Northwestern | Political Science

Guide to Graduate Study

This guide outlines the main requirements of the doctoral program in Political Science and answers common questions students may have in planning their program of study. Students and faculty should consult the Director of Graduate Studies, the Program Coordinator, and The Graduate School's (TGS) website, www.tgs.northwestern.edu, for the latest information on policies and procedures. Northwestern University reserves the right to change, without notice, any statement in this publication concerning, but not limited to, rules, policies, curricula, and courses.

I. THE STEPS IN THE POLITICAL SCIENCE PH.D. PROGRAM

Students progress through our program by meeting a predictable sequence of milestones that guide the way toward successfully completing a dissertation and earning a Ph.D. To help our students maintain momentum, most of these milestones have an expected time of completion and associated Departmental deadlines.

During the first year, we expect our students to focus primarily on coursework and their research interests. Thus, the first few milestones involve completing courses and polishing a Research Paper to the point that it demonstrates the student's ability to conduct research at a Ph.D. level.

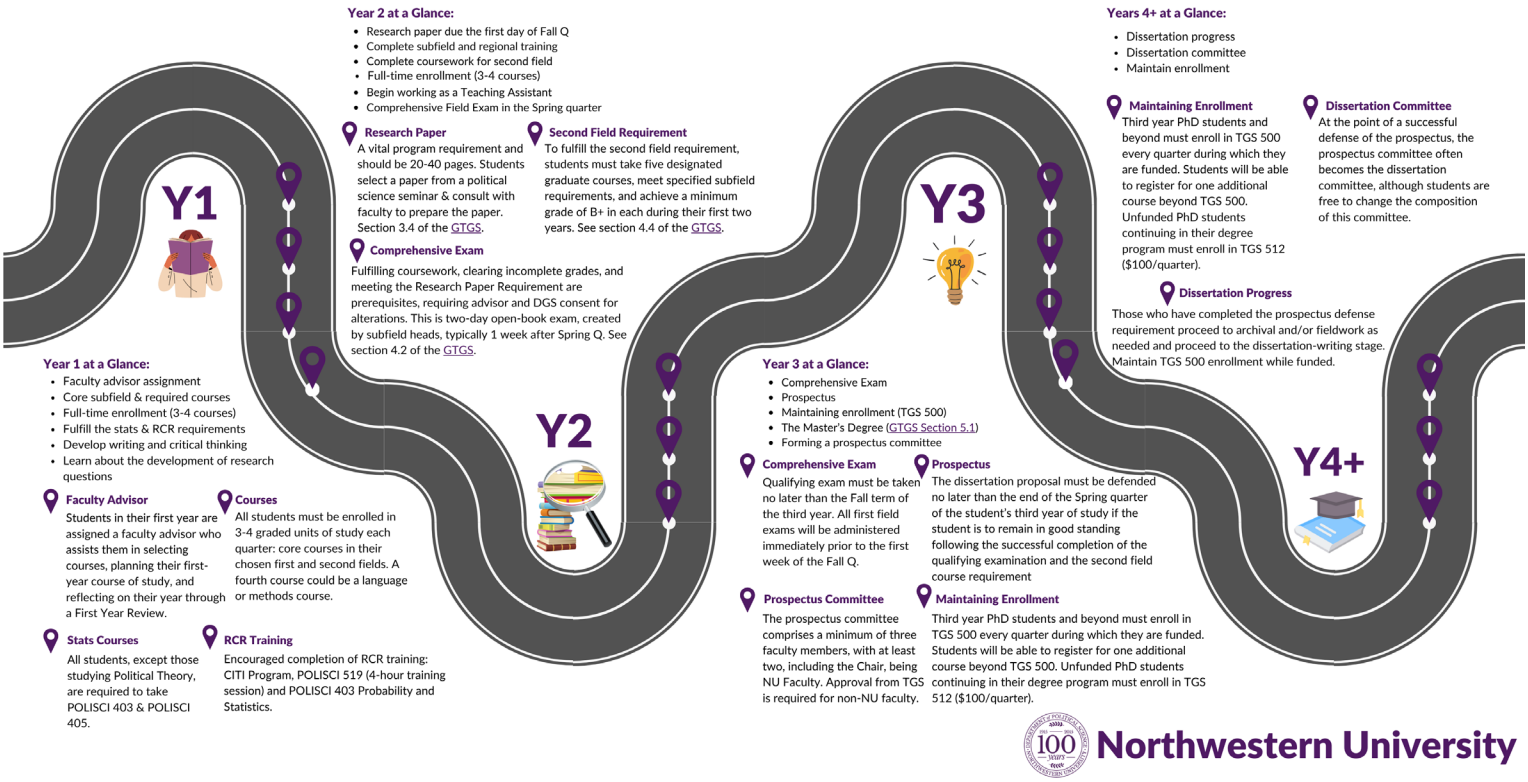
- *Milestone #1*: A minimum of two years of full-time graded coursework (18 courses) must be completed before the end of the second year.
- *Milestone #2*: Successful completion of a Research Paper Requirement (due on the first day of the Fall quarter of the second year).
- *Milestone #3*: At some point before defending a dissertation proposal, students must qualify in a second field, either by taking a second Qualifying Examination (see below) or by completing five (5) graduate courses in that field with a minimum of a B+ GPA. The second field must be completed before defending a dissertation proposal at the end of Spring in the third year.
- *Milestone #4*: At some point before defending a dissertation proposal, students must take at least two courses in Methods – PS 403 and PS 405 or their equivalents – which are offered annually in the Fall and Winter quarters, respectively. Students who have completed a political science graduate methods sequence or equivalent coursework prior to their time at Northwestern may apply for an exemption to this milestone. Political Theory majors are exempt from this requirement but are welcome to explore it.

After the second year, the program's focus shifts more exclusively toward research. Marking this transition, students must pass qualifying exams and defend a dissertation proposal.

- *Milestone #5*: Successful completion of a first-field Qualifying Examination in either Spring of the second year or Fall of the third year. (Note: Before exams may be taken, students must resolve any incomplete grades and fulfill the Research Paper Requirement.)
- *Milestone #6*: Successful defense of a dissertation proposal (often called a prospectus) in Spring of the third year.

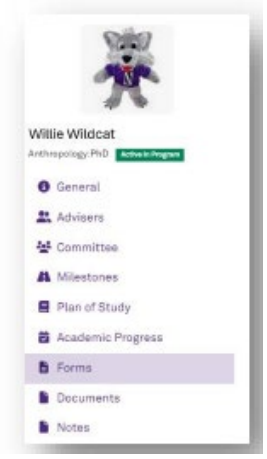
After defending a dissertation proposal, the next benchmark involves completing and defending a dissertation, which typically also leads to graduation. For most students, the critical deadline for this step involves graduating in time for a job or before a funding package runs out, rather than because of a university deadline related to the dissertation itself. Our graduate students most often defend their dissertations during their sixth year of study.

