

**UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**  
**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN POLITICAL**  
**SCIENCE**

**DRAFT: EFFECTIVE FOR ALL STUDENTS ENTERING AFTER 2001**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Department of Political Science has established the following guidelines, policies, and procedures in addition to the general Graduate School requirements for the doctor's degree. Graduate students should familiarize themselves with the current edition of the regulations published by the Graduate School as well as with these guidelines.
2. These guidelines will apply to all students who begin their graduate work in the Fall Term of 2001 or thereafter. Students who began their work earlier may elect to be governed by these guidelines or by those that were in effect at the time of their admission.

**II. GRADUATE STUDIES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

1. Graduate work differs qualitatively from undergraduate work. It places emphasis upon the acquisition of tools, abilities, and knowledge that will qualify the student to teach, carry out research, and perform as a professional political scientist.
2. As a general rule the minimum time that a student who enters the program without an M.A. degree can expect to spend earning the Ph.D. degree is four years. Most students should complete the program in four to six years. A student who enters with an M.A. degree may expect to cut one year from the normal timetable.

The length of time required to satisfy all the requirements for the Ph.D degree naturally varies, depending upon such considerations as whether the entering student already has an M.A. degree, the number of terms the student carries a reduced program because he or she is working as a teaching assistant or a research assistant, and the particular requirements of the student's program. A program requiring extensive language training, for example, will take longer to complete if the student starts language as a graduate student than it will for a student who is already near-proficient in the necessary language when he or she enters graduate school.

**III. THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM**

In our department, Political Science is divided into the following major fields and modular subfields:

Major Fields:

American Government and Politics  
Comparative Government and Politics  
Political Theory

Public Law  
Public Policy and Administration  
Research Methods  
World Politics

Modular Subfields:

Organizational Theory  
Political Development  
Political Economy  
Urban Politics

2. The doctoral program normally includes work in three Political Science fields and one field of a different discipline, such as History, Economics, or Philosophy called the cognate field. One Political Science field will be the major field, another the first minor field, and the third the second minor field. The major field is the one in which the student expects to write his or her doctoral dissertation.

A modular subfield may not be offered as the student's major field, nor may a modular subfield, by itself, be offered as the first minor field. However, two modular subfields may be jointly offered as the first minor field, or a single modular subfield may be combined with a major field. Modular subfields may be offered as the second minor field.

Particular field programs are described in separate sets of guidelines, one for each major field.

3. The list of fields above is not intended to preclude the possibility of a student following a program including other fields, based on problem-oriented, interdisciplinary, or other bases that suit the interests of the student. Students interested in such programs should discuss them with their advisers who, along with the Director of Graduate Studies, must approve them before they are undertaken.

4. The graduate program is divided into two phases. The first phase, which is called pre-candidacy, consists of the program of course work that prepares the student for his or her preliminary examinations in the major and minor fields and the preliminary examinations themselves. The second phase, called candidacy, is the period during which the student plans, executes and defends his or her doctoral dissertation. A student enters the candidacy phase only after successful completion of the major field, first and second minor fields, and the cognate.

5. The number of courses a student takes during pre-candidacy varies with the requirements of the student's program, but a student without an M.A. degree can normally expect to take 12 to 15 courses in Political Science and 2 cognate courses. A general guideline is 5 courses in the major field, 4 in the first minor, 3 in the second minor and 2 in the cognate. See the separate field guidelines for more specific information.

6. Courses at the 600 or proseminar level are designed for graduate students. Their purpose is to provide the student with a comprehensive survey of the literature as well as of the concepts, problems and schools of thought within a given area of political science. Proseminars are not intended as advanced research courses.

7. Courses at the 700-900 level are research seminars in which primary emphasis is placed upon intensive training in the design, writing and presentation of individual or group research papers, or initial work on doctoral dissertations.

