

**University of Texas at Austin
Department of Government**

Graduate Student Handbook

**Government
PhD, MA**

Concentrations:
American Politics
Comparative Politics
International Relations
Methodology and Formal Theory
Political Theory
Public Law
Public Policy

Effective: 2025-2026 Academic Year

(For students entering Fall 2020 and after,
or for students who opted-in to the Fall 2020 program)

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Graduate Student Handbook

Department of Government

I. Introduction

At UT, our goal is to ensure that our graduate students quickly become an integral part of our vibrant intellectual community and are prepared to join the long tradition of political science scholarship when they leave. The program requirements all aim at fulfilling these two goals. The Department is home to an eclectic and excellent faculty, with interests and methodological approaches spanning the breadth of political science. In this rich and diverse environment, new graduate students soon find a congenial group of professors and fellow students and a wide range of resources to ease their entry into academic life.

The intellectual pursuits of our graduate students are both stimulated and supported by a diverse array of graduate seminars, a robust schedule of guest lectures, and a vast network of supportive institutions across campus. Our relationship with the Law School is excellent and longstanding, with several overlapping faculty. Our University's area studies centers cover most of the globe, from Latin America to the Middle East, from Europe to South Asia, and are at the very top of the national rankings in their respective areas. In addition, centers like the Women and Gender Studies Center or the Rapoport Center for Human Rights support research in particular subject areas. These centers not only ensure funding for graduate student research, but also a deep pool of faculty covering the entire globe and nearly any imaginable substantive interest, allowing for interdisciplinary collaboration.

In addition to these campus resources, our graduate students benefit from the faculty's success in securing grants from top funding agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Google, and the Department of Defense. The grants provide students opportunities not only to pursue their own research but to be deeply involved in faculty research projects, collaborate extensively with their colleagues, help guide undergraduate research projects, and participate in the administrative and managerial aspects of executing large and long-term research agendas. Building on this experience, students regularly secure their own grants from the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, Fulbright, the Boren Foundation, the Foreign Language and Area Studies program, and many other sources.

Like any academic discipline, Political Science is essentially a global, ongoing conversation about many of the key issues of our time. This Handbook outlines the structure of our program, which aims to make our students increasingly valued and substantive participants in this intellectual conversation, ready to take their place among the ranks of faculty at the most prestigious institutions in the world.

II. Information about Admissions

Applications for the Government PhD program are due by December 1 for the following Fall semester admittance and are reviewed by a faculty committee. The online application is usually open around the beginning-to-middle of August.

In making its decisions, the Admissions Committee considers these primary factors:

- 1) Academic transcripts (undergraduate and graduate)
- 2) Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores
- 3) Letters of recommendation
- 4) Curriculum vita (CV)

- 5) Statement of purpose
- 6) Writing sample

For international applicants, English language test scores are also considered. The Government department accepts either TOEFL scores or IELTS scores.

The Government graduate program is designed more for PhD.-seekers. Although we offer a Master's Degree, we do not have an application process for students who are interested in receiving a Master's Degree only. Applicants are eligible to apply to our program if they will have completed their bachelor's degree by the start of the semester for which they are applying.

It is recommended that prospective students visit the Government department's Graduate [Admissions page](#) which has clear instructions for applying to the Government PhD program. Please be sure to visit the FAQ link in the left margin on that page.

It is also recommended that prospective students visit the University of Texas Graduate School Admissions [website](#) for application instructions.

If prospective students have any questions after they have looked at the web sites, they can contact the [Government Graduate Administrator](#) who can answer any questions about Admissions and the program requirements. The [Graduate Adviser](#) can answer any questions relating to the academic nature of the PhD program.

III. Academic Integrity

The information below is from the Office of the Dean of Students [website](#), Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin and the Department of Government. More specifically, students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, students should complete any assignments, exams, and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires students to:

- 1) Acknowledge the contributions of other sources to students' scholastic efforts;
- 2) Complete assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- 3) Follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of the student's academic discipline; and
- 4) Avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of the student or another student.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to Chapter 11 of the [Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities](#).

IV. Grievances

The information below is from Graduate School website, [Grievances](#).

Graduate students at The University of Texas at Austin have the right to seek redress of any

grievance related to academic or nonacademic matters.

Every effort should be made to resolve grievances informally between the student and the faculty member involved or with the assistance of the Graduate Adviser, Graduate Studies Committee chair, or department chair. If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, students have recourse to formal grievance procedures.

V. Requirements for a PhD

The Government department offers specialized instruction in seven fields: 1) American Political Institutions and Processes; 2) Comparative Politics; 3) International Relations; 4) Methodology and Formal Theory; 5) Political Theory; 6) Public Law; and 7) Public Policy.

Students are required to designate one of these fields as their Major Field (or preliminary examination field) and one of these fields as their Minor Field. Students must take and pass at least four courses in their Major Field and three courses in their Minor field. Specific course requirements may vary by field. Certification in the Major Field (or exam field) is achieved through coursework and a written examination, followed by an oral examination of the dissertation proposal.

Below are the requirements to earn a PhD with the Government department:

1) Complete 14 Organized Courses: The 14 Organized Courses are comprised of 3 Foundation Courses, 4 Major Field Courses, 3 Minor Field Courses, 3 Concentration Courses, and 1 Writing Course. The details follow.

- **Three Foundation Courses:** The three Foundation Courses that are required of all PhD students are:
 - 1) GOV 391K, Scope & Methods of Political Science
 - 2) GOV 391J, Statistical Methods in Political Science
 - 3) GOV 391L, Statistical Methods in Political Science II

Students who have chosen Political Theory as their major field may be eligible to substitute one language, including English, for Stats I and Stats II. Proficiency must be equal to or beyond the level required in the second semester of the second year of college coursework. Please refer to “Waivers to Program of Work Requirements” under More Information Regarding Coursework below.

- **Four Courses in The Major Field:** Students must take one Core course and three additional courses in their major field. Each subfield (except the Political Theory field) requires its own Core course. The other three courses are taken at the student’s discretion, with the advice of the student’s Faculty Advisor. Major Field courses must be taken within the Government Department. Conference courses cannot count toward the Major Field requirement. Major Field courses cannot be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis.