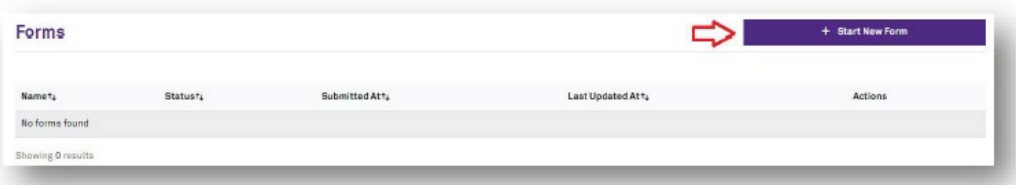
- *Milestone #7*: Successful defense of a dissertation.



As you work your way through these milestones, make sure to keep the Department and the university up to date with your progress. Your progress through coursework is automatically recorded, but it is your responsibility to notify the Department and the university of other milestones via the Graduate Student Progress website (https://gsp.northwestern.edu). Most milestones are recorded on the Forms tab; if you are unsure about how to record a milestone you have completed, get in touch with the Political Science Department Graduate Program Coordinator to clear up the issue.

Log in to the Graduate Student Progress (GSP) system at https://gsp.northwestern.edu/. From the dashboard, navigate to the Forms tab and hit +Start New Form:





TGS Forms Overview

***Note*:** Information you input in the forms noted below with an asterisk (*) will populate the University's student information system, CAESAR, and may appear on your official transcript or diploma.

Form Name	Audience	Use	Approval Workflow
Application for Degree*	Master's and PhD students	Use this form to petition to graduate for a future quarter, indicate the name as it should appear on the diploma, and the address where the diploma should be mailed. The diploma name and mailing address can be updated even after the form is submitted and approved.	Student -> Program
Application for Master's in Primary PhD Program	PhD students	Use this form to request a master's en route to the PhD (in other words, a master's along the way to the PhD in the same program of study).	Student -> TGS
Master's Degree Completion*	Master's students	Use this form to indicate that you have completed or are nearing completion (in the current quarter) all master's degree requirements. If your program requires a thesis, list the thesis title and names of your master's thesis committee.	Student -> Program -> TGS
PhD Qualifying Exam*	PhD students	Submit this form once you have passed the qualifying exam.	Student -> Program -> TGS
PhD Prospectus*	PhD students	Submit this form once you have passed the prospectus.	Student -> Program -> TGS
PhD Final Exam*	PhD students	Submit this form shortly before your scheduled dissertation defense. List the dissertation title exactly as it will appear on your dissertation.	Student -> Committee Members -> Program -> TGS
Petition for Absence	Master's and PhD students	Submit this form to request a general or parental leave of absence.	Student -> Program -> TGS
Program Withdrawal Request	Master's and PhD students	Submit this form to request to withdraw entirely from your graduate program.	Student -> Program -> TGS

Northwestern's Graduate School has its own set of requirements and deadlines, all of which also apply to our students. These are available in the University's Academic Catalog: https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/

II. THE FIRST YEAR OF THE PH.D. PROGRAM

A student's first year in the Ph.D. program focuses primarily on coursework and research.

2.1 Coursework

Over the course of the Ph.D. program, eighteen (18) courses must be completed to fulfill the Department's requirements for coursework. Students typically take 3 courses per quarter during Fall, Winter, and Spring of the first two years. Under University regulations, all students are required to be enrolled full-time each quarter: full-time is defined as being enrolled in at least 3 units of study. Students should generally focus their courses on the graduate 400-level offerings of the Department.

Undergraduate (300-level) courses in other Departments may be taken to satisfy Departmental requirements if no

graduate course covering the same material is available. Students must consult with their advisor before enrolling in a 300-level course. Students should also consult with the course instructor to arrange extra work since graduate students taking 300-level courses will be required to meet higher performance standards than undergraduates. Students need permission from their faculty advisor to take more than two 300-level courses in any year.

The Department discourages graduate students from enrolling in Political Science 499 (Independent Study). Prior Graduate Program Coordinator approval is required for all 499 registrations.

If a student must take an incomplete grade (Y) at the end of a term, that grade must be reported to the Graduate Program Coordinator before the start of the following term. Students have one quarter to complete any incomplete grades and will be placed on academic probation should the incomplete grade not be resolved.

Students are ineligible to apply for Department funding awards if they have more than one incomplete grade on their transcript. However, you would still be funded while on probation through your period of guaranteed funding.

It is essential that the work you submit in each seminar consists of original work for that seminar. Students are free to explore various components of a single research trajectory across multiple seminars, but they are not permitted to submit multiple drafts of the same (or substantially similar) papers to different seminars. If a student recycles work in this way, the Department will consider it an academic integrity issue. (See the University's Principles Regarding Academic Integrity at https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/principles.html for more information.)

2.2 Required Methods Courses

All students, except those studying Political Theory as a first field, are required to take POLISCI 403 (Probability and Statistics) and POLISCI 405 (Linear Models) or other equivalent coursework at some point before defending a dissertation proposal. Students who have completed a political science graduate methods sequence or equivalent coursework prior to their time at Northwestern may apply for an exemption to this milestone. Political Theory students are encouraged to explore the courses, as it may pertain to their second field and the broader discipline.

2.3 Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) training

As part of the curriculum, we believe all students should understand ethical standards and dilemmas associated with research. Current graduate students in the Department of Political Science should maintain active compliance with Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training. All Political Science graduate students are required to complete RCR training.

There are two components of RCR training:

- Completion and certification of Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program - Social Science
- POLISCI 519: Successful completion and enrollment via CAESAR, a 4-hour Instructor-Led Training session.

2.4 Research Paper Requirement: Guidelines for Students and Faculty

The Research Paper is expected to be an original scholarly paper demonstrating the student's ability to analyze a significant problem in the format of a journal article or conference paper. It is normally 20-40 pages in length. The Research Paper is a core requirement of the program that is tied to coursework.

The process of completing the Research Paper requirement is as follows:

1. Students select a paper that they have actively worked on during the first three (3) quarters of their graduate career at Northwestern University to submit.
2. The paper is chosen in consultation with a relevant faculty member (often an instructor for a seminar in which the paper was written, a faculty member who does work in a related field, or the student's faculty advisor). Students should consult with the faculty member who taught the seminar for which they originally wrote the paper. That faculty member, in consultation with each student’s advisor and any other relevant faculty members, will suggest an additional reader for the Research Paper who will help determine whether the paper fulfills the Research Paper requirement.

