
November	Graduation

MA Thesis – 2 Year Completion

Period	Activities
September, Year 1	New student orientation; consultation with Graduate Advisor; finalize course selection; formalize supervisor; review CAPP/Degree Works report.
September–December, Year 1	Complete Fall coursework. Begin exploratory reading in your area of interest. Have early conversations with your supervisor about potential thesis topics.

December, Year 1	Review first-term progress with supervisor. Begin narrowing your thesis topic.
January–April, Year 1	Complete Spring coursework. All coursework is normally completed by April at the conclusion of Spring term Year 1. Develop and refine your thesis topic in consultation with your supervisor. Begin background research and targeted reading.
May 15, Year 1	Deadline: Submit a 5-page thesis proposal to your supervisory committee and then to the Graduate Advisor. Give a copy to the Graduate Secretary for your student file.
May–August, Year 1	Complete background research and reading. Register in POLI 599 (thesis). Begin drafting chapters or sections in consultation with your supervisor.
September–December, Year 2	Continue writing thesis. Aim to have a substantial draft of your core chapters to your supervisor by December. Maintain regular meetings and incorporate feedback.
January–March, Year 2	Revise and finalize thesis draft. Consult the Graduate Studies website for thesis checklist and formatting guidelines. Circulate near-final draft to supervisory committee.
April–May, Year 2	Supervisory committee review. Receive comments and make revisions. Rewrite introduction, cut redundant sections, and add material as needed.
May–June, Year 2	When committee is satisfied, sign Request for Oral Examination. Submit signed form, thesis PDF, and ethics approval (if applicable) to the Graduate Secretary at least 20 working days before the exam.
June–July, Year 2	Oral examination (approx. 2–3 hours). 15-minute presentation, followed by rounds of questioning. Expect to be asked for revisions.
November, Year 2	Graduation

MRP – 1 Year Completion

Period	Activities
September	New student orientation; consultation with Graduate Advisor; finalize course selection; formalize supervisor; review CAPP/Degree Works report.
September–April	Complete all coursework (9 units). Begin identifying a potential MRP topic in consultation with your supervisor. Look for opportunities to develop course essays into MRP material.
January–March	Develop a 5-page MRP proposal in consultation with your supervisor. Identify a specific topic, research question, and approach. Identify a second reader.
April	All coursework complete. Turn full attention to the MRP. Finalize topic, research question, and methodology with your supervisor. Register in POLI 598.
May–June	Complete primary research and writing. Aim to produce a full first draft by end of June.
July	Revise draft based on supervisor feedback. Expand analysis as directed. Aim for a near-final draft by end of July.
August	Final revisions. Submit completed MRP (normally 40–50 pages) to supervisory committee (supervisor and second reader) for grading.
August–September	Committee grades the MRP and submits the grade to the Graduate Secretary, who forwards paperwork to GARO to complete the program.
November	Graduation

PhD – 4 Year Completion

Period	Activities
September, Year 1	New student orientation; consultation with Graduate Advisor; finalize course selection; confirm supervisor; review CAPP/Degree Works report.

September–April, Year 1	Complete five graduate courses plus POLI 600. Enroll in field seminars for your two intended candidacy exam areas. Register in POLI 693 (Candidacy Examinations) for exam preparation period.
May 1, Year 1	Deadline: Submit written notice to Graduate Advisor of intention to write Fall (October) candidacy exams.
May–August, Year 1	Begin dedicated candidacy exam preparation. Obtain reading list from field coordinator. Meet with each examining committee member. Preparation typically takes five to six months.
October, Year 2	Write first candidacy exam (written and oral components)
November 1, Year 2	Deadline: Submit written notice to Graduate Advisor of intention to write Spring (March) candidacy exams.
November–February, Year 2	Prepare for second candidacy exam. Continue meeting with examining committee members and working through reading list.
March, Year 2	Write second candidacy exam (written and oral components). Upon passing both exams, begin dissertation proposal work.
March–August, Year 2	Draft and orally defend dissertation proposal (normally 20–30 pages) within three to six months of passing candidacy exams. Achieve ABD status upon successful defense. Dissertation research begins.
September–April, Year 3	Active dissertation research. Fieldwork (if applicable). Regular supervisory committee meetings. TA and/or RA work may continue.
May–August Year 3	Continue dissertation writing. Aim to circulate draft chapters to supervisor on a regular basis. Maintain consistent writing schedule and committee communication.
September–June, Year 4	Complete full dissertation draft. Circulate to supervisory committee for comprehensive review. Revise based on feedback.
July–August, Year 4	Submit signed Request for Oral Examination with final dissertation PDF and ethics approval (if applicable) to Graduate Secretary at least 30 working days before the exam.

August, Year 4	Oral examination. Submit revised and approved dissertation to Graduate Studies.
November, Year 4	Graduation

PhD – 5 Year Completion

Period	Activities
September, Year 1	New student orientation; consultation with Graduate Advisor; finalize course selection; confirm supervisor; review CAPP/Degree Works report.
September–April, Year 1	Complete five graduate courses plus POLI 600. Enroll in field seminars for your two intended candidacy exam areas. Register in POLI 693.
May 1, Year 1	Deadline: Submit written notice to Graduate Advisor of intention to write Fall (October) candidacy exams — or plan for Spring sitting.
May–August, Year 1	Begin candidacy exam preparation. Obtain reading list from field coordinator. Meet with examining committee members. Preparation typically takes five to six months.
October, Year 2	Write first candidacy exam (written and oral components).
November 1, Year 2	Deadline: Submit written notice to Graduate Advisor of intention to write second candidacy exam.
November–April, Year 2	Prepare for second candidacy exam. Continue meeting with committee members and working through reading list.
March, Year 2	Write second candidacy exam (written and oral components). Upon passing both, begin dissertation proposal.
April Year 2–April Year 3,	Draft and orally defend dissertation proposal (normally 20–30 pages). Achieve ABD status upon successful defense.
May–August, Year 3	Begin dissertation research. Fieldwork (if applicable). Regular supervisory committee meetings. TA and/or RA work may continue.