The Core courses for each subfield are

- 1) American Politics = GOV 381J, Political Institutions and Processes
- 2) Comparative Politics = GOV 390K, Comparative Study of Political Systems
- 3) International Relations = GOV 388K, Study of International Relations
- 4) Methodology = GOV 380R, Math Methods for Political Analysis (a.k.a., MLE or Stats III)
- 5) Political Theory (none)

- 6) Public Law = GOV 384N, Core Readings in Public Law
- 7) Public Policy = Public Policy Process

Some fields have secondary Core courses that are required by the field. These are

- 1) American Politics = GOV 381S, Public Opinion and Voting Behavior
- 2) Public Law = GOV 384N, Comparative Constitutionalism

- **Three Minor Field Courses:** Minor field courses from the chosen subfield must be taken within the Government Department. Conference courses cannot count toward the Minor Field requirement. Minor Field courses cannot be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis.
- **Three Concentration Courses:** Students should work closely with their faculty advisor to choose courses for their Concentration. Concentration courses can be taken in the same field or in multiple fields. They can be taken outside the Government department but must be approved by the Government Graduate Adviser first. Conference courses can count toward the Concentration requirement. Concentration courses may be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis.
- **Writing Course:** Students are required to take one writing course (such as Research Colloquium in Political Science), ideally in their third year in the program. Generally, each field will offer its own writing course, but students can take this course outside their subfield. This course must be taken within the Government department. This course cannot be taken on the CR/NC grading basis and cannot be taken as a conference course.
- **More Information Regarding Coursework**

1) Program of Work: The courses that count toward the PhD coursework requirements are designated as the student's [Program of Work](#). The Graduate Administrator will keep track of each student's Program of Work. The student can consult the Graduate Administrator at any time about the Program of Work to see how the courses the student has taken meet the PhD course requirements.

2) Waivers to Program of Work Requirements: Waivers to any of the requirements listed above (including course requirements) must be submitted to the Graduate Adviser in writing (an e-mail is fine). The Graduate Adviser may consult the field chair if necessary, but only the Graduate Adviser can waive a course requirement. Please be sure to copy the Graduate Administrator on any correspondence regarding a request for a waiver.

3) Credit/No Credit Grading Basis: Graduate students have the option of taking some graduate courses on either a letter-grade or credit/no credit grading basis. Please note that the grading basis of credit/no credit for graduate students is not the same as the pass/fail grading basis that is offered to undergraduate students. A graduate student must receive the equivalent grade of C or better to receive a grade of "credit" for a course. No more than 20% of the courses that count toward a graduate student's Program of Work may be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis. Foundation courses, Major Field courses, Minor Field courses, and Writing courses may not be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis. Supervised Teaching in Government (398T) can be taken only on a credit/no credit grading basis. Master's Thesis (698A and 698B), Master's Report (398R) and Dissertation courses (i.e., GOV X99W) can be taken only on a credit/no credit grading basis and do not count toward the 20% Program of Work limit. The default grading basis for most organized graduate courses is letter-grade basis, so a graduate student wanting to take a course on a credit/no credit grading basis should take an extra step to change the grading basis at the time of registration.

4) Counting a Course Toward More Than One Requirement: In most circumstances,

a course cannot count toward more than one coursework requirement. For instance, since all students are required to take GOV 391J, Statistical Analysis in Political Science I, that course cannot also count toward the Major Field or Minor Field requirement if the student's Major Field or Minor Field is Methodology. There are some exceptions. Please check with the Graduate Administrator if you have any questions about the course requirements.

2) Participate in a Second-Year Review: See information about The Second-Year Review in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

3) Pass Preliminary Exam in the Major Field: See information about Taking Preliminary Exams in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

4) Prepare and Orally Defend a Dissertation Proposal: See information about Oral Qualifying Exams in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

5) Advance to PhD Candidacy: See information about Advancing to Candidacy in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

6) Complete a Minimum of 6 Hours of Dissertation Before Graduating. See information about Registering for Dissertation Courses in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

7) Write an Original Dissertation and Successfully Defend It: See information about The Dissertation Defense in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.

8) Timeline for PhD

- **Semester 1**
Scope and Methods + Stats 1 + Substantive Course
- **Semester 2**
Stats II + 2 Substantive Courses / Methods Courses
First-Year Advising
- **Semester 3**
3 Substantive / Methods Courses
- **Semester 4**
Writing Course + 2 Substantive / Methods Courses OR 3 Substantive / Methods Courses
Second-Year Review
- **Semester 5**
Preliminary Exam Take 1
2 Substantive / Methods Courses OR Writing Course + 1 Substantive / Methods Course
- **Semester 6**
Preliminary Exam Take 2
Prepare Dissertation Proposal
Pass Oral Qualifying Exam
- **Semester 7**
Research and Write Dissertation

[Apply for Candidacy](#)

- **Semester 8**
Research and Write Dissertation
- **Semesters 9 - 11**
Research and Write Dissertation
Defend Dissertation
- **Semester 12**
Write Dissertation
Deadline to Defend Dissertation

VI. Requirements for a Master's Degree

Students pursuing the Master's Degree, *en route* to the doctoral degree, have two options: Master's Degree with Thesis or Master's Degree with Report. Students are responsible for planning their program of coursework and putting together a thesis or report committee composed of two or more faculty members. The supervisor must be a member of the Government department's Graduate Studies Committee. All students, regardless of which option they select, must be registered during the semester in which they are to graduate. Students seeking a Master's Degree must complete all requirements within one six-year period. Full-time students can complete the requirements for either the thesis or report in approximately four semesters. Careful planning of the program of study and regular consultations with the report or thesis supervisor are critical to fulfilling the degree requirements.

1) Master's Degree with Report: At least thirty-three (33) semester hours of coursework, which includes the GOV 398R Master's Report course, are required for the Master's Degree with Report. The Report is not required to be based on original research. Here are the coursework requirements:

- At least 18 hours, including the report course, must be in the major area.
- At least 6 hours must be supporting coursework.
- Although this is usually not a consideration for most graduate students, 24 of the 33 hours must be graduate-level coursework and no more than 9 of the 33 hours can be upper-division undergraduate-level coursework.

2) Master's Degree with Thesis: At least thirty (30) semester hours of coursework, which includes the GOV 698A and GOV 698B Master's Thesis courses, are required for the master's degree with thesis. The Thesis must be based on original research. Here are the requirements:

- At least 18 hours, including the two thesis courses, must be in the major area.
- At least 6 hours must be supporting coursework.
- Although this is usually not a consideration for most graduate students, 21 of the 30 hours must be graduate-level work and no more than 9 of the 30 hours can be upper-division undergraduate-level work.
- The student must register for both GOV 698A and GOV 698B Master's Thesis courses, each of which are 3-hour courses. The GOV 698A Master's Thesis course must precede the GOV 698B Master's Thesis course. The two courses cannot be taken during the same semester.

3) More Information Regarding Master's Degrees

- The “major area” consists of coursework within either or both of the student’s two subfields.
- Supporting coursework consists of courses outside of the student’s two subfields, although the Graduate Adviser may permit some or all of it to be taken in other areas of the department.
- The student must register for GOV 398R Master’s Report or GOV 698B Master’s Thesis during the semester in which the Master’s Degree is earned.
- No more than 20% of the coursework that counts toward the Master’s Degree with Report or Thesis can be taken on a credit/no credit basis. The GOV 398R Master’s Report course and the GOV 698A and GOV 698B Master’s Thesis courses must be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis and therefore do not count toward the 20% limit.
- A student may [transfer up to 6 hours of graduate course credit](#) from another university with permission from the Graduate School.
- The minimum GPA on the Master’s Program of Work is 3.0.
- The courses that count toward the course requirements for one Master’s Degree at the University of Texas cannot count toward the course requirements for another Master’s Degree at the University of Texas. In other words, one course cannot count toward the courses requirements for two Master’s Degrees.