3. Research papers are due by the first day of the Fall quarter of the second year.
4. The paper must be submitted to both readers by the deadline, and the student must complete the Research Paper Requirement form sent by the Graduate Program Coordinator. Within six weeks of receiving the paper, the faculty readers must evaluate and assign one of three grades via an online form:

(a) Approved, (b) Not Approved, (c) Revise and Resubmit

For all Revise and Resubmit grades, the latest deadline for revision is February 1 of the student's second year. Students failing to meet this deadline will be placed on academic probation (see Section VII).

Resubmitted Research Papers will receive one of two grades: (a) Approved (b) Not Approved.

In cases where the two readers' evaluations diverge, the Director of Graduate Studies will appoint a third reader from the relevant disciplinary field to break the tie. Papers will be graded no later than March 1 (one month after the submission deadline for the revised version). Students whose papers receive a grade of "not approved" after the revise and resubmit will be considered to have failed to maintain satisfactory academic progress in the program and will be excluded (dismissed) from the program. Absent a successful appeal in accordance with the process outlined in Section VII, they will not be permitted to enroll in the following Fall and will leave before qualifying exams and before receiving the M.A.

III. THE SECOND YEAR & BEYOND: QUALIFYING EXAM AND SECOND FIELD REQUIREMENT

During the second year, students:

- Complete course requirements, usually including the Second Field requirement, and refine research interests.
- Prepare to take qualifying examination(s) at the end of the second year or the beginning of the third year.

3.1 Preparation for the Qualifying Exam

Students bear responsibility for choosing their courses to meet the substantive requirements of their first and second fields. Students are advised to focus on core courses in particular fields (rather than only choosing among more specialized topics). Readings from course syllabi are often especially relevant to the questions that appear on the exams.

3.2 First Field Qualifying Exam (Also referred to as "Prelim" or "Comprehensive Exam")

Students must take a qualifying exam in their primary field of study no later than the Fall term of the third year. Qualifying exams are administered either just after the end of Spring quarter or just before the beginning of Fall quarter. Students who do not pass the exam may retake it once.

Students must have completed their coursework (18 courses), cleared all incomplete grades, and fulfilled the Research Paper Requirement before taking their qualifying examination.

Students take a written examination in their first field. The qualifying exam is a one-day, closed-book exam. Students are permitted to use one page of hardcopy notes (front and back of 1 sheet of 8.5" x 11" paper). No other reference materials (e.g., books, articles, electronic devices, etc.) are permitted. The exam is held over a window of no more than 8 hours and will use Lockdown Browser or a similar software to restrict internet access. The individual subfields are responsible for writing the exams. If students have not passed their exams for the first field and completed the course requirement for the second field by the end of the third year, they will be considered to have failed to maintain satisfactory academic progress in the program and will be excluded (dismissed) from the program (see Section VII).

The first field exam is offered in the following fields:

American Politics
Comparative Politics
International Relations
Methodology
Political Theory

Field heads are responsible for soliciting questions from other faculty members and composing the first field exam. Students are welcome to consult with the field head and others in the field in which the exam is to be taken. Students may also consult previous exams, which can be obtained from the Graduate Commons or the Graduate Program Coordinator. Students may want to form study groups to prepare for exams.

Students may elect to take two first field exams in lieu of completing the second field course requirements.

Two faculty members drawn from the subfield of the exam are responsible for evaluating the written exam. The grading process is double-blind; with student names withheld from exams submitted for grading and faculty names withheld from the feedback that students receive with their exam results.

Committees assign one of three grades:

(a) Pass with Distinction, (b) Pass, (c) Fail

To earn Distinction, all faculty readers must assign a 'Pass with Distinction' grade. If one faculty reader assigns a 'Pass with Distinction' but others assign a 'Pass', then the exam will receive a passing grade. If the committee does not agree about whether the exam deserves to pass, an oral exam will be used to resolve the grade. Oral exams, when necessary, will be scheduled within a month of the original date of the exam. While they may include questions beyond the scope of the written exam questions, the focus is on clarifying the student's thought process and responses in the exam itself. An oral exam is a continuation of the exam, rather than a new exam. Of necessity, the oral exam breaks some elements of the double-blinding involved in grading the written exam. While faculty members who participate in the oral exam are not necessarily the same as the original graders from the written exam, it is typically not feasible to hold an oral exam while keeping the test-taker's identity obscured.

Students have two opportunities to pass qualifying exams. Failure to perform adequately on the second iteration of an exam will lead to exclusion (dismissal) (see Section VII). Students should coordinate with the Director of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Program Coordinator, and relevant faculty in the field to schedule the second exam, which should be completed promptly but need not necessarily be scheduled before the end of Fall term of the third year.

3.3 Second Field Requirements

The second field is offered in the following fields:

American Politics
Comparative Politics
International Relations
Methodology
Political Theory

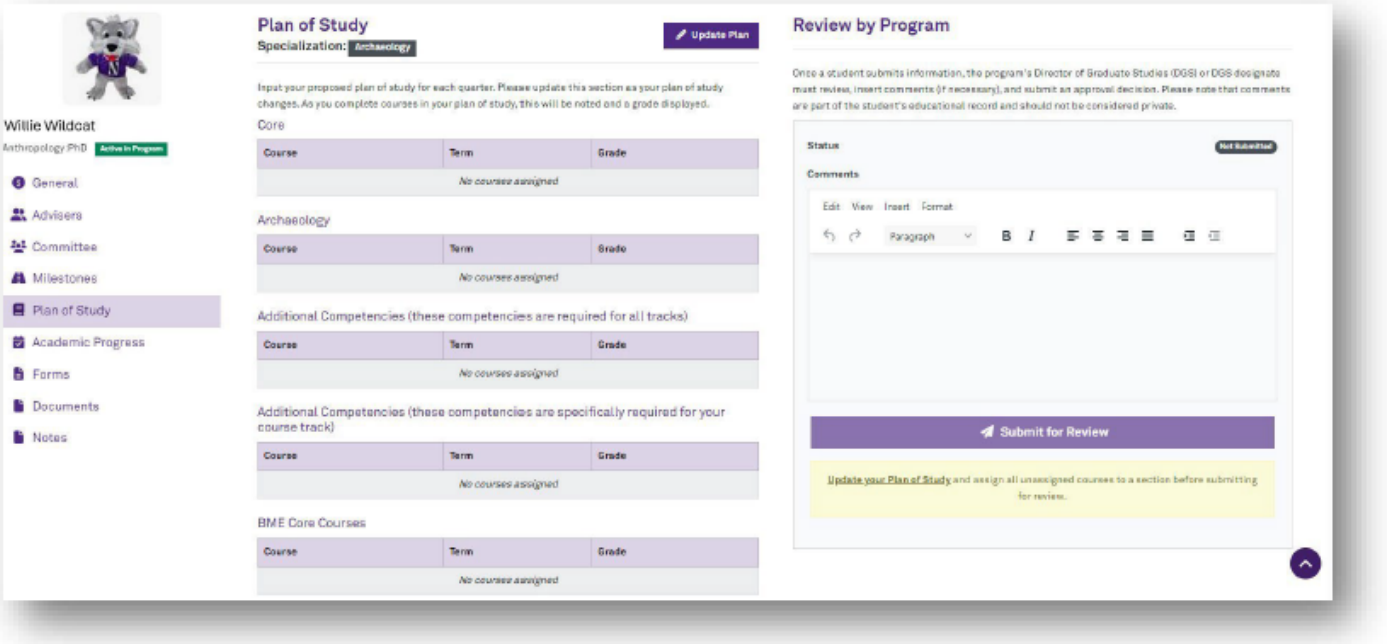
To complete the second field requirement, students are required to either pass a second qualifying exam or take five (5) graduate courses designated by the subfield and earn a minimum grade of B+ in each of those courses. Students may propose courses from outside the Department, which will be subject to approval on a case-by-case basis by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with members of the field in question.

