Ph.D. in Political Science
Policies and Procedures Manual
Department of Public and International Affairs
George Mason University
Effective August 2013
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I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The objective of the Ph.D. program is to prepare political scientists for professional careers in research and/or teaching by combining academic education in the field with opportunities for experience within the kinds of complex domestic and international political organizations they are studying. Graduates will be scholars and teachers, but experience-based understanding will enhance their analytic skills. Our location in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area and abundant links to political institutions make us a prime location for this new kind of political science degree. Our large and distinguished faculty offers both depth and breadth in the scholarship of the four primary fields of the degree: a) the institutions and processes of American government b) international relations c) comparative politics and d) public administration. Students also have the opportunity in this program to take advantage of the courses in other GMU graduate programs, such as the School of Public Policy, the Center for Global Affairs, the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, and the Global Affairs program.

The program allows and encourages students, if they so choose, to obtain experiential opportunities with governmental or political organizations or with the firms and non-profit organizations that are concerned with politics, administration and government. Students will have opportunities to experience government and politics first-hand in domestic and international political organizations such as parties, lobbying groups, think-tanks, international institutions and non-governmental organizations, academic journals and journals of political opinion, as well as congressional and Executive offices. Our faculty’s working links with many of these governmental and non-governmental organizations enable us to help students find and make good use of these learning opportunities. The object of the experiential learning element of the program is to provide students with the opportunity to understand and apply the analytic concepts of the academy in settings they are designed to explain. Students will emerge from their experiences in political organizations with a more critical, nuanced, and complex understanding of the concepts that have been used to account for political processes and institutions. Subjects from legislative redistricting to sustainable development can be studied in both the scholarly literature and in the field. This opportunity can help provide scholars and teachers with the insight and experience to expand academic understanding and make genuine contributions to the domestic and international institutions in which they have worked and studied. This educational model, patterned after the American Political Science Association’s Congressional Fellows Program, sets us apart from other Metro area universities and makes us additionally attractive to students.
II. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The program is administered by the Political Science Graduate Director, and the Graduate Coordinator. The Graduate Director takes the lead in proposing policy changes, and in chairing and appointing curriculum and admissions committees, making assistantship appointments, organizing comprehensive examinations, and making recommendations on Dissertation committee membership to the Chair. The Graduate Coordinator administers the program procedures, including responding to information requests, communicating information about requirements and changes in status to students, and tracking application and graduation forms.

The Admissions Committee, chaired by the Political Science Graduate Director, will make determinations regarding admissions and the awarding of assistantships and fellowships. Decisions about whether each student has made adequate progress and may continue in the program will be made by the Faculty on a yearly basis.

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III. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The program allows students to specialize in one of four fields: American Politics and Government, International Relations, Comparative Politics or Public Administration. Courses in Research Methods are required of students in all fields. The degree requires 72 hours of coursework divided among: core courses; advanced courses in the student’s major and minor fields; supporting courses that can be taken outside the Department; research methods courses; experiential learning; and dissertation guidance.

The course work is allocated as follows:

- **Core Courses**: 9 credits chosen from five core courses: GOVT 510, GOVT 520, GOVT 530, GOVT 540, and GOVT 550.

- **Major Field Courses**: at least 21 credits of advanced course work divided between two major fields (American government and politics, public administration, international relations, or comparative politics).

- **Minor Field Courses**: at least 9 credits of advanced coursework in a third field to be designed by the student and advisor to complement the major fields and with written approval of student’s advisor on the education plan.

- **Methodology Courses**: 9 credits to include Research Methods in Political Science (GOVT 500), Problem Solving and Data Analysis (GOVT 511), and one other course in quantitative or qualitative methods. The last of the three methodology courses should be tailored to the student’s dissertation research needs. Language coursework and proficiency may count as the third methodology course with approval.

- **Electives**: at least 12 credits in electives. Six (6) credits may come from practical experience in the field.

- **Dissertation Proposal (GOVT 998)**: 3-6 credits.

- **Dissertation Guidance (GOVT 999)**: Students may apply to this degree a minimum of 3 and maximum of 6 credits of 998 and a minimum of 9 credits of 999. They apply a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 24 dissertation credits (998 and 999 combined) to the degree. A minimum of 3 credits per semester must be enrolled until 12 total combined credits have been completed. May register for one credit a semester thereafter.