VII. Information for Incoming Students

1) Orientation and Methods Camp: All incoming students are required to attend Orientation and “Introduction to Math for Political Scientists” (or Methods Camp) before the Fall semester begins. Orientation is scheduled for the Monday and Tuesday of the week before classes start. Orientation consists of half-day sessions, with general information given about the PhD program and the Government department on Monday, and specific information for Teaching Assistants on Tuesday. Students who will not be Teaching Assistants during their first year are still required to attend the second day of Orientation. Methods Camp runs on Monday and Tuesday afternoons after Orientation and then for full days Wednesday through the following Monday, with a half day on the Tuesday before classes start. Methods Camp does not meet on Saturday or Sunday. The Graduate Administrator will contact the incoming cohort with more specific information about Orientation and Methods Camp late in April or early in May.

2) UT ID Card: All UT students are required to obtain a UT ID Card as proof of their identity while they are on campus. Government graduate students will need their ID card for TA office access and Batts Hall building access after-hours.

3) E-mail Account: Students are eligible to receive a personal UTmail account at no cost for life. This account is optional.

4) Building Access & Security: Students must have a UT ID card to access Batts Hall after hours. The building access doors automatically unlock at 8:00 a.m. and lock at 6:00 p.m. on weekdays. The doors are locked on weekends and holidays. If anyone exits the building using the door that opens to the South Mall after 6:00 p.m., an alarm will sound. Stairwell doors leading into the hallway will lock at 6:00 p.m. and the elevators will not work after 6:00 p.m. without swiping the ID card. In addition, if the building access doors or the doors to the stairwells are held open too long, the alarms will beep and then eventually go off if the door is not shut. The UT Campus Police will respond to these alarms.

5) Mailroom: The Government department mailroom is located on the second floor of Batts

Hall in BAT 2.104. Government faculty and graduate students are assigned a mail slot for receiving interdepartmental communications and campus mail. The mail slots are not to be used for personal mail received through the U.S. Postal Service. The mailroom also serves as the Government faculty lounge. There is a refrigerator, a microwave oven, and some supplies in the cabinets that are for faculty use only. There is also a bin where papers that need to be shredded can be placed. The mailroom can be accessed through an access code.

6) Graduate Student Lounge: A Graduate Student Lounge is located on the first floor of Batts Hall in BAT 1.128 and is for graduate student use only. Please report any unauthorized people in the lounge to the Government department staff. A small refrigerator and microwave are provided for graduate student use. There are also cabinets, a sink, a sofa, table, and chairs. It is the graduate students' responsibility to keep this area clean, so students are asked to clean up after themselves.

7) Milestones: The Milestones Agreement Form is UT's response to a mandate from UT System that requires departments to provide degree-specific advising, milestones, and timeline information for all new Ph.D. students. Starting in Fall 2013 all students seeking a Ph.D. at UT System institutions must sign, with their departments, a Milestones Agreement form that they have been advised of the requirements for their Ph.D. program and have been provided the expected timelines for the attainment of their academic milestones and graduation.

Milestones are major events on the path to the degree and common to most Ph.D. programs, e.g. passing major exams or being admitted to candidacy. The degree requirements/steps provide additional program detail, such as a language requirement or radiation safety training.

There are two components to the Milestone Agreement form:

- **A list of UT Austin Milestones and the Expected Time of Achievement:** These are general requirements for every doctoral program at UT, but the expected time of achievement is specific to each doctoral program.
- **Degree Plan Requirements:** This is a broad list of degree plan requirements for UT doctoral programs. Some are required, some are recommended and some do not apply to the Government doctoral program (indicated by the check marks).

After the start of the semester, the Graduate Administrator will send first-year graduate students a link so that they can logon and verify that they have read the Milestones and the Degree Requirements. If left unsigned, the Graduate School will send to the PhD student auto-notifications of non-compliance. It will be the Graduate Administrator's job to keep track of certain milestones (like completing preliminary exams), but other milestones will be tracked automatically by the Graduate School (such as advancing to candidacy).

8) First-Year Advising: During the Spring semester of students' first year the Graduate Administrator will initiate a First-Year Advising process in which first-year students are required to meet with their faculty advisors before they register for the Fall semester of their second year. The Graduate Administrator will provide each first-year student with a copy of the "First-Year Advising Form" to take with them when they meet with their faculty advisor. Either the faculty advisor or the student can return the completed form to the Graduate Administrator. The completion and return of the "First Year Review" form is required prior to student registration. Students who fail to meet with their faculty advisor and submit a completed advising form will not be permitted to register for the next fall semester.

VIII. Information for Continuing Students

1) Faculty Advising

- **The Graduate Adviser** (also known as the Director of Graduate Studies) advises graduate students about their program of study, certifies that students meet departmental and university requirements, and administers departmental admissions, departmental funding and annual review of all graduate students, and placement. Representing the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies in all matters pertaining to the graduate program in the Department, the Graduate Adviser is the principal liaison between the Department and the Graduate School.
- **Faculty advisors** are usually in a student's principal field of interest and provide specific advice about faculty, courses, research, and job placement in that field. Upon entering the program, students will choose their own faculty advisor. In the summer before the first semester of study, the Graduate Administrator will contact incoming students with information about the faculty advisor selection process. If an incoming student has not chosen a faculty advisor by the time the student needs to register for classes for their first Fall semester, the Graduate Adviser can serve as the student's faculty advisor in the interim. If a student has not chosen a faculty advisor by the end of the Fall semester of their first year, the Graduate Adviser will select a faculty advisor for the student.

Students should meet with their faculty advisor periodically during each semester to discuss the student's program of study. In their first year, students are required to participate in the First-Year Advising process. Information about this process can be found under section VII: Information for Incoming Students, "First-Year Advising". In the second-year of study, students are required to meet with their faculty advisors along with two other faculty members for a Second-Year Review. Information about this process can be found under Section VIII: Information for Continuing Students, "The Second-Year Review".

Students are free to change faculty advisors at any time, subject to the approval of a new faculty advisor and notification to the Graduate Adviser and Graduate Administrator. This notification can take place via e-mail. Faculty advisors are under no obligation to serve as students' dissertation committee supervisors once students have advanced to candidacy. In addition, students' faculty advisors are superseded by the dissertation supervisor when students advance to candidacy.

2) Annual Review: The University of Texas Graduate School requires an annual review of all graduate students. Therefore, all graduate students in the Department of Government are required to submit documents for their annual review every Spring. Documents that are included in the annual review process include the Annual Review and Departmental Funding form (which will be supplied by the Graduate Administrator), a Statement of Purpose, a CV, and two letters of recommendation (a third letter is required if the student is applying for a fellowship). It is during the annual review process that students also apply for Teaching Assistant (TA) and Assistant Instructor (AI) positions, as well as department fellowships for the upcoming Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters. The Graduate Administrator will announce the annual review process to graduate students toward the end of January.