8. Graduate students will normally elect courses at the 600-900 levels. They may elect courses at the 400-500 levels only when these are of substantial importance to the student's program. Graduate students in courses numbered below 600 are expected to perform at an appreciably higher level than undergraduate students in the same course.
9. All students are required to maintain a grade point average (GPA) of "B+" or better in Political Science courses. Students failing to maintain such a GPA will not be permitted to proceed further in the program. Students are not encouraged to receive incompletes. If it appears that the student may have difficulty completing the Ph.D. program, appropriate counseling will be provided.

#### **IV. THE COUNSELING SYSTEM**

1. A faculty advisor in the student's major field will be appointed for each student. This appointment will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the student. Students may change advisors at any time in the program. Students should notify the DGS of their desire to have a new advisor appointed. Students should meet with their advisor at least once a term to discuss their academic development.
2. Student academic files are maintained in the Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies. These files are available to students for review.
3. After preliminary examinations, the student will choose a dissertation committee to supervise the preparation of a dissertation prospectus and to guide doctoral research. This committee will be comprised of at least four persons, one of whom must be from outside the department.
4. A student may appeal any decision of any counselor, guidance committee, or evaluation committee to the Director of Graduate Studies. Appeal from a decision of the Director of Graduate Studies may be made to the Department's Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC). In the latter case a faculty member designated by the department chairperson will replace the Director of Graduate Studies as chairperson of GAC for the consideration of the appeal.

#### **V. THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM**

The assessment system contains three components: (a) the first year evaluation, (b) the follow-up evaluation, and (c) the preliminary examinations. The purpose of the evaluations is to determine as early as is fair and practical the suitability of students for continuation in the doctoral program and to provide students with feedback from the faculty about their performance. The purpose of the preliminary examinations is to determine the extent to which the students have mastered the fields that they have studied as well as their qualifications for pursuing advanced research in the form of a doctoral dissertation.

##### **A. The First Year Evaluation**

1. The first year evaluation takes place toward the end of the first year in residence. We generally recommend that the evaluation take place in April.
2. The First Year Evaluation Committee consists of the student's current advisor and one other faculty member chosen by the student.

3. In making its evaluation, the First Year Evaluation Committee will take the following information into account:

- a. The student's grade record and a list of winter term and proposed fall term courses.
- b. A seminar paper or other piece of work selected by the student as his or her best work so far. This paper may have been prepared prior to admission to the graduate program.

4. After reviewing these materials, the committee will meet with the student and discuss the student's program and progress in that program. The committee will make a formal report. This report will identify the degree to which the student has mastered scholarly tools, accumulated substantive knowledge, and become acquainted with the relevant literature. The scholarly tools desired include a clear written and oral expository style, appropriate methodological skills, and a foreign language if appropriate. Deficiencies, if any, that the student is expected to correct will also be identified. The report will contain an overall evaluation of the progress that the student has made since entering the department and of the student's prospects for obtaining the Ph.D. degree.

5. A copy of the committee's report will be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and retained in the student's academic folder. It is available to the student.

6. Students whose performance is regarded as clearly superior may be exempted by the committee from the follow-up evaluation.

## **B. The Follow-Up Evaluation**

1. The follow-up evaluation will be conducted toward the end of the student's fourth term in residence. We generally recommend that these evaluations take place in March.

2. The committee for this evaluation will consist of the student's advisor and two faculty members chosen by the student and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. One of the additional faculty members should be from the student's major field; the other from the student's first minor field.

3. In making its evaluation, the committee will examine the same material as for the first-year evaluation, including a more recent piece of written work done by the student while in the department's graduate program. In addition, the student is required to submit a written plan of course work for achieving candidacy. The committee will also inquire into the satisfactory elimination of any deficiencies noted during the first year evaluation.

4. At the conclusion of this evaluation the student will be given one of the following evaluations: encouraged to proceed towards the Ph.D., eligible to proceed, or not allowed to continue in the program.

5. The evaluation form will be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and retained in the student's academic folder. It is available to the student.

6. Students who are not allowed to continue in the program may appeal this decision to the Director of Graduate Studies, in writing, within one week of the evaluation. Students who appeal will be reevaluated within two weeks of the date of their

appeal by a new committee consisting of the Director of Graduate Studies as Chairperson, the coordinator of the student's major field or his/her designate, and a third member from the department selected by the student. The decision of this second evaluation committee will be final.