At the completion of coursework, students must be able to demonstrate that they have completed their five course requirement by sorting the courses into the 'Second Field in [subfield]' box on GSP:

1) Visit GSP https://gsp.northwestern.edu
2) Click "Plan of Study"
3) Declare your specialization
4) Assign courses to your specialization and second field

Plan of Study

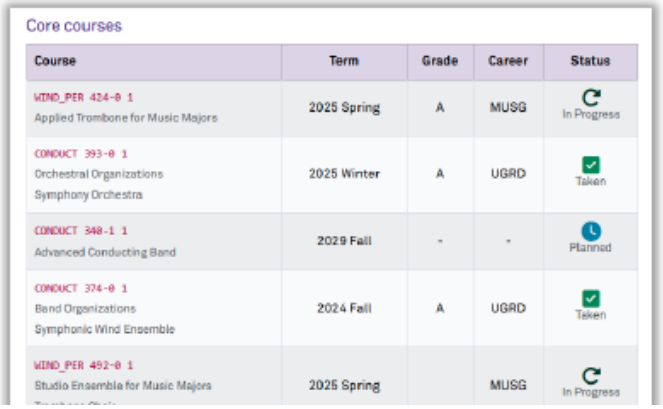
The Plan of Study tab displays your completed and planned courses, which can be categorized under the program's course requirements.



Note: Course requirements are defined and maintained by your program.

Course Statuses

Planned – Course planned from the catalog, not enrolled
Taken – Student took the course in a past term
In Progress – Student is enrolled in current term
Enrolled – Student enrolled in this course for a future term
Withdrawn – Student dropped after the drop deadline and received a W grade



Core courses

Course	Term	Grade	Career	Status
WIND_PER 424-0 1 Applied Trombone for Music Majors	2025 Spring	A	MUSG	In Progress
CONDUCT 393-0 1 Orchestral Organizations Symphony Orchestra	2025 Winter	A	UGRD	Taken
CONDUCT 340-1 1 Advanced Conducting Band	2029 Fall	-	-	Planned
CONDUCT 374-0 1 Band Organizations Symphonic Wind Ensemble	2024 Fall	A	UGRD	Taken
WIND_PER 492-0 1 Studio Ensemble for Music Majors	2025 Spring		MUSG	In Progress

The student may construct a custom-designed second field, with written approval from the Director of Graduate Studies, following consultation with their academic advisor.

3.4 Taking Courses in the Third Year and Beyond

Students who need to acquire additional skills relevant to their field of research may take additional courses beyond the 18-credit Departmental and TGS course requirement.

Students wishing to take undergraduate language classes should see Section 8.4 for procedures. These classes must be taken for a grade.

Students will be able to register for one additional course beyond TGS 500. Students who choose to take a course P/NP must manually adjust the Grading Option from ABC to P/NP on CAESAR. Should a student wish to register for more than one additional course, they must write to TGS Student Services at gradservices@northwestern.edu

Per TGS policy, “auditing” a graduate course is not permitted.

IV. THE MASTER'S DEGREE

The Department does not have a separate MA program and does not admit students solely for the purpose of obtaining an MA. This degree is awarded exclusively to students who are in the process of obtaining their Ph.D.

4.1 Requirements

The Master's degree is awarded upon satisfactory completion of the following requirements:

Nine units of graduate work, subject to the requirements outlined above. These courses must be courses approved for TGS credit (as designated in CAESAR) and must be taken for a quality letter grade (i.e., not P/NP).

The Department requires students to have fulfilled the Research Paper requirement, as described above, to receive an MA. Therefore, students must have completed 3 quarters (at least 9 courses, taken at Northwestern), passed the Research Paper Requirement, and cleared all incomplete grades before they are eligible to apply for the MA.

4.2 Application for the Master’s degree

Responsibility for filing for the MA degree with TGS at the appropriate time lies with the student. At present, the MA is granted quarterly, and the deadline for the application is no later than the second week of the quarter. No "Y" (incomplete) grades will be accepted on applications for the MA. Applications are submitted through GSP, and email notification of an application must be sent to the Graduate Program Coordinator. The Graduate Program Coordinator provides Departmental endorsement of successful applications. Students are responsible for meeting deadlines set by TGS for the award of Master's degrees. More information is available here: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/academic-services/masters/degree/index.html

V. ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

5.1 Candidacy for the Ph.D.

Admission to candidacy for the Ph.D. means that a student has:

1) Passed the required Qualifying Exam
2) Completed the Research Paper requirement
3) Completed the second field course requirement
4) Completed the required total number of 18 graded courses with no incompletes
5) Completed or finalized an exemption from the methods requirement
6) Secured the recommendation of the student’s advisor and the Department

Candidacy certifies that the student is proficient in their first and second fields and is prepared to move on to the dissertation stage of the graduate career. More information can be found in TGS’s statement on candidacy: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/phd-degree-requirements.html#candidacy

5.2 Dissertation Proposal

The dissertation proposal must be defended no later than the end of the Spring quarter of the student's third year of study. If the student does not successfully defend a proposal by Spring quarter of the third year, or if revisions are required to the proposal after the defense, the deadline for a successful resolution is the end of Fall quarter of the student's fourth year of study.

Details concerning this Graduate School policy (including acceptable conditions and procedures for extensions) can be found here: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/phd-degree-requirements.html#prospectus. Upon the approval of the dissertation proposal, the student becomes an "ABD" (all-but-dissertation) and the student's principal advisor generally becomes Chair of the student's dissertation committee.