A committee of faculty known as the Annual Review Committee (ARC) reviews each student's annual review documents along with the student's course evaluations, TA evaluations, PhD Program of Work, first-year advising form, and second-year review form in a file that is prepared by the Graduate Administrator. Each member of the ARC assigns each student a score according to the following 10-point scale: 8-10 Exceeds expectations; 4-7 Meets expectations; 1-3 Does not meet expectations. The ARC submits their scores to the Graduate Administrator, and the Graduate Administrator compiles the scores into a spreadsheet. The highest and lowest scores are dropped and then each student receives a final assessment based on the average of the remaining scores. The ARC meets to discuss any revisions or concerns regarding students' final scores,

usually at the end of March.

The offer letters for Summer TA and AI positions as well as Summer fellowships are sent by e-mail to students in early-to-mid April. Because the admissions deadline for applicants to accept offers from the Government graduate program is April 15, the Graduate Administrator will need to consider the number of Teaching Assistant positions and fellowships that have been accepted by the incoming cohort. Then the Graduate Administrator will send to each student an e-mail that contains information about the ARC's assessment of the student's progress in the graduate program (Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectations, or Does Not Meet Expectations) along with a letter of departmental funding. These e-mails are usually distributed the last week in April.

The membership of the Annual Review Committee is selected each academic year by the Department Chair and the Graduate Adviser. Graduate students can select one member of the Annual Review Committee. The Graduate Administrator will conduct the election process toward the beginning of the Fall semester.

3) The Second-Year Review: The faculty review the progress of all students during their second year. The purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for students to discuss their program of study and research interests, and to receive constructive feedback from faculty working in their general areas of interest. The student's Major field and Minor field are confirmed during this review. In addition, one of three recommendations will be made regarding the student's progress in the Government PhD program: 1) the student is approved to take the preliminary examination in the student's Major field and doesn't need to be reevaluated; 2) the student is approved to take the preliminary examination in the student's Major field but should be re-evaluated during the next long semester; or 3) the student should be terminated from the Government PhD program.

The Graduate Coordinator will send all second-year students an e-mail with details about how to begin the second-year review process. The student's Second-Year Review Committee will be comprised of the student's faculty advisor, one faculty member chosen by the student, and one faculty member chosen by the Graduate Adviser. The second year review needs to be completed before the end of the Spring semester.

Each student will be responsible for conferring with their Second-Year Review Committee to schedule a time for his or her second year review. Students must provide three items so that the committee can review their progress: (1) a solo-authored paper reporting on research the student has conducted or discussing a significant research problem in political science; (2) a statement of the student's research interests and tentative ideas or plans for a dissertation; and (3) the student's C.V. These three items should be submitted to the Graduate Administrator at least one week before the review.

The Graduate Administrator will provide each student's Second-Year Review Committee with copies of the materials named above, along with copies of the student's Program of Work and Graduate Student Course Evaluations. In addition, the Graduate Administrator will route to the student via DocuSign a copy of the Second-Year Review Report at least one week prior to the scheduled review.

At the completion of the meeting, the Second-Year Review Committee will file an evaluation (the Second-Year Review Report) with the Government Graduate Office. The Report will summarize the student's strengths and weaknesses and the Committee's recommendation for the student's continuation in the PhD program. Students who fail to meet with their review committee will not be permitted to register for the next semester.

4) Taking Preliminary Exams: All students must gain certification in their Major field of study by examination. Each student is required to pass a written examination (preliminary examination) in their Major field. The Department's seven examinations fields are: American Political Institutions and Processes, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Methodology and Formal Theory, Political Theory, Public Law, and Public Policy.

The preliminary examination is administered by the Government Graduate Office at the beginning of the Fall semester after the student's second year. The Graduate Administrator will send e-mails prior to the exam period to remind students about the examination process. Students are not allowed to delay the preliminary examination. To assist students in preparing for their preliminary examinations, copies of questions from past examinations are available cloud storage (i.e. [UT Box](#)).

The preliminary examination is designed to determine a student's knowledge and proficiency in his or her chosen field of specialization. The Department's expectation is that four courses ought to prepare a student for a field preliminary examination, although this may vary within the fields. Normally these would include the field's core course or its equivalent, two topical courses focusing on segments of the field and perhaps a research seminar. Students should not feel that they must master everything there is to know in their examination field. They must, however, be able to give high quality responses to questions on sectors of a field they have studied, and to generally demonstrate the ability to develop coherent arguments concerning the most important issues in the field.

Uniform procedures for preliminary examinations have been specified by the Graduate Studies Committee. Faculty in each field follow this format in designing and grading exams. Each written examination has three questions: one about broad concerns of the field based on material covered in the field core course or its equivalent, and two questions about either a major division of the field or a more specific problem based on further work the examinee has taken in advanced courses or seminars. Students are allowed eight hours from the time they receive their preliminary examination until they must deliver it for assessment. Students who qualify for special accommodations for taking the exam should provide the Graduate Administrator with a letter from [SSD](#) at least one week before the exam. All examinations must be taken on the student's own laptop computer using the Exam4 software. The Graduate Administrator will provide examinees with information about how to download the Exam4 software.

All Graduate Studies Committee members of a field may read and grade the exams. The grading procedures for preliminary examinations are as follows:

- Each examiner shall assign each question one of the following three grades: Pass; Low Pass; Fail. There will be two combinations of grades on individual questions that will be accepted as the minimum for passing the examination as a whole, and they will be treated as equivalent to each other: (1) Low Pass, Low Pass, Low Pass; or (2) Pass, Pass, Fail.
- When there is more than one examiner, the performance on the examination will be determined by averaging the grades given by individual examiners in such a way as to be consistent with the requirement just stated. To accomplish this, the grades Pass, Low Pass, and Fail will be equated with the numbers 5, 3, and 0 respectively, and an overall average of 3 will be required to pass.
- Each examiner will report his or her grades to the Graduate Administrator, who will collate the grades of all the examiners in each field. Then the Graduate Administrator will send each examiner his or her grades to confirm the grades have been recorded correctly.

Any written examination that is failed must be retaken during the Spring semester following the first examination. Examinations in a field may be retaken only once. A second failure, on any

one examination, entails termination from the program. Students may appeal termination through a pre-set appeals process (see below). After an examination is failed, students are not allowed to undertake an examination in a second field.

A student failing a preliminary exam for the second time may appeal the grade to the committees that originally graded the questions. The student exercises this right by informing the Graduate Administrator within one week of receiving the results and may give substantive reasons for the appeal. The student may appeal the grade on one or more questions. The Graduate Administrator shall notify the grading team for any appealed grade, maintaining the student's anonymity. The team(s) can decide whether or not to meet, or to simply confirm/revise their grades individually and communicate the results to the Graduate Administrator. Each member may revise their grade up or down; in order to pass the student, the new average of all questions must be a passing grade (3, under current rules).

