PhD in Political Science

Program Description and Admissions Information

Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University
Graduate Admissions
3351 Fairfax Drive, MS 3B1
Arlington, VA 22201

Telephone: 703-993-8099
Email: schar@gmu.edu
Web: schar.gmu.edu
This guide incorporates most of the requirements and rules pertaining to the Political Science PhD Program in the Schar School of Policy and Government. In addition, the University Catalog and associated requirements and rules, along with other pertinent University policies apply to, and in the case of inconsistency, take precedence over this guide.

Revised: March 27, 2017
SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT
OVERVIEW

The Schar School of Policy and Government (Schar School) is at the heart of George Mason University’s commitment to government and policy studies and research. Located in both Fairfax and Arlington, Virginia, the Schar School takes advantage of its location in the National Capital Region, offering students and faculty unique opportunities to study federal executive and legislative governance and policy-making, as well as international organizations and government agencies.

The Schar School of Policy and Government conducts policy research in a number of fields, including governance and public management; regional economic development; terrorism and international security; transportation policy; politics and Islam; science and technology policy; economic policy; and Russian, Central Asian, and East Asian politics.

The school is home to three doctoral programs – Biodefense, Political Science, and Public Policy. The structure of the school and its dedication to interdisciplinary education and research allow it to reach across Mason to bring together the knowledge and skills needed to address a wide variety of policy concerns. While most members of the core faculty hold full-time tenured positions, other members of the Schar School faculty are from other university departments and schools. In addition, faculty and students in the Schar School are published widely in primary academic and professional journals on topics including American politics and policy, comparative politics, legislative and executive branch operations, federalism, weapons of mass destruction, international security, environmental policy, Latin American politics, and foreign affairs. In addition to the academic faculty and graduate students, the Schar School hosts a substantial number of senior fellows, visiting faculty, post-doctoral associates, and other researchers from around the world, all of whom make essential contributions to research, teaching, and outreach activities.

The Schar School’s faculty offers both depth and breadth in the scholarship of the four primary fields of political science: the institutions and processes of American government; international relations; comparative politics; and public administration. In addition to the rich course offerings offered in these fields, public forums at places such as the Woodrow Wilson International Center, the Organization of American States, the International Monetary Fund, and the National Academy of Public Administration further enrich the intellectual setting for the PhD program.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The program prepares political scientists for professional careers in research and 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.

The program allows students to specialize in one of four fields: American government and politics, international relations, comparative politics, or public administration.

Students in the program study both full-time and part-time, and may change their status at any time. A full-time course load is three classes (nine credits). We recommend that a student not take more than 4 classes (12 credits) per semester. If a student holds a full-time assistantship (20 hours a week), two classes (six credits) is considered full-time. Graduate students who are enrolled in dissertation credits (either 998 or 999) are considered full-time, if they are enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester, regardless of whether they hold an assistantship.
The degree requires 72 credits of course work divided among core courses, advanced courses in the student’s major and minor fields, supporting courses that can be outside the department, research methods courses, courses in political theory, experiential learning, and dissertation guidance.

The course work will be allocated as follows:

- **Core Courses**: 9 credits chosen from five core courses: GOVT 510, GOVT 520, GOVT 530, GOVT 540, GOVT 550.
- **Major Field Courses**: at least 21 credits of advanced courses 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.
- **Altogether up to 12 credits** may be taken in other departments to fulfill minority portions of any of the requirements, including the methodology requirement.
- **Dissertation Proposal**: 3-6 credits.
- **Dissertation Guidance**: 6-18 credits.

Students must demonstrate proficiency in statistical, mathematical, and computational techniques used for political science research or in one foreign language at an advanced level of reading and comprehension. Proficiency will be determined by satisfactory course work in methods or exam at the time of the qualifying exam for language proficiency.