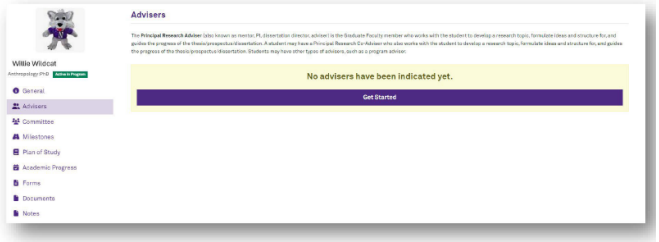
If the student does not complete, submit, and defend the prospectus by the stated deadline, the student will be placed on academic probation by the Department (see Section VII).

The format of the proposal varies across fields and is adaptable to specific research projects and contexts. As a general rule, a proposal includes a concise statement of the question or problem that the student intends to research. It justifies the project on theoretical grounds (that is to say, it demonstrates why political scientists should be interested in the project), which often incorporates a review of relevant scholarly literature. It shows how the scholar intends to go about collecting and analyzing evidence/argumentation that is relevant to the question or problem. In sum, the proposal should be a map of the work required to complete the dissertation.

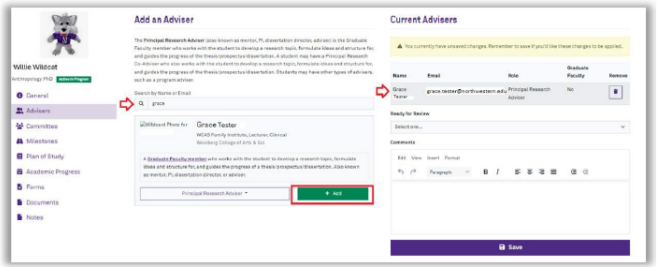
A minimum of three faculty members serve on the prospectus committee. At least two members of this committee, including the Chair, must be Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. Almost all faculty members who hold tenured or tenure-line appointments will be considered Graduate Faculty. Information about who is eligible can be found here: http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/graduate/program-administration/graduate-faculty-membership.html

Non-Northwestern faculty must be approved by TGS. The process for adding a non-Northwestern faculty member to a committee is found on GSP.

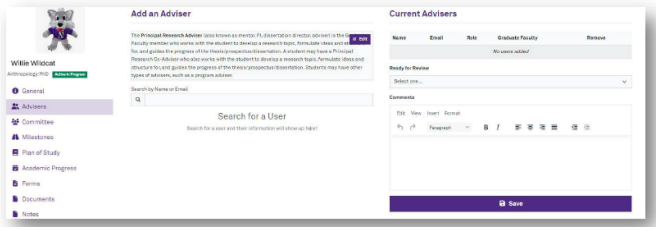
In the Adviser and Committee sections of GSP, you can indicate who are your adviser(s) and committee members. If you don't already have those roles assigned in GSP, click the **Get Started** button.



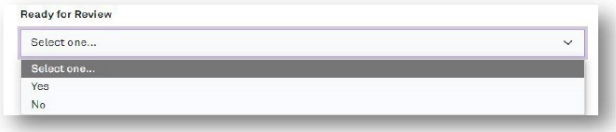
Once you've found the individual in the directory, use the **Add** button to add them to the list of Current Advisers.



Use the **Search by Name or Email** field to look up the names of faculty advisers or committee members.



If the selection is final and you wish to notify your program and send an invitation to the individual(s), select **Yes** from the Ready for Review drop-down list, then click on the **Save** button. If your selection is not final (you don't want notifications sent to your program or the individuals you've selected), click **No**. If 'Yes' is selected, an invitation will be sent to that individual. If 'No' is selected, then you can save selection, but no email invitations will be generated.



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Non-Northwestern faculty must be approved by TGS. Please add them here for review.

VI. THE DISSERTATION

The time needed to complete the dissertation varies with the amount of research or fieldwork required, the conditions of funding, and other contingencies. Important information can be found here: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/phd-degree-requirements.html#phdtimeline

6.1 Composition of the Dissertation Committee

At the point of a successful defense of the prospectus, the prospectus committee often becomes the dissertation committee, although students are free to change the composition of this committee.

This committee will include at least three faculty members, at least two of whom must be members of the Northwestern University Graduate Faculty. The members of the committee will be nominated by the student's dissertation Committee Chair (usually the student's advisor) in consultation with the student.

The committee members should be selected on the basis of their expertise in the field of the dissertation and their willingness to serve. The Chair of the committee and at least one other faculty member must be members of the Department of Political Science. If a former member of the faculty, i.e., one who has retired or moved to a different university, is to be the chair/a member of the committee, their written consent must be obtained beforehand. Approval also must be obtained from The Graduate School. (The Graduate Program Coordinator can facilitate these requests.)

Students should make sure that their committee information is recorded in GSP.

6.2 Defense of the Dissertation

Arrangements for the dissertation defense must be made with the Graduate Program Coordinator at least four weeks prior to the defense. The finished dissertation must in all cases be in the hands of the committee at least four weeks before the scheduled date of the examination.

The committee may require revisions or refuse to certify the dissertation. With the agreement of the dissertation advisor and the candidate, the defense may be opened to other graduate students and faculty members. Defenses are assumed to be public events, with an open oral defense followed by a closed discussion with only the committee and the student.

The final format and conditions of acceptance of the dissertation are specified in detail by TGS. Students should consult TGS's website for a comprehensive list of rules and procedures. It is the responsibility of the student to see that the final document meets these specifications. The Department has no authority to waive or alter these requirements.

Prior to the defense, students must review the following page: http://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academics/academic-services/phd/degree-completion/index.html

The Graduate Program Coordinator can advise students on successfully completing the necessary steps.

6.3 Time Limits

Each doctoral student must complete all requirements for the Ph.D. by the established deadline. Graduate Faculty legislation states that all requirements for the doctoral degree must be met within nine years of initial registration in a doctoral program.

Political science students typically complete their dissertations within the first six years and generally do not approach the formal nine-year deadline. It is worth noting that these students will typically have run out of funding long before they are excluded from the program.

Students who exceed The Graduate School's nine-year time limitation will be placed on probation by The Graduate School as outlined in the Academic Catalog: https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/satisfactory-progress/#tgsprobation. Students must maintain continuous registration until all degree requirements are met, per the policies outlined here: https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/general-registration/.

VII. UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Failure to make satisfactory progress, as determined by the Department, may result from (but is not limited to) accumulation of too many incomplete grades or incomplete grades that last too long before being resolved, receiving average grades below a B, unsatisfactory performance on the Qualifying Exam, failure to meet the second field course requirement, unsatisfactory teaching, unsatisfactory research progress, or failure to meet other Departmental requirements on time or to the appropriate standard. A student's failure to make satisfactory progress must be reported by the Department to the student and to the Graduate School in the Department's annual academic progress report.