Students who, due to emergency circumstances, are physically unable to attend a scheduled examination must inform the Graduate Administrator within 24 hours of their missed exam date of the circumstances regarding their absence. The student may petition the Graduate Adviser to retake the examination during that same examination period or within two weeks following the original examination date. It shall be the sole discretion of the Graduate Adviser, in consultation with the field chair(s), whether a new examination will be made available during the initial time period. If a student chooses not to attend an examination, and the absence was not due to emergency circumstances, the student will be failed for the missed examination and will be permitted only one more opportunity to take the examination in that field.

Please note: students must register for courses during the semester in which they take the preliminary exams. Failure to register for the semester in which a student takes the exam could result in disqualification of the exam's results.

5) Oral Qualifying Exams (or The Dissertation Proposal Defense): The purpose of the oral examination is to determine whether the student is ready to begin work on the dissertation. There are therefore two questions to be answered: (1) is the proposed research project feasible, and if it were completed, would it constitute an acceptable dissertation and, (2) is the student capable of carrying out work he or she proposes. Thus, both the proposal itself and the student's competence to carry it out are open to examination, and a student will not be admitted to candidacy until the examining committee is confident that the answers to both questions are positive.

The oral examination is to be taken within one year after passing the preliminary examination (by the beginning of the Fall semester of the fourth year) unless permission has been granted by the Graduate Adviser for a delay. Students need to prepare a written dissertation proposal and assemble a dissertation committee. It is the student's responsibility to see that each member of the oral committee has a copy of the dissertation proposal well in advance of the scheduled meeting. Students taking the preliminary examination before they have satisfied all course requirements must do so before taking the oral. Students who have finished all course work before the written examination should try to write a proposal and hold the oral examination within the semester in which the examination was taken. Individual adjustments to this schedule must be made by the Graduate Adviser.

The oral examination committee is comprised of a minimum of three (maximum of seven) members of the faculty of the Department of Government. These include a designated supervisor (who shall be the dissertation committee supervisor) and at least two other committee members. It is very important that all the members of the dissertation committee be on the oral examination committee, so that they can all commit themselves to acceptance of the plan of research described in the proposal.

The oral examination is the final step at which the Department certifies that all of the instructional aspects of the student's preparation are satisfactory. Typically, the student makes a short formal presentation of the proposal to the committee which is followed by questions and discussion. Members of the committee then select one of four options: (1) approval of the proposal; (2) approval contingent on specified changes to be checked by a designated faculty member or members; (3) rejection of the proposal, requiring a substantially new draft and another presentation; or (4) failure. The oral committee cannot request that a student retake a written examination that has already been passed. All committee members need to sign the "Report of Results of Oral Examination on Dissertation Proposal" form at the time of the oral examination. The form must also be signed by the Graduate Adviser to certify the examination results and to ensure that the student has received required ethical training and approval on [copyright](#) and [research with human participants](#). The form is available from the Government Graduate Office or online in [UT Box](#) (Current Student Administrative Forms folder). Students are encouraged to meet with the Graduate Administrator prior to finalizing this committee to review the student's status and committee composition.

- **Copyright & Plagiarism Tutorials:** Graduating degree candidates are required to affirm completion of the university's Copyright Tutorial and the library's Plagiarism Tutorial. The tutorials can be taken any time before submitting the Master's thesis/report and PhD dissertation. However, it is advised that the student take them before they begin to write, as the goal is to educate the student on the often confusing and constantly changing copyright laws as well as issues related to plagiarism.
- **Research With Human Participants:** All research projects with human participants conducted by faculty, staff, and students associated with the University of Texas at Austin must receive ethical approval before the research is begun. Research with human subjects (or participants) involves studies in which there is direct intervention or interaction with humans. It also includes observational studies in which there is systematic observation of humans, even when that observation is the observation of public behavior. Phone or mail surveys conducted for the purpose of obtaining generalizable knowledge is also considered research with human subjects. Any systematic investigation of people's non-public data, records, or specimens is considered a research study with human participants. However, the systematic investigation of publicly available archival records is not construed as research with human participants. A dissertation project with human subjects must be reviewed and approved by the Departmental Review Committee (DRC) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). For the policies, procedures, application materials and forms for the review of a project involving human subjects, consult the Office of Research Support and Compliance.

6) Advancing to Candidacy: Students preparing to advance to candidacy should arrange to meet with the Graduate Administrator to review their program of work and the fulfillment of requirements. All completed courses included in the program of work at the time of advancement to doctoral candidacy must have been taken within the previous six years.

Upon successful completion of the preliminary exam, the oral qualifying examination, and all required coursework, students form a dissertation committee (see information about The Dissertation Committee in Section VIII. Information for Continuing Students below.). While it is preferable that the dissertation committee is comprised of the same members as the oral qualifying examination committee, it is not required (with the exception of the committee supervisor).

After the dissertation committee is formed, the student is ready to submit the Degree Candidacy Application Form. Students must be registered during the semester in which they apply for candidacy. Information about advancing to candidacy can be found on the Graduate School's website.

Applicants should be prepared to include a brief (60 lines or less) description of the dissertation proposal as well as the names of the members of their dissertation committee.

Once submitted, the application for candidacy will route through the dissertation supervisor, the Graduate Adviser, and the Graduate School for approval. The approval process usually takes no more than one week. When the application for candidacy has been approved by the Graduate School, students will receive an automated e-mail verifying that the application for candidacy has been approved. At this point students have officially advanced to doctoral candidacy.

Graduate School rules require that the candidacy of each student be reviewed after two years and annually thereafter. The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) reports its recommendations to the Graduate Dean. The committee may recommend: (1) renewal of candidacy for one year, or (2) termination of candidacy.

7) The Dissertation Committee: When the student is ready to advance to candidacy, the student must form a dissertation committee. In consultation with the committee supervisor(s), the student must secure the agreement of at least four faculty members to serve on the student's dissertation committee. The supervisor and at least two other committee members must be from within the student's graduate program and must be members of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC). Each committee must have at least one member whose teaching and research are principally outside the student's graduate program. This outside committee member cannot be a member of the student's department's GSC. In other words, if the proposed outside committee member is from another department at the University of Texas, but is on the Government department's GSC, this person cannot serve as the outside committee member. The "[Graduate Studies Committee \(GSC\) List and Search](#)" can verify whether a proposed committee member is on the Government department's GSC roster.

A recommendation to appoint a scholar who is not on the GSC at the University of Texas at Austin should be accompanied by a curriculum vitae. The CV should be submitted to the Graduate School at the time the student applies for doctoral candidacy. Please note that the student's application for candidacy will not be approved by the Graduate School until the CV is received.

Retired faculty who have been nominated or granted emeritus status and who were members of the GSC upon retirement may request continued membership on the GSC with approval of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Such requests should be accompanied by the recommendation of the Graduate Adviser and be submitted to the Graduate School by the Graduate Adviser. If approved, the continued membership will be reviewed annually. Emeritus faculty members may serve on committees as a member or a co-supervisor but may not be appointed as sole dissertation supervisor.