September–April, Year 4	Active dissertation writing. Circulate draft chapters to supervisor regularly. Maintain writing schedule and committee communication.
May–August Year 4	Complete remaining dissertation chapters. Circulate full draft to supervisory committee for comprehensive review. Revise based on feedback.
September–May, Year 5	Final revisions and polishing. Submit signed Request for Oral Examination with final dissertation PDF and ethics approval (if applicable) to Graduate Secretary at least 30 working days before the exam. Oral examination. Submit revised and approved dissertation to Graduate Studies.
June, Year 5	Graduation (if graduation submitted in November, dissertation defended by April).
	Graduation (if graduation submitted in July, dissertation defended May–August)

Appendix B: Acronyms

There are several acronyms throughout this handbook and others that you may come across in your graduate program.

Acronym	Full Term
ABD	All But Dissertation , a status in the PhD program achieved after completing coursework, both candidacy exams, and the dissertation proposal
ARA	Academic Research Assistantship , funds are paid as a stipend and are not considered employment income
CAL	Centre for Accessible Learning , the UVic centre that arranges academic accommodations for students

Acronym	Full Term
CAPP	Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning report, a personalized checklist that helps track program progression
CSPT	Cultural, Social and Political Thought , an interdisciplinary graduate concentration
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees , the union representing graduate students employed as TAs
CV	Curriculum Vitae , an academic resume outlining your education, research, publications, and professional experience
DTB	David Turpin Building , where the Political Science department is located
ERA	Employment-based Research Assistantship , a paid employment position provided by a faculty member for research work outside a student's degree requirements
FGS	Faculty of Graduate Studies , the university's administrative body responsible for graduate programs, funding, and academic regulations
GAC	Graduate Academic Concession , a form required to apply for a leave of absence or dropping or withdrawing from courses
GARO	Graduate Admissions and Records Office , the administrative office that processes graduate student registration, records, and program completion
GPA	Grade Point Average , a numerical measure of academic performance on the university's 9-point scale
GPS	Graduates of Political Science , a department graduate student organization
GSS	Graduate Students' Society , the university's graduate student organization representing all graduate students, and also administers the student health and dental plan
HRE	Human Research Ethics , the UVic team responsible for reviewing and approving research involving human participants and human biological materials

Acronym	Full Term
IN	Indigenous Nationhood , a graduate certificate concentration
MRP	Major Research Paper , a Masters stream requiring an independent research paper of normally 40-50 pages, in lieu of a thesis
PGC	Politics of Global Challenges — a PhD stream
POLI	Department of Political Science
RA	Research Assistantship , a position providing financial support for graduate students, normally either as a stipend or employment income
ROE	Request for Oral Examination Form , the form submitted to schedule a thesis or dissertation defense
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council , one of Canada's three federal research granting agencies, and the one most relevant for Political Science students
TA	Teaching Assistantship , a unionized position supporting course instruction and grading
TAC	Teaching Assistant Consultant , a senior graduate student who provides TA training and on-one-one development support

Appendix C: Resources and Support

Teaching Resources

- **UVic TA Resources:** [Available through the Learning and Teaching Innovation \(LTI\)](#)

Research Resources

- **Academic Skills Centre:** [The Academic Skills Centre](#) assists graduate students with time management, getting started with your research, and drafting your manuscripts, from proposal to literature review to the concluding chapter.
- **UVic Space:** UVic's open-access institutional repository where completed theses and dissertations are deposited. Required for degree completion. [You can find more information by clicking the link here.](#)

- **Human Research Ethics (HRE):** If your research involves human participants, you must apply for ethics approval before beginning your study. Contact the HRE team at ethics@uvic.ca or [visit their website here](#).

Student Wellness and Mental Health

Graduate school can be demanding, and it is normal to experience periods of stress, anxiety, or difficulty. UVic offers a range of supports for your mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. You do not need to be in crisis to reach out, these services are here for everyday challenges too.

- **Student Wellness Centre:** Located in the Health and Wellness Building, Student Wellness offers confidential counselling, medical care, and spiritual care. Call 250-721-8563 or [visit their website here](#).
- **SupportConnect:** A free, confidential mental health support service available 24/7 by phone, chat, or video. Connect with qualified counsellors anytime, for any reason. [Visit their website for more information](#).

Other Useful Contacts

Resource	Location	Contact
Centre for Accessible Learning	Campus Services Building, Room 150	infocal@uvic.ca 250-472-4947 uvic.ca/accessible-learning
Office of the Ombudsperson	Student Union Building, Room B205	ombudsperson@uvic.ca 250-721-8357 uvicombudsperson.ca
International Centre for Students	Jamie Cassels Centre, Room B202d	icsinfo@uvic.ca 250-721-6361 uvic.ca/international-experiences
Faculty of Graduate Studies	Jamie Cassels Centre, Room A207	garo@uvic.ca 250-472-4657 (GARO) uvic.ca/graduatestudies
Graduate Students' Society	Halpern Centre, Room 102	gssoffice@uvic.ca gss.uvic.ca
UVic Libraries	Mearns-McPherson Library	askus@uvic.ca 250-721-8230 uvic.ca/library