Probation is a formal status indicating that a student has failed to meet a Departmental, college, or TGS requirement or milestone as specified in this Guide or other college or university documents and must remediate the identified deficiency within a specified period. Probation is the standard intermediate step before exclusion (dismissal) and is intended to give students a structured opportunity to return to good standing. Probation begins when the student is provided written notification of probationary status. A student placed on academic probation by the Department will have two subsequent quarters to resolve the deficiency that triggered probation. For example, if written notification is provided during Fall Quarter, the deficiency must be resolved by the end of the following Spring Quarter. Likewise, if written notification is provided during Winter Quarter, the deficiency must be resolved by the end of Summer Quarter. Upon written request and with demonstrated good-faith progress, the Director of Graduate Studies may grant a single extension of one additional quarter. If the deficiency is not resolved within the probationary period, including any extension, the Department may initiate exclusion proceedings.

TGS has its own definition of probation and can place students on probation independently of the program for the reasons outlined here: https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/satisfactory-progress/#criteria

Unsatisfactory progress may lead to exclusion (dismissal). Exclusion is defined by the University here: (https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/satisfactory-academic-progress.html#exclusion). When a student is excluded (dismissed) by the program, the student has an opportunity to appeal the exclusion decision to The Graduate School.

VIII. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

8.1 Transfer Credits

The Graduate School does not honor the transfer of credits, but the Department may consider them. Doctoral students may petition to transfer up to two quarters (six credits) of coursework. Such coursework must be from graduate-level courses at approved, accredited institutions. To meet Departmental requirements, a minimum of eighteen (18) graded courses must be taken, of which a minimum of twelve (12) must be taken at Northwestern University, and a B (3.0) average must be maintained.

Students who petition for transfer credits need to submit syllabi and other evidence of course content and requirements to their advisor. Students may submit their petition via the Graduate Commons. The advisor will evaluate the quality of this previous coursework and other information related to the merits of the request and forward this information to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Transferred credits cannot be used to effectively become a part-time student. Transfer credits are intended to speed your process through the program. As a result, students who receive three transfer credits or more must take their exam in the spring of the second year.

All students must continue full-time study to remain in good standing. This is why students who complete their 18 credits of coursework (either at Northwestern exclusively or with the transfer of credits) need to progress directly to the next stage of their studies. Students who register for fewer than three seminars during a term must register for TGS 500 (or TGS 512 if beyond funding) to maintain full-time registration. Contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for a permission number.

8.2 Leaves of Absence

When special circumstances interrupt a student's studies, the student may request a leave of absence by submitting an online form, found on the Graduate School website (https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/academic-policies-procedures/policies/leaves-of-absence.html), to the Graduate School explaining why a leave is necessary. Students must also submit a Leave of Absence form through GSP. TGS has specific policies for parental and medical leaves of absence,

explained at the link above, in addition to offering a general leave of absence for cases that do not fit those two categories.

A student granted a leave of absence by TGS may not register during the leave. While TGS and Department milestone deadlines are extended by the length of the leave, students should do their best to catch up quickly upon their return.

More information can be found here: https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/leaves-absence/

8.3 Grade Requirements

Grades given in courses are A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, and F. Students do not receive credit for a grade of F, X, Y, NR or PY. A grade of Y indicates incomplete coursework and is given, with prior agreement of the instructor, when a student does not submit all assigned work in a course. A grade of W indicates withdrawal. **Political Science Department policy requires that all Y and X grades must be made up within one quarter of the date the grade is incurred**. Work in an incomplete course must be completed and a Change of Grade form completed in CAESAR (or a manual form that the Graduate Program Coordinator can provide if more than a year has passed, sent to the Office of the Registrar) before the deadline.

Grades can only be changed when the instructor makes an error. A request to raise or lower a letter grade after course completion and grade submission must be forwarded to the DGS with a full explanation of the reason(s) for the request. The Graduate School requires at least a 3.0 (B) average (on a 4.0 scale). The Department requires a 3.3 (B+) average for the five courses that count towards the second field qualification. As stated in Section 2.1, students have one quarter to complete any incomplete grades; an unresolved Y grade after one quarter will result in academic probation (see Section VII).

8.4 Language and Research Skills Proficiency Requirements

The Department has no formal language requirement, but students should learn those languages that are necessary for their dissertation research and scholarly career. Students must identify their language needs in their dissertation proposals, and an evaluation of the student's competence will be made at the time of the dissertation proposal defense by the student's committee. Dissertation committees may also require demonstration of competence in computer techniques, statistics, research methodology, or mathematics if those skills are necessary for the proposed dissertation research.

However, TGS has established a minimum level of spoken English proficiency that graduate students must achieve before becoming eligible for funding as a graduate or teaching assistant. To fulfill TGS's English proficiency requirement, students must demonstrate the required level of proficiency on a recognized assessment. Students who satisfy any one of the criteria below fulfill TGS's English proficiency requirement. Score thresholds have been selected to correlate across exam formats; please contact ELP with any questions about interpreting test scores. Students are required to retake the Versant test approximately every 6 months until they fulfill TGS's English Proficiency Requirement.

Several language acquisition opportunities are available to students. These include:

Summer Language Grant Program (https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/internal-fellowships-grants/summer-language-grant.html):

This program provides some financial support for successful applicants who need support to travel to a foreign country or to attend a domestic language immersion program to acquire or improve their command of a foreign language. This language must be relevant to the student's research. Successful applicants must have some exposure to the target language prior to applying.

School of Professional Studies (SPS) summer language classes (https://sps.northwestern.edu/summer/index.php):
An arrangement between SPS and TGS enables Ph.D. students to register for summer intensive language courses on campus without additional tuition charges. Students can register for these courses in CAESAR instead of or in addition to (depending on how many language courses are taken) registering for TGS 500, the typical summer quarter registration. These classes do not count towards the graduate degree requirement.

Language Courses during the Academic Year:
Students may take 100-, 200-, and 300-level language classes through WCAS during the academic year or summer.

Students must take these classes for credit and a grade. Students who are registered for full-time coursework must take these classes as their fourth class in a given term. Students beyond coursework would take these courses in addition to 500, or 512 registrations. Visit the Non-TGS registration page for information on how to register for these language courses: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html#registering

8.5 Advanced Year Registration

Ph.D. students who have reached their ninth quarter of study are considered to have reached "advanced year registration status". In practical terms, this means that third-year students (those who have completed their 18 credits of coursework) are considered to have reached advanced year registration status. More information about advanced year registration can be found here: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html#registering.