In the event that a GSC member of a dissertation committee terminates employment with the University, except as discussed above, a replacement GSC member may be necessary to maintain the required committee membership of four. A former faculty member may remain on the dissertation committee, but will assume status as an outside committee member.

During the dissertation writing process, it is expected that students will periodically meet with members of the committee to review the progress being made.

Except for faculty members who are no longer employed by the University, no committee member including the supervisor may be replaced or withdrawn from a committee without his or her explicit consent. All committee changes must be submitted on the "[Petition for Change in Doctoral Committee](#)" and be signed by both the Graduate Adviser and the dissertation supervisor(s). The petition attests to the fact that all members of both committees (the previous

committee and the proposed committee) agree to the change, and that new members (1) will have ample time to become familiar with the student's dissertation, (2) will accept the committee responsibility, and (3) are aware that there will be no reimbursement for any expenses incurred. Committee changes must be submitted at least thirty days prior to the final oral examination (dissertation defense).

8) Registering for Dissertation Courses: Once a student's application for candidacy has been approved by the Graduate School, the student can register for dissertation courses. While writing the dissertation, students must be registered in the dissertation course during the Fall and Spring semesters to satisfy the [continuous registration](#) requirement.

Students who have advanced to candidacy are required to register for at least six hours of the dissertation course before graduating. This course is offered for 9 hours (GOV 999W), 6 hours (GOV 699W), and 3 hours (GOV 399W). To be considered a full-time student, students need to be registered for at least nine hours. Students may register for fewer than nine hours if they do not need to maintain full-time status (i.e. due to academic appointments, loans/grants guidelines, INS requirements, etc.). Students should check with the Graduate Administrator, the International Office, financial lenders, the financial aid office, etc. if they have any questions regarding the number of registration hours that are required. During the summer a 3-hour whole-session dissertation course (GOV w399W) is offered for students who need to register for summer courses to meet student employment registration requirements or to graduate in August.

Students may not receive advice and assistance from a member of the faculty in the preparation of the dissertation without being registered for the dissertation course. Students must be registered for a dissertation course during the semester in which they graduate. Dissertation courses are evaluated and graded each semester by the student's supervisor and assigned a grade of either Credit or No Credit.

Students who have completed all coursework but have not advanced to candidacy may register for a conference course (or courses) and/or organized courses until they have officially advanced to candidacy. Students who want to register for 9 hours can register for both GOV 397K and GOV 697K or for any combination of conference courses and organized courses. Their proposed dissertation committee supervisor can be listed as the supervisor for conference courses. If a student advances to candidacy before the midpoint of the semester, the placeholder conference course(s) can be dropped and replaced with the dissertation course. Students should contact the Graduate Administrator for information about deadlines and the required paperwork for changing conference courses to dissertation hours.

9) Continuous Registration Policy: Once they have officially advanced to candidacy, students are expected to be registered continuously for dissertation courses during the Fall and Spring semesters until completion of the doctoral degree. Students must register for at least six hours of dissertation (GOV _99W) before graduating.

10) APSA Membership: The Government department provides all students on the job market a free membership to the American Political Science Association for up to three years. This membership includes online access to E-jobs and APSA journals. Students who are going on the job market should contact the Graduate Administrator if they are interested in this service.

11) The Dissertation Defense: Students must be registered for dissertation hours during the semester in which they plan to graduate. Students are also required to file for graduation by submitting the online [Doctoral Graduation Application form](#) by the Graduate School's published deadline.

A final oral examination, the Defense of the Dissertation, is required. Committee members should be given a final draft of the dissertation at least four weeks before the scheduled date of the final oral examination. The student and the student's supervisor, in negotiation with the dissertation committee members, should determine a time and date for the defense.

A "[Request for Final Oral Examination](#)" form must be formally filed and scheduled through the Graduate School. Beginning in Fall 2020, the proposed defense date must be at least two weeks prior to the Graduate School's dissertation submission deadline in any given semester. A defense cannot be held within two weeks of the last class day of the semester, unless the committee has consented to hold the defense within those last two weeks. The form must be typed or word-processed. The student should carefully note the other forms that must be submitted along with the Request for Final Oral Examination form. The room in which the final oral examination is held must be indicated on the form and can be scheduled through the [Batts Hall Room Reservation request](#).

The committee's decision to examine the student on the dissertation must be unanimous. It is expected that all members of the dissertation committee attend the defense, either physically or virtually. By signing the "Request for Final Oral Examination" form, each member of the dissertation committee indicates that the dissertation has been received four weeks in advance, and that he or she agrees to be present, either in person or electronically, at the final oral examination (defense of dissertation). The student's Graduate Adviser must also sign the form. Although Graduate School rules allow for the dissertation supervisor and the student to attend the defense virtually, it is the policy of the Government Department Graduate Studies Committee that both the dissertation supervisor and the student must be physically present in the same room at the time of the defense. Exceptions can be made in rare and unusual circumstances, but must be approved in writing by the student's dissertation supervisor prior to scheduling the defense, with a copy to the Graduate Adviser giving the reasons for the exception.

Scanned or electronic signatures will be accepted on the Request for Final Oral Examination Form as long as they are legible and dark enough to be imaged. Typed names as a signature are not allowed. Electronic and digitally authorized signatures may be accepted in any font format so long as they include the insignia or logo of the e-signature software used showing authorization.

At most, one non-supervisory committee member may be absent from the defense. If one non-supervisory committee member is unable to attend the defense, there must be an explanation of the member's absence, together with an assurance that the student's dissertation will be read, and if approved, signed. There is a pre-typed section on the 2nd page of the Request for Final Oral Examination form that may be used for this purpose, or an attached letter may be used.

If a committee member is planning to attend but is not available to sign the form in person, the signature may be obtained electronically. The committee supervisor or the Graduate Adviser may also sign the form by proxy by signing their own name next to the member's printed name. However, proxy signatures for the committee supervisor or for the Graduate Adviser are not allowed. All signatures must be on one form. Once the "Request for Final Oral Examination" form and required paperwork have been submitted to the Graduate School, the defense will be officially scheduled by the Graduate School. Two days before the defense, the committee supervisor, the student, and the Graduate Administrator should receive via e-mail a "Report of Dissertation Defense" from the Graduate School.

The candidate will then present the dissertation to the committee and be examined accordingly. This final oral examination covers the dissertation and the general field of the dissertation. If the

examination and the dissertation are found to be satisfactory by all of the examiners, the student is awarded a Pass. In some cases the committee may require revisions that will be checked by either the entire committee or by the supervising professor only. This should be agreed upon at the time of the defense, and clearly communicated to the student. While the supervisor should wait to sign the Report of Dissertation Defense until all revisions have been approved, the other committee members may choose to sign at the defense. The committee should agree upon the length of time allowed for submission of the revised dissertation; this must be communicated clearly to the student. The completed Report of Dissertation Defense is submitted to the Graduate School only after final revisions to the dissertation have been approved, the Graduate Adviser or the Graduate Studies Committee designee has signed, and the dissertation has been uploaded.