**Continuous Registration (Govt 998 and Govt 999)**
Once enrolled in GOVT 998, Dissertation proposal, a student must maintain continuous registration in GOVT 98 or 999 each semester (not including summers) until the dissertation is submitted to and accepted by the University Library. Failure to maintain continuous enrollment will result in dismissal from the program.

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IV. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Graduates from the program will demonstrate superior academic skills in the field of Political Science. They will complete introductory courses in four fields of the discipline and then develop a major and minor concentration from among the fields of American Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, or Public Administration. Students may also apply their classroom learning in positions appropriate to their scholarly interests throughout the Washington D.C. community if they avail themselves of the opportunity for institutional experience. These requirements are distinct from the research methodology requirements of the degree. By the time students reach candidacy, they are expected to possess the quantitative and/or qualitative skills to design an original research project for their doctoral dissertation. All dissertations satisfying the requirements for graduation will make an independent scholarly contribution to the academic discipline of Political Science. Students are required to present their research findings in both written and oral formats.

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V. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Doctoral students and candidates are assessed in a number of ways throughout the program. Scholarly ability is evaluated through course grading in seminar-style classes, with a focus on the research projects students produce. Oral and written skills will be considered in course grading. After students have completed their coursework and demonstrated proficiency in either statistics or a foreign language, they are required to take a Comprehensive Examination in their two primary fields of specialization. Once students have successfully passed the Comprehensive Exams they move on to the dissertation phase of the program. The first phase is the Dissertation Proposal in which the student defines a suitable problem for the dissertation. A committee of faculty will evaluate the dissertation proposal for originality, feasibility, comprehensiveness, and its likelihood to make a scholarly contribution to the field. Upon successful completion of the dissertation proposal, the student advances to candidacy and begins the dissertation. The dissertation itself will be assessed using rigorous criteria. Only research projects that make an original and positive contribution to the fundamental understanding of government and politics will be deemed to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the doctorate.
VI. DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRICULUM

American Government and Politics: The field of American government and politics examines the principles, processes, institutions, behaviors and development of the American political system. The curriculum in this field is designed to provide a strong knowledge base and the analytical skills that will enable students to understand, evaluate, and critique the complex interdependencies of American politics. The Department is particularly strong in American institutions which form the basis for understanding of political behavior and governmental processes. Federalism and state and local politics are well developed areas as well, thanks to our long-established offerings in public administration. We have a growing expertise in political behavior and political development. Moreover, public forums in American politics at the Woodrow Wilson Center Institution, numerous Washington area think-tanks, and at other metro-area universities further enrich the intellectual setting for the Ph.D. program.

International Relations. The field of International Relations focuses on the changing structure of international politics, including post cold war security issues, the rise of international terrorism, foreign policy development, international political economy—including the effects of economic globalization, the information technology revolution, and the enhanced role of global corporations and nongovernmental organizations—and the rise of other nonsecurity issues on the emerging international agenda, from environmental policy to human rights. Our approach, influenced by the reality of globalization, is grounded in the belief that the intersection between domestic politics and international affairs is of increasing importance in this globalized and interconnected world, and that a theoretical approach that aims to unite the theoretical and conceptual concerns of both comparative politics and international affairs best prepares students to analyze the complex political dynamics that today affect global peace and stability. Our International Relations faculty include specialists on the full range of issues that concern contemporary international affairs, including security policy, foreign policy, international political economy, war and peace, post-colonial and ethnic politics, ethics in international affairs, and human rights and humanitarian intervention. Many are also area studies specialists.

Comparative Politics. The field of Comparative Politics focuses on the governance processes and institutions of other nations and regions of the world, as well as the comparative and cross-national analysis of political institutions, processes, and behavior. Comparative politics faculty at George Mason University are grounded in specific areas of expertise common to the sub-field of comparative politics, such as democratization, political parties and other democratic institutions, state-society relations, revolutions, warfare, social movements, ethnic politics, and political economy. Many also bring expertise as area studies specialists in the key regions of the world, including the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, Central and East Asia, and Africa.
In addition to the rich course offerings in International Relations and Comparative Politics, students have the opportunity to attend an extraordinary number of talks by academics, political leaders, and officials from around the world in the Greater Washington D.C. area. Our location affords students the opportunity to participate in forums organized by other area universities, think tanks, advocacy groups, governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations such as the Organization of American States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