As noted in Section 3.4, funded students who have completed all course requirements must register for TGS 500. Students may independently register for one non-required course in addition to TGS 500. These courses should be related to the student's area of study and should not be taken to fulfill Departmental degree requirements. For an override into more than one course beyond TGS 500, email gradservices@northwestern.edu. Additional information on continuous registration can be found here: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/about/policies/general-registration-policies.html#continuous.

8.6 Teaching Requirement

Every graduate student is expected to have practical experience in teaching within the Department. This requirement is met by working as a Teaching Assistant in an undergraduate course. The Department generally expects that you will work as an on-campus Teaching Assistant Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters after the first year, unless you are funded by a fellowship for that time period.

Students who are supported by external funds that do not require teaching must consult with the Associate Chair prior to their third year to arrange to obtain teaching experience. Teaching experience is vital to a professional academic record, and students are encouraged to take the initiative to improve their skills.

TGS requires that non-native English speakers take an English language test before serving as TAs. Students may be exempt from this test if they have a four-year degree from an institution where the primary language of instruction is English and have passed the speaking portion of the TOEFL. See Section 8.4.

8.7 Political Science Graduate Student Teaching Certificate

Graduate students interested in receiving Department recognition of their teaching must achieve the following requirements. Participation in the Searle Graduate Teaching Certificate Program, which might optionally be completed for additional recognition, would also fulfill some of the requirements for Department recognition.

To pursue the certificate:

- Students must have served as a Teaching Assistant (TA) for at least three quarters

To receive the certificate, the student must complete the following steps:

- Write a statement of teaching philosophy
- Produce a portfolio documenting their teaching
- Be observed and evaluated by a member of the Department teaching committee, Department faculty, or a Searle Center staff member
- Be trained in how to conduct observations and observe at least one TA section or graduate student workshop and complete a feedback report
- Obtain a nomination from a faculty member for whom they have served as a TA
- Attend quarterly Department teaching committee meetings and lead at least one professional development experience or service project, described below.

1. In order to be eligible for recognition, students must commit to serve on a Departmental teaching committee, which will operate as follows:

   a. Members of the committee will be all graduate students currently pursuing the Department teaching recognition, any previous awardees who would like to continue their involvement, any current Searle Center Graduate Teaching Fellow(s), and the Commune Co-Chairs (ex officio) and the Directors of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies (ex officio).
   b. Graduate student members of the committee will be responsible for coordinating at least one professional development experience or service project for fellow graduate students. (A full program of proposed teaching professional development events and projects is attached in the Appendix.)
2. Students who complete all of the above will receive formal recognition from the Department in the form of a "Graduate Student Teaching Certificate," which will be presented at the end of the year. There will be no limit on the number of graduate students recognized each year. Each recipient will be awarded a $500 honorarium.

8.8 Funding

Funding for graduate students during their first five years of study is governed by the terms of their offer letter and the policies of Northwestern University.

Students are not guaranteed funding beyond the end of their fifth academic year. Students may be able to secure sixth-year funding by securing "student banked quarters" from qualifying external and internal funding sources during their first five years, such as through interdisciplinary GAships (https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/assistantships/interdisciplinary-graduate-assistantships.html), external fellowships, grant funding, etc. Funding sources are not always fully transparent to students, so you should always contact the Director of Graduate Students and Graduate Program Coordinator to verify. The information we are providing is our best judgment based on available information and our past experience, and the official determination is made by Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, in the face of ambiguity.

There may be other funding opportunities available during the sixth year at the University's discretion, although many options begin to disappear at that point. Students have sometimes been able to find outside funding, secure teaching positions at other local colleges and universities, and otherwise make improvised arrangements to fill funding gaps. However, it is far better to prepare either by finishing the program early or by securing matched quarters before the start of the sixth year.

The first collective bargaining agreement ("CBA") between Northwestern and the graduate student union (NUGW-UE Local 1122) was ratified on March 15, 2024. The CBA applies to certain graduate students currently enrolled in degree programs when they are providing instructional or research services for the University. Students should refer to the University's graduate student union website for contract details. To the extent that terms in this handbook conflict with the terms set forth in the CBA between the University and NUGW-UE Local 1122, the terms of the CBA will govern.

8.9 External Funding

Graduate students at all stages should note that the Department encourages them to apply for outside funding. Updated information about external funding appears here: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/external-fellowships-and-grants/. Students are strongly encouraged to consult with the Office of Fellowships: www.northwestern.edu/fellowships.

Students on the 20-Quarter Funding Package who receive external funding (either through outside Northwestern fellowships or qualifying Research Assistantships, Teaching Assistantships, or Graduate Assistantships with other Northwestern Departments) during their first five years of study will receive the following support:

1. During the 20-quarter funding package a 1:1 match of up to four additional quarters of support (Student Banked Quarters) to be used through the summer of the sixth year of graduate study only.
2. A stipend top-up to the TGS base stipend (if the external award stipend is lower) through the sixth year.

While most external fellowships will qualify for this additional support, students should be aware that some RAships, GAships, and TAships with other Northwestern Departments do not qualify for Student Banked Quarters. Students **must** consult their Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or Graduate Program Coordinator (GPC) to determine whether their funding qualifies for Student Banked Quarters. What qualifies for Student Banked Quarters is ultimately at the discretion of Weinberg College.

Students should also be aware that they may not accrue more than four (4) Student Banked Quarters for use in the sixth year, and student banked quarters are not eligible to be used beyond the sixth year.

8.10 Conference and Travel Policies

Graduate students are strongly encouraged to present the results of their research at scholarly conferences while they are still doing graduate work. Chicago is frequently the site of professional meetings, particularly the Midwest Political Science Association Meetings, and this provides an opportunity to present papers without incurring travel expenses. Students are encouraged to consult with their advisor and dissertation committees on possibilities for publication and conference presentations.

The Graduate School provides Conference Travel Grants of up to $800 for eligible students. Information about eligibility and application instructions can be found here: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/fellowships-and-grants/internal-fellowships-grants/conference-travel-grant.html

The Department also provides up to $500 in matching funds to support travel to conferences and seminars. This application is available on the Department's website (https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/6c86bc46b58e4fb39d618fb7f250b634). Applications for these funds may be made in conjunction with an application to the Graduate School for travel support.

8.11 Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious violation of Departmental and University standards. Students found responsible for academic dishonesty (regardless of the sanction assigned by The Graduate School) may be dismissed by the program. Students should acquaint themselves with University requirements in this area, particularly with regard to plagiarism. The Office of the Provost has a publication entitled "How to Avoid Plagiarism" which deals with the topic in detail and can be found here: https://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies-procedures/academic-integrity/how-to-avoid-plagiarism.html

While graduate students can use AI tools to assist with their academic writing process if they find this helpful, they should be aware that such tools can sometimes create texts that plagiarize published work without attribution or otherwise violate Northwestern's rules of academic integrity. If this happens in the context of academic work done while a graduate student is at Northwestern's political science Department, the student will be held accountable for the infraction.