If the committee does not award a Pass, it has a choice of two alternatives:

- **Re-defend.** This decision indicates that the committee is not satisfied with the dissertation or with the oral examination, but believes that rewriting may make it acceptable. In this case the fully signed Report of Dissertation Defense form should be returned to the Graduate School by the supervisor, with each member of the committee indicating their decision. Another scheduled defense will be required, and a new Report of Dissertation Defense form will be generated.
- **Fail.** This decision indicates that at least one member of the committee has decided that the dissertation is unsatisfactory and may not be rewritten. The fully signed Report of Dissertation Defense form should be returned to the Graduate School by the supervisor, with each member of the committee indicating their decision. Committee members should also submit their individual Report on Doctoral Dissertation forms indicating their dissatisfaction. This decision normally results in the termination of a doctoral student's program.

The signatures of all committee members are required on the Report of Dissertation Defense that is submitted to the Graduate School. This is true whether or not a committee member was physically present at the final defense. Signatures should all be on a single page.

The dissertation must be uploaded and all the required paperwork submitted to the Graduate School by 3:00 p.m. on the deadline shown on the Graduate School's [Deadlines and Submission Instructions](#) (usually the last class day of the semester).

IX. Government Department TA, AI, and GRA Information

1) Teaching Assistant (TA) Information: Because all undergraduate students at the University of Texas are required to take two introductory Government classes (GOV 310L and GOV 312L), the Government department has one of the largest total student enrollment for its classes on campus. Fortunately, this means the Government department can hire around 50-55 students each semester as Teaching Assistants (TAs) for undergraduate Government classes.

- **Allocating TAs to Classes:** The number of TAs that the Government department may hire varies from semester to semester and is determined by the College of Liberal Arts. Because the department can offer so many undergraduate classes and because some classes require more than one TA, the Government department has more undergraduate courses than it has TAs to staff them. Therefore, the Graduate Adviser determines which classes will receive a TA based on enrollment and based on College of Liberal Arts guidelines for TA and AI assignments. This decision is made during the registration process so that the most accurate assessment of enrollment numbers for a class can be

determined. The larger classes will be assigned a TA (or TAs) first, and then TAs are allocated to classes according to enrollment until there are no more TA positions to allocate.

- **Assigning TAs to Classes:** While it is preferable that TAs be assigned to a class that complements their fields of study, this is not always possible. The class schedules of 50 TAs combined with the class schedules of the courses that will receive a TA often determine to which class a TA is assigned. Professors can make a request to the Graduate Administrator to have a particular student assigned as their TA for a class, and the requests are usually fulfilled. Before the semester starts, professors are notified by e-mail who their TA(s) will be for the semester and the TA is copied on the e-mail.
- **TA Office Hours:** TAs are required to hold 3 hours of office hours each week. The Graduate Administrator will contact the semester's TAs with instructions about how to choose their office hours after the assignments have been e-mailed.
- **Teaching Assistant Job Duties Document:** Students and professors are asked to fill out and sign a Teaching Assistant Job Duties document for their TA assignment each semester. The Teaching Assistant Job Duties document originated from conversations that took place within the College of Liberal Arts TA Task Force during the 2014-2015 academic year. It is meant to improve communication between TAs and instructors, and enhance the success of TAs and students by generating conversation and clarifying expectations. This Job Duties document includes such duties as attending classes; taking notes; taking attendance; conducting review sessions; grading papers, homework, and exams; helping to prepare exam questions; helping to record, compute, and submit grades. It also includes the frequency with which these tasks should be performed and any notes or comments the professor may want to include regarding these tasks. The Graduate Administrator will ensure professors and their TAs receive and sign the TA Job Duties document every semester.
- **TA Contracts:** TAs are also required to sign a TA contract every semester. (Please note, this is a different document from the TA Job Duties document). The TA Contract is a contract between the TA and the department for the student's TA assignment. The contract lists the dates, the class and professor, the eligibility requirements, and the benefits for the TA assignment. The Graduate Administrator will distribute the contracts to each TA every semester.
- **TA Evaluations:** Professors who receive a TA are expected to fill out an evaluation of the TA's performance. The evaluation includes the following categories for evaluation: how well the TA interacted with students; how well the TA handled their responsibilities (i.e., conscientiousness); what noticeable contributions the TA made to the class; and any particular notes or concerns, both positive and negative. The Graduate Administrator will distribute TA evaluations to the professors every semester. These evaluations are then placed in each student's Annual Review file.
- **TA Benefits Eligibility:** TAs that are hired for 20 hours per week for 4.5 months during the Fall or Spring semester are eligible for employee health insurance, in-state tuition rates, and the tuition reduction benefit. See "Benefits" below for an explanation of these benefits.

2) Assistant Instructor (AI) Information: The Government department hires 3 - 6 Assistant Instructors (AI) every Fall and Spring semester to help teach its lower-division Government courses, generally GOV 310L American Government and GOV 312L Issues and Policies in American Government. AIs are not allowed to teach upper division courses without permission from the Graduate School. Students can apply for AI positions during the Annual Review and

Departmental Funding process.

- **AI Requirements:** Students are required to have completed GOV 398T Supervised Teaching in Government (offered on the Credit/No Credit basis only) before they can be hired as an AI. Students can also take a 398T course in any department that offers the course. AIs are also required to have held a Teaching Assistant position for at least one semester.
- **AI Office Hours:** AIs are required to hold 3 hours of office hours each week.
- **AI Contract:** AIs are also required to sign an AI contract every semester. The contract lists the dates, the class and supervising professor, the eligibility requirements, and the benefits for the AI assignment. The Graduate Administrator will distribute the contracts to each AI every semester. Generally, the Graduate Adviser is listed as the AI's supervisor.
- **AI Handbook:** The Government department provides each AI with an "Information for Assistant Instructors" handbook. This handbook is updated regularly by current AIs.
- **AI Benefits Eligibility:** AIs that are hired for 20 hours per week for 4.5 months during the Fall or Spring semester are eligible for employee health insurance, in-state tuition rates, and the tuition reduction benefit. See "Benefits" below for an explanation of these benefits.

3) Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) Information: Professors with research funds will occasionally hire Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) with those funds to help them conduct research. The professor will usually choose the student himself/herself. Most of these GRA positions are hired on an hourly basis and do not receive any benefits. GRA positions that are hired for 20-hours-per week for 4.5 months for the Fall or Spring semester are entitled to employee health insurance and in-state tuition rates. Because the tuition reduction benefit is not always available to GRAs, you are encouraged to consult your hiring supervisor for more information. (see "Benefits" below)

4) Information for New Employees: Students who are first-time employees at the University of Texas or who are employed after a break in employment (such as being funded by a fellowship, for example) will need to complete certain employment requirements. They will receive information about these requirements from the Government department staff.