### C. The Preliminary Examinations

1. The following is a brief description of the prelim system. It is currently under review and may change. Students who enter under this system may choose to be examined under this system even if a new one is put in place.

2. Students normally take prelims in two fields. One is the major field and the other is the first minor field. In some fields the prelims are oral examinations; in other fields the exams are written. Each subfield has guidelines that discuss its examination system. In an oral exam the major exam involves three faculty members in the major field and one person who is chosen at random from members of the department outside that field. The first minor exam involves two faculty members from the first minor field. In an oral examination the student is responsible for choosing the members of these committees (except the random) and for scheduling the exam. The content of the exam is individualized. As a result, content varies a lot in scope and specificity. Students often have considerable responsibility for defining the topics and the readings that will be covered in the exams. Oral exams may be scheduled at any time; written exams are given on dates that will be announced through the graduate office. Written exams may be followed by short orals. The exams are graded on the scale of pass/fail/honors.

3. Students should consult the separate field guidelines concerning specific requirements for preliminary exam preparation. Students should consult the members of their preliminary examination committees with regard to the scope and content of the examinations.

4. The purpose of the preliminary examination in the major field is to make it possible for the examination committee to determine whether the student is adequately prepared to teach and conduct advanced scholarly research in that field. Such preparation includes, but is not exhausted by, mastery of a substantial body of knowledge in the field. Currently, written exams are required in theory and comparative politics. Preparation for these exams is outlined in the field guidelines. Preparing for oral exams in other fields may be prefaced by written work if the student or the committee chooses. In any case, the student should submit, at least several days before an oral exam, a written presentation of ideas on research or theoretical topics that he or she has found of particular interest. Two illustrative and recommended formats are a) brief essay (5-10 pages) setting out the student's organization of and scholarly views concerning one item of particular interest or b) a set of four or five stimulating questions or issues at the frontier of the discipline upon which the student is prepared to present original thought.

5. The purpose of the preliminary examination in the first minor is to permit the examination committee to determine whether the student has mastered a sufficiently large body of knowledge within that field to ensure that he or she could successfully teach a college-level course in that field. The preliminary examination for the first minor field may take one of several forms including (most frequently) an oral examination, a *written examination*, or presentation of a long paper for criticism by two faculty members selected by the student from the field under examination.

6. Both preliminary examinations should be seen as an opportunity for the student to develop his or her own thought in written or scholarly discussion. Students

are expected to be familiar with the principal literature relating to the field, any trends in findings, approaches to methodology, and whatever main conflicting interpretations there may be. They will be expected to organize and classify information, to discuss relationships between ideas and phenomena (whether toward analogy or contradiction) and generalize on the basis of relevant evidence about the central issues within the field. The examination committee will look for originality and creativity above and beyond familiarity, understanding and mastery.

7. For the major field, students must not only display mastery of a substantial body of knowledge, but must be conversant in particular with what is going on at the cutting edge of the field. They must not only be familiar with what we think we do know, but with what we do not know, within the field. They should be able to identify major unsolved problems and they should be familiar with how research is conducted within the field. The major exam is not a preliminary discussion of the student's proposed dissertation; rather it is designed to determine whether the student is qualified to undertake dissertation research.

8. In the case of both the major and first minor exams, the exam should be fairly wide-ranging. It should not be confined to just one sub-field such as, for example "the government and politics of Russia and successor states." Fairness requires agreement between student and committee, perhaps in the form of a reading list, as to what constitutes the field to be covered by the exam. In order to assist the department in arriving at and maintaining a reasonable consistency across fields in the conduct of prelims, the Director of Graduate Studies shall read all faculty reports of performance on major and minor prelims.

9. There may be no overlap in the core membership of the major and first minor preliminary examination committees, i.e., the three faculty members from the field of the major preliminary examination and the two members from the field of the first minor preliminary examination. However, one or more of the core members of one preliminary examination committee may also participate in the other examination committee, if the student so requests, provided that the membership of the committee in which there is overlapping membership is enlarged correspondingly by one or more members of the faculty from the field under examination.