*Official program requirements are published in the annual PhD Student/Faculty Handbook issued to new students during orientation. The current issue is located on the program website:

[https://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/phd-student-services/phd-handbook-forms](https://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/phd-student-services/phd-handbook-forms)

**George Mason University Libraries**

The University Libraries serve as both a repository of and digital portal to the wider universe of knowledge. The Libraries foster innovation, originality, and imagination by qualitatively managing access to scholarship and information, providing expert consultation in the research process, actively teaching the effective and critical use of information, and disseminating research and scholarship through publishing endeavors. Digital resources are accessible by students both on- and off-campus. Among many other resources, Fenwick Library in Fairfax is home to Mason’s print federal government documents collection; and Arlington Campus Library is designated as a European Union Document Depository, providing in-house access to non-circulating European Union documents for faculty, students and members of the public. As part of the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC), Mason students have use of major academic libraries in the Washington Metropolitan area, including The George Washington University, American University and Georgetown University. More information is available at [http://library.gmu.edu](http://library.gmu.edu)
DEGREE PLAN FOR STUDENTS ADMITTED FALL 2016

Student name: ___________________________________________  G#: _________________________

Advisor: _______________________________  Anticipated Graduation Date: _________________________

Foundation Courses - 9 credits

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVT 510</td>
<td>American Government and Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 520</td>
<td>Political Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 530</td>
<td>Comparative Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 540</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>GOVT 550</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
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Major Field Courses – Minimum 21 credits divided between two major fields

American Government and Politics: 2 of the following 4 seminars are required

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<th>Credits</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 603</td>
<td>Seminar in the Courts and Constitutional Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 604</td>
<td>Seminar in Congress and Legislative Behavior</td>
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<td>GOVT 605</td>
<td>Seminar on the Presidency</td>
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<td>GOVT 706</td>
<td>Seminar in Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations</td>
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Comparative Politics: The following 2 seminars are required

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<th>Semester</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 631</td>
<td>Seminar in Comparative Politics and Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 731</td>
<td>Advanced Seminar in Comparative Politics</td>
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International Relations: 2 of the following 4 seminars are required

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<th>Semester</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 641</td>
<td>Global Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 741</td>
<td>Advanced Seminar in International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 743</td>
<td>International Political Economy</td>
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<td>GOVT 745</td>
<td>International Security</td>
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Public Administration: The following 2 seminars are required

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<tr>
<td>GOVT 753</td>
<td>Seminar in Third Party Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 755</td>
<td>Seminar in Politics and Bureaucracy</td>
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Minor Field – 9 credits of advanced coursework in a third field

Minor field: ____________________________________________________

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<th>Course #</th>
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Advanced Research Methodology Courses – 9 credits

GOVT500 and GOVT511 are required plus one additional course in quantitative or qualitative methods. The last of the three courses should correspond with the student’s dissertation research needs. Language coursework and proficiency may count as the third methodology course work following language assessment and approval.

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<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVT500 (required)</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT511 (required)</td>
<td>Problem Solving and Data Analysis I</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prerequisite for 511: passing a statistics screening exam</td>
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<td>Third methods course:</td>
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Electives – Up to 12 credits

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<th>Grade</th>
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Dissertation Credits

**998 Proposal:** min 3, max 6. **999 Dissertation:** min 6. **998+999 combined:** min 12, max 24

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<th>Course #</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits/Semester</th>
<th>Credits/Semester</th>
<th>Credits/Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GOVT 998</td>
<td>Dissertation proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>GOVT 999</td>
<td>Dissertation Research</td>
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Total Credit Hours: ________________

**Anticipated Completion Dates**

**Comprehensive Exam:** ______________________________

**Dissertation Proposal** (GOVT 998): ______________________

**Dissertation Research** (GOVT 999): ______________________

Advisor Signature: ________________________________ Date: ______________

Student Signature: ________________________________ Date: ______________
POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS* (GOVT)