8.12 Conflict Resolution

If a student encounters a challenge with a fellow student, faculty member, advisor, or Department administrator, there are several ways to seek resolution. Within the Department, the first stop should be with the Graduate Program Coordinator. If the problem cannot be resolved there, the student should visit the Director of Graduate Studies, and then, if necessary, the Department Chair. If the problem lies with one of these three individuals, students are encouraged to contact both of the other two immediately. Appropriate steps will be taken to review the conflict and find a solution that works for both parties.

Northwestern takes student concerns very seriously, and students with issues outside the reach of the Department should contact the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution, which can be found here: https://www.northwestern.edu/student-conduct/. The Graduate School recommends that students contact Gayle E. Woloschak, The Graduate School Assoc. Dean of Graduate Student and Postdoctoral Affairs, in the event of a conflict with an advisor/faculty member. The university also provides a range of other resources for dealing with conflicts that arise in academic life: https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/dealing-with-student-faculty-conflicts/. Students are not required to contact the Department to pursue assistance with a problem if they find resources elsewhere.

8.13 Placement

The Department considers placement in an academic or non-academic position to be the final milestone for graduate students and provides resources and workshops to help students prepare for the job market.

Northwestern has a number of resources available to students, starting with Northwestern Career Advancement: https://www.northwestern.edu/careers/explore-careers/graduate-student-programming/index.html.

The Commune holds programs throughout the academic year designed to inform and assist students with understanding the job-seeking process. The Placement Director is available to help students compile application materials and send confidential letters of recommendation. The Department website is a place where many students post biographies. Faculty advisors should be consulted on cover letters, portfolio assembly, and networking. It behooves students to begin the job-seeking process early and to make appointments to see NCA, the Placement Director, and their faculty advisor well before graduation. Students may contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for the current Placement Director's contact information.

8.14 University Nondiscrimination Statement

Northwestern University does not discriminate or permit discrimination by any member of its community against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, parental status, marital status, age, disability, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, reproductive health decision making, or any other classification protected by law in matters of admissions, employment, housing, or services or in the educational programs or activities it operates. Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that is based on any of these characteristics is a form of discrimination. Further prohibited by law is discrimination against any employee and/or job applicant who chooses to inquire about, discuss, or disclose their own compensation or the compensation of another employee or applicant.

Northwestern University complies with federal and state laws that prohibit discrimination based on the protected categories listed above, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX requires educational institutions, such as Northwestern, to prohibit discrimination based on sex (including sexual harassment) in the University's educational programs and activities, including in matters of employment and admissions. In addition, Northwestern provides reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants, students, and employees with disabilities and to individuals who are pregnant.

Any alleged violations of this policy or questions with respect to nondiscrimination or reasonable accommodations should be directed to Northwestern's Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, equity@northwestern.edu.

Questions specific to sex discrimination (including sexual misconduct and sexual harassment) should be directed to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equity, 1800 Sherman Avenue, Suite 4-500, Evanston, Illinois 60208, 847-467-6165, TitleIXCoordinator@northwestern.edu.

A person may also file a complaint with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights regarding an alleged violation of Title IX by visiting www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/complaintintro.html or calling 800-421-3481. Inquiries about the application of Title IX to Northwestern may be referred to Northwestern's Title IX Coordinator, the United States Department of Education's Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, or both.

8.15 Glossary of Organizations, Positions, Etc.

In your time at Northwestern, you will likely encounter many references to the following entities, often referred to by jargony abbreviations. This glossary may help sort things out.

8.15.1 The Graduate School (TGS)

TGS is responsible for the administration of graduate programs. Admissions and awarding of degrees are administered by TGS. TGS has numerous rules and deadlines with which you must comply. TGS also coordinates professional development and facilitates associations for graduate students. For information on TGS policies and programs, please consult their website: www.tgs.northwestern.edu

8.15.2 The Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (WCAS)

WCAS coordinates the academic activities and funding of 30 Departments in the Arts and Sciences, including Political Science. WCAS works with departments to determine funding priorities and allocations throughout the College. WCAS information can be found here: www.weinberg.northwestern.edu

8.15.3 Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

The DGS is a tenured member of the faculty who directs the graduate program. The DGS chairs the Graduate Committee and acts as an intermediary between graduate students, TGS, and WCAS.

8.15.4 The Graduate Committee

The Graduate Committee is appointed prior to each academic year by the Department Chair. It is composed of the DGS, acting as the Committee's Chair, and representatives from each of the five sub-fields. The Committee's main roles are to help the Department administer the graduate admissions process, consider program initiatives and curricular updates, select nominees for internal fellowships and prizes, and when necessary, decide upon specific policies related to TGS and WCAS.

8.15.5 Graduate Program Coordinator (PC)

The Graduate Program Coordinator is a staff member employed by the University to aid students and faculty with the administration of the program. In particular, they handle applications for funding, admissions, milestone tracking, degrees, qualifying exams (sometimes referred to as "prelims"), and dissertation committees. The Graduate Program Coordinator is a good first point of contact on matters of Departmental and University policy.

8.15.6 Graduate Student Progress (GSP) system

GSP is an online tool that houses all information about graduate students, including enrollments, funding, milestones, and advisor information. All TGS Forms for milestone completion are housed in GSP. It is also a place where students can enter awards, publications, honors, and other achievements which may be selected to be featured on the Department website. Students are responsible for keeping information current, especially as it pertains to their faculty advisor and dissertation committee, qualifying exam form, prospectus form, and dissertation defense. GSP can be accessed here: https://gsp.northwestern.edu.

8.15.7 Faculty Advisors

The Department encourages extensive student-faculty interaction. Every incoming graduate student will be assigned a faculty Program Advisor in their first field of interest to advise on coursework and other academic issues. The faculty advisor serves as the liaison between their advisee and the faculty and is the primary source of academic advice. The advisor will be available to meet with the student to offer advice and develop a proposed plan of study. Students should meet with their advisor at least once per quarter to discuss course selection and as needed for other issues.

As stated above, students will be assigned an advisor in their first year, who typically continues through their second year. By the time of the prospectus defense, students must have an advisor who will serve as the first member of their dissertation committee, and this advisor must be recorded in GSP.

8.15.8 The Commune

The Graduate Student Commune is the organization of Political Science graduate students. It advises the Department on teaching and recruitment and organizes resources and activities for graduate students. It is composed of all students currently enrolled in the graduate program. The Commune elects representatives to represent the graduate students in matters affecting the graduate community. The Commune email is commune.polisci@gmail.com.