**Public Administration.** The field of public administration examines how government and other sectors work to achieve policy goals and objectives through various forms of collective action. The curriculum in this field traditionally has focused on the organization and management of public bureaucracies and their contributions to public policy outcomes. However, reflecting recent trends allocating authority and responsibility for the delivery of public services to such nongovernmental actors as private profit and nonprofit organizations, the field has expanded to include a focus on whether and how networks of public and private actors collaborate to achieve public objectives. The field also has become more global as public management practices and theories are diffused across national and regional administrative settings. George Mason’s public administration program has been among the nation’s leaders in incorporating this shift into the core of its curriculum. Our faculty’s research interests include work on accountability in third party governance, public management and organization theory, privatization, nonprofit governance, intergovernmental management, and homeland security. In addition, many of the faculty maintain strong ties to the world of public management practice, including involvement as Fellows of the National Academy of Public Administration, consultant roles with federal and nonprofit agencies and active participation in public management associations. George Mason’s public administration program also enjoys advantages from our location in suburban Washington, D.C., which provides easy access to a wide array of national and international organizations, firms, and think tanks, as well as to the institutions and agencies of the federal government. PhD students have many opportunities for exposure to the numerous conferences and forums held on public management issues in the Washington area by such organizations as the National Academy of Public Administration, the Brookings Institution, the World Bank, the Urban Institute and the Council on Excellence in Government.

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VII. COURSES FOR THE DEGREE

**Foundation Courses:** 9 credits from the following:

- GOVT 510 American Politics
- GOVT 520 Political Theory
- GOVT 530 Comparative Politics
- GOVT 540 International Relations and Comparative Politics**
- GOVT 550 Public Administration

**Methodology Courses**

- GOVT 500 Research Methods**
- GOVT 511 Problem Solving and Data Analysis I (requires taking and passing a statistics screening exam prior to class registration.)

One additional course in quantitative or qualitative methods is required. The last of the three methodology courses should be tailored to the student’s dissertation research needs. Language coursework and proficiency may count as the third methodology course work with approval on the education plan form.

**Courses for the Field in American Government**

Required Seminars: (2 of the following 4 seminars are required)
- GOVT 603 Seminar in Courts and Constitutional Law
- GOVT 604 Seminar in Congress and Legislative Behavior
- GOVT 605 Seminar on the Presidency
- GOVT 706 Seminar in Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

**Courses for the Field of Comparative Politics**

(the following 2 seminars are required)

Required Seminars:
- GOVT 631 Seminar in Comparative Politics and Institutions
- GOVT 731 Advanced Seminar in Comparative Politics

**Courses for the Field of International Relations**

(2 of the following 4 seminars are required)

Required Seminars:
- GOVT 641 Global Governance
- GOVT 741 Advanced Seminar in International Relations
- GOVT 743 International Political Economy
- GOVT 745 International Security
Courses for the Field of Public Administration

Required Seminars:
GOVT 753 Seminar in Third Party Governance
GOVT 755 Seminar in Politics and the Bureaucracy

**GOVT 500 and GOVT 540**
Because of particularly heavy structural demand for these courses, they are offered three times per year – either once during one semester and twice (two sections) during the other, or once during each regular semester and once during a summer session.
It is suggested that you register early for these courses before they become full.

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VIII. SECONDARY PROGRAM

Students who have been admitted after the bachelor’s degree and wish to obtain a MA in Political Science as an admitted PhD student may do so. The MA in Political Science will be a “Secondary Program”. A doctoral student must complete at least 18 hours of the MA in Political Science AFTER approved for the master’s degree as a secondary program.

Please Note: The MA is a 36 credit program. Only 30 credits of the MA will apply to the PhD in Political Science.

To apply for the MA in Political Science as a secondary program, please complete the Secondary Program application and return the form to the Graduate Coordinator. This form should be completed and submitted in your first semester of the program.

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IX. MINOR FIELD

Students choose one minor field in consultation with an advisor. The courses in the minor field should complement the two major fields and need the prior written approval of the advisor.

The minor field is a substantive area, often one that could or will likely be related to the dissertation. The student’s advisor and the graduate director must approve any choice of courses constituting a minor field. Further, the minor field may not be made up of more than one (1) directed reading or independent study course. Illustrative examples: Middle East studies, interest groups, French politics, peasant movements, state theory etc.