500 The Scientific Method and Research Design: Grounds students in the principles of the scientific method as the framework for investigating all research questions in political science, whether qualitative or quantitative in character (or both). Focus is on sound and rigorous research design. (3 credits)

510 American Government and Politics: Examines institutions and processes of American government, including separate institutions of power in national government, theory and practice of federal system, role of interest groups and political parties, and effects of media and public opinion on electoral behavior and policy making. Seminar examining normative and empirical research. (3 credits)

511 Problem Solving and Data Analysis I: Introduces fundamental statistical and quantitative techniques for analyzing social science data rigorously and soundly. Focuses on problem definition, research design, and problem solving under conditions of uncertainty in political science. (3 credits)

520 Political Theory: Analyzes selected major works of ancient, modern, or contemporary political theory that illuminate basic problems and questions for people engaged in political or civic life. Examines justice, liberty, equality, autonomy, rights, obligation, participation, and nature of politics. (3 credits)

530 Comparative Politics: Examines fundamental issues in comparative politics and provides broad coverage of the central themes under study. Designed to help students think theoretically and critically about the study of comparative politics, its scientific objectives, and its epistemological assumptions. Within this context, students will look at concepts and approaches, as well as important theories and debates that characterize the subfield. Helps prepare students for qualifying exams in comparative politics. (3 credits)

540 International Relations: Focuses on changing structure of international politics, post-Cold War security issues, effect of globalized economy and information technology revolution, enhanced role of global corporations and nongovernmental organizations, and rise of non-security issues in emerging international agenda. (3 credits)

541 Introduction to Critical Analysis and Strategic Response to Terrorism: Introduces terrorism as a complex threat to human security. Focuses on tools for analyzing terrorism and the underlying sources and conditions that contribute to it. Considers similarities and differences between terrorism and other threats to human security. Explores the lessons learned in the history of responding to terrorism. Focuses not only on different tactics of response, but also includes how different types of societies (dictatorship, democracies, etc.) have responded to terrorism and what the results of those responses have been. Includes case studies of responses to terrorism. (3 credits)

550 Seminar in Theories of Public Administration: Reviews the theoretical traditions in American public administration, from the earliest days of the founding to the present. Concludes with consideration of contemporary theoretical debates over the proper role of public administrators and controversies about conflicting demands made on the public service and the public sector. (3 credits)

603 Seminar in the Courts and Constitutional Law: Analyzes role, influence, and effects of U.S. courts in creating constitutional legal norms and interpreting them. Special attention to First and Fourteenth Amendments and Commerce Clause. Lecture and discussion; students expected to read and analyze leading court cases. (3 credits)
604 Seminar on Congress and Legislative Behavior: Examines theories and empirical research on the U.S. Congress and legislative behavior, including elections, representation, structures, and processes. Also examines Congress’ impact on the design and implementation of public policy, interactions with other branches of government, and comparisons with parliamentary systems. (3 credits)

605 Seminar on the Presidency: Examines the American presidency from a number of substantive and methodological perspectives. Readings and discussions in the course appraise the presidency within the system and focus on the role the presidency plays in formulating and implementing public policy. (3 credits)

631 Seminar in Comparative Politics and Institutions: Examines theories and practices of governance and development in comparative national settings. Course explores key subsets of the comparative politics literature in depth, including institutional change, regime types and transitions, democracy and authoritarianism, states and state-society relations, revolution, social movements, political cultures, and methods. Course is explicitly conceptual and cross-regional. (3 credits)

632 Politics and Societies of the Middle East: Examines the Middle East in comparative perspective, using social scientific categories of analysis. Topics include: regime types, their basis and causes; influential political trends such as Arab nationalism, Ba’athism, and political Islam; the role of kinship, religion, and tribe in opposition and regime politics; the regional oil economy and economic crisis; democratic liberalization; and the growth of civil society.