10. Three favorable votes are sufficient to pass the major preliminary examination. Failure to pass entitles the candidate to request re-examination. On the second round the panel should consist of five department members (four from the field, one outside it), with a vote of four necessary to pass. Failure on the second try terminates a student's precandidacy status. Of the original four who attended the first examination, at least three including the chair should return for the second examination. The replacement will be nominated by the student and approved by the Director of Graduate Studies and the chair of the committee.

11. If a student fails the first minor examination, he or she may request re-examination. The examination committee will determine the conditions of re-examination.

#### **D. The Second Minor**

1. Students may either take a preliminary examination in the second minor field or fulfill the second minor requirement by taking at least three graded graduate-level courses in the field with grades of B+ or better, except where separate field guidelines specify otherwise.

2. In some cases a student may substitute a program of three courses outside the department for the second minor. These courses must be approved in advance by the student's advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies. Students who elect this option must also obtain approval for their cognate courses and normally courses within the department will be used for the cognate.

3. Courses taken in preparation for the preliminary exams may not be used in fulfillment of the second minor requirement.

### **E. The Cognate Field**

A student qualifies in a cognate field by taking two graduate level courses of at least two credits each in a department other than political science. Cross-listed courses taught by political science faculty may not be used to satisfy this requirement.

## **VI. CANDIDACY**

1. When a student has satisfied all the requirements for the Ph.D. degree except the dissertation, the student is officially admitted to candidacy.

2. The requirements for admission to candidacy include the following:

1. Qualification in the major field by preliminary examination.
2. Qualification in the first minor field by preliminary examination.
3. Qualification in the second minor field by coursework or by preliminary examination.
4. Satisfaction of the cognate field requirements.

3. Students are required to become candidates within *three years of their admission*. Only rarely will exceptions be allowed. Candidacy status is often a requirement for graduate fellowships from outside sources, and students seeking such support while they are gathering material for or writing their dissertations are advised to plan early and appropriately for making the relevant applications.

## **VII. THE DISSERTATION**

1. Within nine months of achieving candidacy a student must obtain written approval of a dissertation prospectus by a dissertation committee, normally consisting of three faculty members from the department and one faculty member from outside the department. A copy of the report must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and filed in the student's academic folder.

2. The final requirement for the Ph.D. is the doctoral dissertation itself. The dissertation must be original scholarly research conducted by the student, and it must be a contribution of substantial merit and value to the discipline. The final copies of the dissertation must be prepared in conformity with the requirements of the Rackham School of Graduate Studies, and it must be successfully defended before the student's dissertation committee, which normally consists of three faculty members from the department and one faculty member from outside the department.

### **VIII. AWARD OF THE MASTER'S DEGREE**

Requirements for a general M.A. in Political Science include 24 hours of graduate level course work, including 18 hours of Political Science and six hours of work in cognate courses, a grade point average above 5.0 on the Rackham scale (B or better), and certification of the preparation of an M.A. paper by a faculty member. The M.A. paper should be a substantial piece of original research prepared for a graduate course in the department or prepared especially for the M.A. degree.

### **IX. ENROLLMENT INFORMATION**

1. Students should keep in mind that under prevailing Graduate School regulations, they must be enrolled full-time for approximately eight terms, or pay equivalent fees if they are not so enrolled. Four of those terms (or equivalent payment) must be prior to the student's admission to candidacy.
2. Students must be enrolled if only for one hour of credit (which carries a minimum enrollment fee), during the term in which they pass the second of the two preliminary examinations they must take. This term may be one of the eight required full-time terms of enrollment, but it does not have to be.
3. Students must be enrolled full-time during the term in which the student takes his or her final oral defense of the dissertation.
4. The Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies defines full time enrollment as 9 credit hours per term as a precandidate and 8 credit hours per term as a candidate. Students who are enrolled half-time may not take more than six hours of courses. Students who enroll half-time for one or more terms must enroll for more than the eight-term minimum referred to above (or pay equivalent fees).