A minor field chosen in methods may not include any of the courses counted for the methods requirement. Moreover, a methods minor may not be a foreign language. Courses chosen for a minor in methods must cohere in some substantive way; they may not simply be a list of “methods” courses.

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X. FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS METHODS ELECTIVE

Advanced knowledge of a foreign language, as attested to by specific outside examination, may be counted as constituting the three (3) credits (only) of the required elective methods course. The student’s faculty advisor or probable dissertation advisor must certify that advanced knowledge of the language designated is essential and necessary to the successful doctoral dissertation work of the student. The graduate director must also approve.

Certification of the student’s proficiency in the designated language must be arranged for, paid by and provided to the graduate office by the student. It is solely the responsibility of the student to ensure that certification is received BEFORE comprehensive field examinations are taken. There are no exemptions from this requirement.

Certification must be obtained at the required level for speaking, reading and writing (see below) through Language Testing International (LTI) of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). (See http://languagetesting.com/assessments_academic.cfm# for details of all logistical elements of testing and payment.) No other certification from any other source will be accepted. (Note: The Department of Foreign Languages at George Mason University does NOT test for proficiency.)

“Proficiency” is defined as “advanced – sub-grade mid” for speaking and reading and “intermediate” for writing on the LTI scale of: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced (with three sub-grades: low, mid and high) and Superior. (See http://languagetesting.com/assessments_academic.cfm# for details of these levels and all logistical elements of testing and payment.)

Certification of all required levels must also be provided for any language approved for doctoral dissertation work under this rubric, which may also be the student’s first (or “native”) language.
XI. REDUCTION OF CREDITS

Ph D students arriving into the program already holding an MA in political science (or related fields, insofar as appropriate) from another institution may apply for a reduction of credits through substitution of some courses, if approved, from the degree at the other institution. (See below for provisions applying to those arriving with an MA in political science from George Mason.)

The option of the block system of 30 credits is no longer accepted.

Courses proposed to substitute through the reduction of credits policy may be applied to (a) the minor field (see the policy on minor field for specification of what may qualify), to (b) any requirements labeled “elective” in the Ph D program requirements as listed in the university catalog, and to (c) any foundation course not in one of the two major fields chosen for Ph D comprehensive field examinations. Official PhD degree requirements for political science may be found at: http://catalog.gmu.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=19&poid=17990

For two additional required courses only, GOVT 500 (the scientific method and research design), GOVT 511 (basic quantitative techniques) and the third methods requirement (see university catalog), a special petition to the graduate director may be submitted – with documentation and syllabus of the substitute course proposed and approval of the faculty advisor. The graduate director must approve this petition. (Note: Substituting advanced knowledge of a foreign language for the third methods requirement is governed by the provisions of a separate policy.)

The student’s faculty advisor must assess, approve and submit the specific reduction of credits request with specific previous courses identified in each section constituting the Ph D degree requirements. Under no circumstance may more than 30 credits be approved and then applied toward the Ph D degree. Often, it may be less.

To help students and advisors to navigate any questions of course equivalencies across institutions, specific official university catalog course descriptions for every graduate course in the Ph D program are found at http://pia.gmu.edu/course_sections?utf8=%E2%9C%93&code=GOVT&term=201370

The student must provide to the faculty advisor, and as attachment to the dossier, documentation of each course to be used in the “request for substitution” a certified transcript from the institution where the substitute course was taken. A grade of B or better is required for the course being considered.

Under compelling and extraordinary circumstances (not including the proviso of 30 credits maximum), a special petition may be addressed to the graduate director,
with documentation and rationale, approved by the faculty advisor, for a waiver of a specific course not included in this framework.

If the students Master's degree was earned at an institution outside of the United States, the Master's degree will need to be evaluated for equivalence to a similar degree earned in the United States. Students can go to www.wes.org to find information on how to get their Master's degree evaluated. This process must be completed before the Reduction of Credit form is submitted. The resulting documentation of the evaluation must accompany the Reduction of Credit form.

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XII. AUDITING A COURSE

Students do not receive grades or credit for audited courses. The tuition fee is the same amount for both audit and credit courses. The credit hours will not count into attempted or earned hours.

Students who wish to audit a course must receive permission from the professor. The student needs to bring a signed Course Audit form (found at http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms/CAF.pdf) to the Office of the University Registrar for processing by the last day to drop the course.

Each professor has full autonomy over whether or not to agree to a student’s request to audit a specific course. The terms for which a professor agrees for auditing a course are determined by each individual faculty member.