640 Strategic Responses to Terrorism: Coordinated Decision Making: Revisits, expands, and examines the critical themes developed in the terrorism certificate program. Provides students with the opportunity to apply the theoretical concepts developed in practice. Integrates the ideas, theories, and practices considered in this track within the larger field of terrorism analysis and strategic responses to this threat. (3 credits)

641 Global Governance: Applies systems approach to understanding global politics. Emphasizes properties and functions of global systems such as population, food, disease, energy, and trade, and how world’s political systems interact with them. Discusses how governance at municipal, national, and international levels affected by global systems. Examines role of nongovernmental organizations in global affairs. (3 credits)

706 Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations: Examines broad trends in governance, including theory and practice of federal, state, and local governments. May include privatization, devolution, mandating, regulatory reform, and comprehensive federalism reform. (3 credits)

712 Problem Solving and Data Analysis II: Advanced techniques and skills for solving policy-related problems or analyzing political data. Focuses on data gathering and analysis, use of statistical software, and multivariate analysis. (3 credits)

713 The Constitution, Criminal Procedure, and Security: Explains legal doctrines that form basis of U.S. constitutional procedural rights, how these doctrines develop, and why courts rule as they do. Evaluates strengths, weaknesses of these rights. (3 credits)

717 Qualitative Methods: Focuses on scientific design of qualitative research questions and use of specific qualitative methods in scientific analysis. Covers when and how to use qualitative research methods to answer empirical questions in political science; primary data collection methods (interviews, observations, document review); the appropriateness of different research approaches; procedural and ethical concerns that may arise in use of qualitative methods. (3 credits)

719 Issues in American Politics: Examines significant issue in American politics and political behavior. Analyzes topic of contemporary and emerging concern. (3 credits)

725 Democratic Theory: Examines democracy in terms of versions of liberalism, theories of social capital and civic participation, and discourses about civil, political, and human rights. How is democracy conceptualized normatively and empirically? What underlying economic, social, and cultural conditions promote democracy? What role do institutions play in creating and sustaining a stable democratic society? Takes a broadly comparative perspective, focusing on variety of established and emerging democracies around the world. Elective for students specializing in American government or international politics and comparative governments. (3 credits)
726 Theories of Justice: Overview of ancient and modern theories of justice with application to contemporary issues involving justice system and other social and political institutions. (3 credits)

727 Restorative Justice: Origins of restorative justice, its principles, implications for different justice organizations and processes, and application to problems such as family violence, human rights, and reconciliation following mass victimizations. (3 credits)

728 Behavior of Law: Examines development of law, and law’s effect on human behavior. Reviews theories of law’s meaning and aims. Examines construction of law, and investigates consequences of law and legal decisions. (3 credits)

731 Advanced Seminar in Comparative Politics: Assumes basic proficiency in comparative analysis. Regionally based examination of key debates in the comparative politics field. Key theoretical and methodological debates are addressed through in depth examination of regional political processes. Regions include Latin America, Asia, Middle East, European Union, Africa, and Russia. (3 credits)

732 Comparative Justice: Survey of justice systems and their environments in different lands and cultures. Identifies commonalities and differences among justice systems, evaluates them, and considers policy implications. (3 credits)

733 Islam and Politics: Provides an overview and understanding of the multifaceted nature of political Islam in the contemporary world. Covers brief history of Islam, formation of modern states in the post-colonial Muslim world, nature of contemporary Islamic radicalism and militancy and the future of Islamism. (3 credits)

734 Democratization: Examines concepts and concrete cases of democratization and cases where democratization is absent or incomplete. Investigates methods for measuring democracy and authoritarianism; the role state and society play in political change; the effects religion, the military, ethnic division, and technology have on government reform; and the extent to which international actors can encourage democratization. (3 credits)

735 Comparative Public Management: Examines the comparative decision environments for public managers and policy elites in the OECD countries generally, focusing on four models: 1) Franco-Japanese model, 2) German concentration model, 3) “Anglo-Saxon” (United States) model, 4) Chinese model. (3 credits)

739 Issues in Comparative and International Politics: Explores issues of contemporary and emerging concern in comparative and international politics. (3 credits)

741 Advanced Seminar in International Politics: Examines theoretical and methodological issues central to study of international relations by focusing on specific topic: American foreign policy, diplomacy, international law and organization, international relations theory, international ethics, human rights and humanitarian intervention, the environment, and others. (3 credits)

742 International Negotiation: Examines frameworks and perspectives that have guided scholarly work on negotiation. Students will analyze complex cases of negotiations in the areas of security, trade, and the environment, and practice negotiating key security and environmental issues on the agendas of nations and international organizations. (3 credits)

743 International Political Economy: Examines interplay of international politics and economics. Discusses theoretical perspectives and analytical tools in academic field of international political economy, and applies theories and tools to trade, investment, exchange rates, development, regionalization, and globalization. Explores how international economic and political forces increasingly shape domestic interests, and how domestic politics affect international political economy. Lecture, discussion. (3 credits)

744 Foundations of Security Studies: Introduces students to a selection of the original sources of the most important ideas that form the basis of security studies as a subfield of political science. (3 credits)

745 International Security: Examines interplay of international politics and international security. Discusses theoretical perspectives and analytical tools in academic field of international security, and applies theories and tools to nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, strategy and defense, and arms control. How domestic issues affect defense policies, terrorism, changing nature of international conflict, and human security will be examined. (3 credits)
746 Media and International Affairs: Examines government/media interaction and media coverage of war and foreign policy since Vietnam and considers a range of critical policy questions. (3 credits)

753 Third-Party Governance: Examines design and management of government programs that rely on other levels of government and the private sector for delivery, with focus on such governmental tools as contracts, grants, loans, regulation, and tax credits. (3 credits)

755 Seminar in Politics and Bureaucracy: Explores research and theory on political causes and effects of actions of government bureaucratic agencies. Readings examine origins of agencies, influences on decisions and programs, sources of internal and external accountability, pathologies of bureaucracies, and contributions bureaucracies make on effective and just governance. (3 credits)

758 - Homeland/Transportation Security Administration: Examines the terrorist attacks of 9/11, vulnerabilities of the aviation security at that time, failure of elected officials and administrators to act more decisively to improve security before 9/11, and the policy and administrative responses to the 9/11 attacks, including the creation of the Transportation Security Administration and the Department of Homeland Security. Includes the development of radical Islam and the rise of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. (3 credits)

759 Issues in Public Administration and Management: Current issues in administration and management of public organizations in contemporary American government. Includes practical applications of theories and analysis to managerial problems. Emphasizes competence in improving management in selected government settings. (1-3 credits)

800 PhD Research Seminar: Provides an opportunity for PhD students in political science to present and refine independent research, and to further improve understanding of social scientific method as they prepare for conference presentations, qualifying exams, and subsequent dissertations. (3 credits)

998 Doctoral Dissertation Proposal: Work on research proposal that forms basis for doctoral dissertation (3-6 credits)

999 Doctoral Dissertation Research: Research on approved dissertation topic under direction of dissertation committee. (1-12 credits)

*Official program requirements are published in the annual PhD Student/Faculty Handbook issued to new students during orientation. The current issue is located on the program web site:

https://schar.gmu.edu/current-students/phd-student-services/phd-handbook-forms
PHD IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

ADMISSIONS AND APPLICATION INFORMATION

Doctoral applicants are strongly encouraged to apply for admission in the fall semester, for both full-time and part-time study. No spring admission cycle is available for our PhD programs. Please note that Graduate Research Assistantships are only awarded to students who are attending school full time. If interested, please indicate on the application your interest in a GRA.

The GMU graduate application process requires the applicant to submit a complete set of documents with the application. All application credentials must be received before the application will be reviewed.