The suggested terms for auditing a course are as follows:
1) Seminar attendance and active participation is required
2) Reading of the materials prior to seminar is required
3) Oral presentations are required – if required by other students in the class
4) Written submissions may or may not be required – determined by the professor

The terms (if any) the professor sets for auditing are non-negotiable. These terms should be documented to serve as a contract between the student and the professor to avoid any confusion down the road. Documentation can be in the form of emails if so desired.

The last day to change a course from credit to audit status or vice versa is the last day to drop the course. Please consult the academic calendar (found at http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/index.html) for drop deadlines. Drop deadlines for each course may vary.

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XIII. GOVT 796—DIRECTED READINGS AND RESEARCH

Prerequisites: 15 credits of Govt. courses at 500 level and above, and permission of instructor.

There are 2 forms that are required to register for Govt. 796 – the contract and the Individualized Section form. Both forms can be found on our website http://pia.gmu.edu/for-political-science/phd-students/resources-for-phd-students.

1) Complete the Govt. 796 contract and get your advisor's signature on the contract.

2) Complete the Individualized Section form, ask Dr. Regan to sign the form. Dr. Regan will ask to see the Govt. 796 contract before she signs the form. Take the signed individualized section form over to the registrar's office.

3) Put a copy of the Govt 796 contract and the individualized section form in Peg Koback’s mail box or in Amanda Myer’s mail box. We will put the copies in your student file.

Do not leave the individualized section form in the main office for Dr. Regan to sign. If you cannot meet with her to obtain her signature, leave the form and the contract in Peg Koback’s mail box or in Amanda Myer’s mail box.

Please Note: If you are only registering for GOVT 796 for a semester, you must be registered by the first day of classes or you will incur a financial penalty. You must be registered for at least one class by the first day of classes.


XIV. CONFERENCE SUPPORT

Only Ph D students who have papers accepted to recognized conferences will be eligible for the conference travel support program. MA students, in spite of the quality of their work, are not eligible.

Ph D students who have had paper proposals officially accepted must file a request for consideration to the department chair, including the total estimated expenses, presented through a completed travel authorization request form. Linda Welter, in the main office, is the key person to advise you on these details, if it is your first time. Normally, upon the chair’s agreement, the department will then contribute $750.00 or 50 percent of total estimated expenses, whichever sum is lesser.

As a condition of this support, you must give a practice presentation to interested members of the department, structured with a PhD student as a discussant – in advance of the conference date. (These sessions are usually called mock panels or mock conference presentations, depending upon how many are involved at once.)
XV. QUALIFYING EXAMS

At the conclusion of their course work, students will take a written Comprehensive Examination in their two primary fields of specialization. This exam will be based on the student’s course work and on the reading list prepared for each field. The exam must be completed before the student takes dissertation proposal or dissertation guidance courses.

The following explains the process for the Comprehensive exams.

The graduate office, with at least two if not three months advance notice, publishes the dates for the next cycle of Ph D comprehensive exams. Each Ph D student must take qualifying examinations in two fields. Therefore, the office publishes two (2) days/dates, exactly (usually) one week apart. The graduate program offers two (2) cycles per year: May and August.

Students planning on taking comprehensive exams must submit a completed and advisor approved Degree Plan form to the Graduate Coordinator at least one month prior to the exam dates. The purpose is to verify that all academics have been completed.

Students planning to take their comps during a given cycle MUST be available for BOTH dates. There are zero dispensations to the two (2) dates that have been fixed. There is NO element of choice in it. Students who cannot make those dates MUST postpone to the following round.

No dispensation or special provision is needed for a “late” exam, as long as the maximum semesters of enrollment allowed by the university are respected.

Exams are prepared by duly appointed field committees. The fields are: international relations, American politics, comparative politics, and public administration. Each exam requires that three (3) questions be answered, one (1) of which is methodology. The required number of answers is structured through an element of choice: i.e., in each section the number of questions from which to choose is greater than the number of answers required. The exam may be otherwise structured as the exam committee sees fit: the three required answers, for example, may be distributed across two or three sections. (Methodology must always constitute its own section.)