1. Graduate application and the online $75 application fee. There are no fee waivers. Please note that when completing the online application, you will be required to submit this fee by credit card payment. The graduate application can be completed at: http://admissions.gmu.edu/ApplyNow

2. A statement of professional goals (usually two pages). Please include your major field of focus (American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, or Public Administration). The goals statement should be 750 to 1,000 words. Please print your name and birth date on the goals statement if it is sent in separately from the application so that we will be able to link this to your on-line application. Please include in the goals statement a description of your personal qualities and development and how they have influenced your career choice; discuss your reasons for considering this particular degree program in relation to your academic background, professional work experience, and career goals. Tell us the fields in which you expect to do doctoral study and research and describe how these interests have been influenced by your prior education, research, or work experience. Let us know why you are considering a career in an academic, or research setting, and include any other information that will be relevant for evaluating your motivation to study and conduct research at the doctoral level.

3. A current resume or vitae.


5. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) official scores are required. GRE scores must have been earned within the past 5 years. There is no waiver for this requirement.

6. Three letters of recommendation from professional or academic contacts. If possible, you should request academic letters of recommendation from past professors. If this is not possible, then letters from supervisors or from individuals that can assess your intellectual aptitude for a graduate program will be sufficient.

7. A writing sample such as a full length research paper. The writing sample may be in the form of a sole-authored academic paper, published article, professional proposal, evaluation, or report. The ideal writing sample demonstrates both your writing and analytical abilities. It should have a clearly articulated thesis statement and make an argument that analyzes the topic, rather than just describing it. There is no required length for the writing sample.

8. English Language Proficiency exam scores (required for international applicants) – TOEFL: minimum score of 600 (paper-based), 250 (computer-based), or 100 (internet-based). **Please note that students submitting internet-based exam results must earn a minimum score of 23 on each individual exam section. IELTS: minimum total score of 6.5. An official score report is required. In addition, students may be required to be tested by the GMU English Language Institute.


Application Deadlines: Fall (August matriculation) Deadline: December 1 (November 1 for International Applicants)

Please upload application materials (including all unofficial transcripts, writing samples, resume, and goals statement) to your Self Service Center. Hard-copy documents can be mailed to:

GMU-Office of Graduate Admissions
4400 University Drive, MS 4C8
Fairfax, VA 22020
**Graduate Tuition and Fees for 2016-2017 (subject to change):**

- **In-state** graduate tuition and fees: $563.50/per credit hour
- **Out-of-state** graduate tuition and fees: $1,341.75/per credit hour

**George Mason University Federal Title IV School Code**: 003749

To determine if you are eligible for financial aid and to establish eligibility for alternative financial aid resources, you must apply each year. For more information visit the [Mason Financial Aid website](http://financialaid.gmu.edu)

1. **Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or Renewal FAFSA Application as soon as possible after January 1** for which you are applying to receive financial aid. You do not have to be admitted to a degree program to complete the FAFSA application.

You may also use the electronic FAFSA Express software to submit your application electronically. Applications received by the processing center after March 1st for the next academic year are considered late and cannot be given priority consideration. For example, financial aid applications must be received by the federal processor **by March 1** to be considered on-time.

You can complete the FAFSA using ESTIMATED income and tax figures. If necessary, do this rather than missing the priority filing date. Be prepared to provide complete copies of your Federal tax returns, tax schedules, and W-2 forms if requested.

2. **Approximately 4-6 weeks after you mail the application you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR).** You must review it, and if it is not correct, make appropriate corrections, sign it and send Part 2 back to the federal processor.

3. **If additional information is required to process your file, you will receive a Missing Information Letter from the Office of Student Financial Aid.** You should respond to this request as quickly as possible. Failure to respond in a timely manner can drastically affect the amount of aid that you are offered.

4. **After all information is received by the Financial Aid Office you will receive an award eligibility notification by email.** This will include the types and amounts of aid you are offered.