Exams are graded by the duly appointed field committee, which reaches, through its deliberations a single result for each answer and, then, a single result for the exam overall. The possible grades for each question and for the exam overall are FAIL, PASS and HIGH PASS. (There is no grade of LOW PASS.)
ALL THREE (3) answers must achieve a PASS or higher for a grade of PASS for the overall exam. Any question that is failed must be re-taken at a subsequent exam cycle (in the same area with new questions). Any question area that is failed may be re-taken no more than one time. Failing a question area twice means that the overall exam is failed and that the student is failed from the program, leaving with an MA degree.

Each day of the exam is made up of an 8-hour session, in a university room designated by the graduate office and supervised by graduate office staff. A computer is provided. NO NOTES/NO BOOKS/NO READING LISTS.

As always at George Mason University, ADA provisions apply. Address all ADA matters to the university’s disability services.

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XVI. DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

As soon as the student passes the Comprehensive Exams, the student should meet with the Director(s) of the Political Science Program about forming the dissertation committee.

Once a committee chair has been identified and approved, the student should collaborate with the chair on the remaining members of the dissertation committee. The dissertation committee must be approved by the Program Director(s), and a Dissertation Committee Formation form must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator.

All dissertation committees must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least two of whom must be from the student’s academic unit or program faculty. The committee consists of a dissertation chair, typically a graduate faculty member from the department or program of the student’s field of study and at least two other members of the graduate faculty. Only a graduate faculty member with a full-time appointment at George Mason University may serve as dissertation chair. Other Mason faculty, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed as additional members to the committee. Such appointments are made where the additional member’s expertise and contribution add value to the dissertation, but appointment does not require graduate faculty status.

Student-initiated changes in the composition of the dissertation committee may occur only with the approval of the dean or director of the school, college, or institute or its designee in consultation with the committee. Faculty may resign from a dissertation committee with appropriate notice by submitting a written resignation.

If the dissertation chair departs from the university the following will apply: With the approval of the doctoral program director, faculty departing the university at the end of the academic year (spring) will be allowed to continue in that role until the deadline for submitting dissertations for the summer. If the student does not or will not meet the deadline for submission in summer, a new chair must be appointed for the student’s committee. In all other cases, it is required that the dissertation chair be a member of the graduate faculty member with a full-time appointment at Mason.

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XXVII. DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

Degree Requirement: Students may apply to this degree a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6 credits of 998 and a minimum of 9 credits of 999. They apply a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 dissertation credits (998 and 999 combined) to the degree. Because of the continuous registration policy, students may be required to register for additional credits of this course. **More than 6 credits of 998 will not apply to the degree.**

Students working on dissertation research (999) must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 per semester (excluding summers) until they have completed the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999 required by the university and their degree program. Then, they must register for 1 credit of 999 until the dissertation is complete and has been officially submitted to the library. Students must be registered by the first day of classes for each semester or they will incur a financial penalty. Failure to be continuously enrolled in 998 and 999 will result in dismissal from the program.

Students must register for GOVT 998 to complete work on the dissertation proposal. To qualify for registration, the student must first have passed the Comprehensive Exams and identified the Chair of the Dissertation Committee.

The process of registering for GOVT 998 requires that the student complete a Proposed Time Line form. The completed form is submitted to the Graduate Coordinator along with the name of the Chair of the Dissertation Committee. The Graduate Coordinator will provide the student with a section number and a CRN#. The student then goes on to PatriotWeb to register for GOVT 998.

The student may be registering for more than one semester of GOVT 998, depending upon how far along the student is on committee formation and topic development. One to six credits of proposal in total are required for Political Science students. Students do not need to be registered for the summer term for GOVT 998 unless that is the term that the student will advance to candidacy.

Students should work closely with their committee chair as they formulate their proposal. It is recommended that the student meet frequently with their committee chair and with each committee member as required by the committee chair. GOVT 998 is graded “IP” for “In Progress” until the student advances to candidacy.

At the completion of the dissertation proposal, the student schedules a proposal defense with the committee. All committee members are to attend the proposal defense. The defense is open to the public, and notification will be made to other departmental faculty and students interested in attending. Once the committee approves the proposal, they sign the Proposal Approval form. The signed Proposal Approval form should be given to the Graduate Coordinator.
The dissertation proposal must be approved in writing by all committee members in the semester prior to the semester you wish to register for Dissertation Research (GOVT 999). You will not be able to have your proposal approved and register for GOVT 999 in the same semester.

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XVIII. ADVANCEMENT TO CANDIDACY

Advancement to candidacy for the Ph D occurs only when all the following steps have been successfully accomplished – in order:

1. All course work has been successfully completed as indicated by requirements published in the university catalogue for the Ph D program in political science.

2. Comprehensive examinations in two fields have been successfully passed, as specified in the section on comprehensive examinations.

3. A student has successfully obtained the agreement of a full-time George Mason University professor to chair that student’s Ph D committee. (Faculty are NOT required to agree to requests to serve on or chair Ph D committees.) And, the student has obtained the chair’s agreement on the remaining composition of the Ph D dissertation committee, as well as the agreement of those members, along with the approval signature of the graduate director, the department chair and the dean’s office. The composition of the Ph D committee is three full-time graduate faculty members of George Mason University, at least two of which must be from the student’s department. The third member may be from outside the student’s department, but an outside member is not required.

The wording of the current Mason catalogue: “All dissertation committees must consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty, at least two of whom must be from the student’s academic unit or program faculty. The committee consists of a dissertation chair, typically a graduate faculty member from the department or program of the student’s field of study and at least two other members of the graduate faculty. Only a graduate faculty member with a full-time appointment at George Mason University may serve as dissertation chair. Other Mason faculty, as well as individuals from outside the university, may be appointed as additional members to the committee. Such appointments are made where the additional member’s expertise and contribution add value to the dissertation, but appointment does not require graduate faculty status.”

4. The student has successfully defended, by vote of the Ph D committee, the dissertation proposal – in a public venue, to which faculty and other graduate student, in particular, are invited. Dissertation proposal defenses involve both the student’s presentation of it and discussions and questions about it from committee members and members of the audience.

5. The graduate director, and the department chair, each individually, approve the student’s dissertation proposal.
6. The student has submitted to the Graduate Coordinator the following forms: completed Education Plan Form signed by the advisor, Proposal Approval Form, Committee Form, and Advancement to Candidacy Form.

7. The advisor has changed grades for 998 from IP to S.

Upon this final moment in the process, the student becomes, officially, a Ph D candidate.
XIX. GOVT 999—DISSERTATION GUIDANCE

Enrollment in GOVT 999 is controlled by the Dean’s office. Each semester to enroll, students should send their GOVT 999 CRN code requests to chssdiss@gmu.edu. Requests must be sent via e-mail from the official George Mason e-mail account and contain the following information:

1. Student’s full name
2. Student’s G number
3. The name of the student’s dissertation advisor
4. The number of 999 credits the student intends to register for*

*Students should be familiar with the dissertation policies listed in the university catalog.

To learn the policies, procedures, formatting requirements for the dissertation please go to thesis.gmu.edu – this is very important!

Once the student has begun the dissertation research (“999”) phase, the student must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 each semester, for every full semester (fall and spring) until the student graduates. If the students will graduate in a summer term, the student must be registered for 999 credits in that term also. The catalog year that the student was admitted under dictates how many credits of 999 the student may register for in a semester, and how many total 999 credits will apply to the degree. The course will be graded as “IP” or In Progress until the dissertation is completed and a public defense is given to the satisfaction of the committee and the Dean.

Total time to degree will not exceed eleven (11) calendar years from the time of first enrollment as a doctoral degree-seeking student. Doctoral students are expected to advance to candidacy in no more than six years and to complete all other degree requirements for graduation in no more than five years from the time of advancement to candidacy. Students who will not meet published time limits because of circumstances beyond their control may petition for an extension. Extensions to the time limit for advancement to candidacy may be granted for a maximum period of one calendar year. The one year extension granted to advance to candidacy will run concurrently with the five years provided to complete the dissertation. The total time limit to degree will not exceed eleven (11) years even for those students granted a time extension for advancement to candidacy. Students who are given permission to re-enroll following an absence from Mason may not count the time limits as beginning on the date of re-enrollment. Failure to meet the time limits or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status also have more restrictive limits to advance to candidacy and to complete the degree, and cannot expect the maximum 11 year deadline to apply to them.
Students should contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

**NOTE:** Students working on dissertation research (999) must register for a minimum of 3 credits of 999 per semester (excluding summers) until they have completed the minimum number of credits of 998 and 999 required by the university and their degree program. Then, they must register for 1 credit of 999 until the dissertation is complete and has been officially submitted to the library.

*To learn the policies, procedures, formatting requirements for the dissertation please go to thesis.gmu.edu – this is very important!

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