- **Required Background Check:** The Government department is required to request a criminal background check for every new employee (including TAs, AIs, or GRAs) or for employees who have had a break in employment. The Government department staff will initiate the background check process and each new or returning employee will receive an automated e-mail which will request the required information for the background check.
- **Social Security Numbers and International Students:** International students should notify the Government department staff right away if they do not have a United States social security number (SSN). The Graduate Administrator will send to them more information about how to apply for an SSN. The SSN is not needed to authorize the background check.
- **Completing the Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9):** Once the new employee's background check is completed and their employment appointment has been approved, they will receive an onboarding task notification in Workday and information from the Government department staff about completing their Employee Eligibility Verification (I-9). It is a federal requirement that Section 1 (which is completed by the employee) and Section 2 (which is completed by the Government department staff in conjunction with the employee) must be completed by the third day of work.

- **Other Onboarding Tasks:** The new employee will also receive information about other Onboarding tasks that must be completed through Workday (Payroll information, setting up direct deposit, W-4 elections, benefits questionnaire, self-identification of Veteran Status, self-identification of a disability, emergency contact information, etc).

5) Benefits: Students whose TA, AI, or GRA* appointments are for 20-hours per week for 4.5 months in the Fall or Spring are entitled to receive the following benefits.

- **Resident Tuition Rates:** A benefit of a TA, AI, or GRA appointment is that the student is eligible to receive resident tuition rates. Whether or not a student is classified as a Texas resident by the University of Texas is determined by their residency status at the time they apply to the University of Texas. Therefore, TAs, AIs, and GRAs, who are classified as non-residents or foreign students are eligible to apply for resident tuition rates. Because it is not automatic, eligible students must request this every semester in which they are appointment to receive the benefit.
- **Tuition Reduction Benefit (TRB):** Another benefit of a TA or AI position is the eligibility to receive the TRB. The TRB is processed by the Government department staff and is applied directly to the student's tuition bill as a credit. Since tuition is due by the 4th class day of every Fall and Spring semester (2nd class day of each Summer session), the Government department staff will ensure that this credit is applied before the tuition payment due date. *The TRB is not always available to GRAs.
- **Student Employee Health Insurance:** The University will cover the full cost of the TA's, AI's, and GRA's health insurance coverage, equivalent to coverage provided to the faculty and staff. Eligible academic graduate student (AGS) employees are automatically enrolled in the AcademicBlue SHIP plan. However, they may make selections to change the default options, including the health insurance coverage plan itself. Benefits-eligible international student employees are eligible to [waive ISSS insurance](#) each semester so insurance costs are not incurred and added to the tuition fee bill.

Basic Coverage includes the following employee-only coverages:

- 1) UT Select medical plan (employee only)
- 2) UT Select prescription drug plan (employee only)
- 3) \$40,000 group term life insurance (employee only)
- 4) \$40,000 accidental death and dismemberment insurance (employee only)

New employees have 31 days from their first day of benefits eligible employment to enroll for optional insurance coverage. These optional coverages are deducted from the employee's paycheck. Optional Insurance for employee and eligible dependents includes:

- 1) Medical, for eligible dependents
- 2) Prescription Drug Plan for eligible dependents
- 3) Tobacco Premium Program
- 4) Dental
- 5) Vision
- 6) Life Insurance
- 7) Accidental death and dismemberment
- 8) Disability Insurance
- 9) Flexible Spending Accounts

6) Six-Year Funding Limit: Since 2014, the College of Liberal Arts implemented a policy to limit College support for students beyond their sixth year in the graduate program. This support includes UT fellowships, TA positions, and AI positions.

The College of Liberal Arts will consider TA and AI support during the seventh year in a small number of cases, based on the individual student's academic programs and personal circumstances. Generally, the College will not consider exceptions for UT fellowships. Departmental Graduate Advisers, with the support of the departmental Graduate Studies Committee and the chair, can present cases for exceptions to the College in a meeting scheduled for that purpose.

Cases for exceptions may include:

- **Obtaining prestigious external grants or fellowships:** Students who are successful in obtaining prestigious external grants or fellowships will be considered for support during their seventh year in the program if such a year is necessary for successful degree completion.
- **Parental Accommodation:** The College currently has a parental academic accommodation that allows for a one-semester extension in the expected time to degree in cases of childbirth or adoption. The student must file the Accommodation Form for Graduate Student Parents.

X. Fellowships and Other Funding

1) Fellowships: The Graduate Administrator will notify graduate students periodically about various fellowship opportunities for which they can apply. Below are some of the most common opportunities.

- **Graduate School Named Continuing Fellowships:** Each academic year the Graduate School asks departments from all over campus to nominate one or two students for the Graduate School Named Continuing Fellowship. Awards are based on major accomplishments since entering Graduate School, a well-defined program of research, a strong personal statement, and letters of recommendation. Financial need is also considered.

The stipend for this fellowship is generally around \$32,000 for twelve months. Award recipients also receive health insurance assistance and tuition assistance that pays the cost of in-state tuition and fees up to nine semester credit hours for the Fall and Spring semesters and three for Summer. Nominees are also considered for a limited number of prestigious Harrington Dissertation Fellowships (\$40,000 stipend) as well as \$1,000 Bruton fellowships.

The Graduate Administrator will announce the application process around the middle of October, and the Fellowship Committee will make a decision about who to put forth as the Government department's nominee(s) early in the spring semester.

- **Graduate School Fellowships and Departmental Fellowships:** During the Annual Review and Departmental Funding process, Government graduate students can apply for fellowships for the following Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters. Students must have advanced to candidacy by the semester of the award period to be eligible to receive these fellowships. Funding for these fellowships comes from the Graduate School and departmental funds. The Government department Fellowship Committee makes decisions about which students will receive these awards.

The stipend for these fellowships is \$22,000 for a full fellowship (both Fall and Spring

semesters) or \$11,000 for a one-semester Fall or Spring fellowship. Award recipients also receive a supplementary amount equal to the cost of the premium for student health insurance and full tuition for up to 9 hours for the semester (or semesters) of the award period. The stipend for Summer fellowships is \$5,000.

- **Pre-dissertation Summer Fellowships:** Students who have not advanced to candidacy are eligible to apply for Pre-dissertation Summer Fellowships during the Annual Review and Department Funding process. Although preference is given to students in their 1st or 2nd year, any student who has not advanced to candidacy may apply. The Government department Fellowship Committee makes decisions about which students will receive these awards.
The amount of the stipend may vary depending on the availability of departmental funds for these fellowships. Generally as many as 10 students receive awards of around \$3,500 each. Recipients are not allowed to take TA or GRA positions during the Summer in which they receive this fellowship. Recipients are also required to submit a brief report detailing their accomplishments to the Graduate Adviser before the beginning of the Fall semester.
- **Liebmann Fellowship:** Around the middle of October the Graduate School announces the competition for the Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowship. The Graduate Administrator will solicit applications via e-mail in October and the decision about who will be selected as the Government department's nominee (or nominees) is usually made before the Winter Break.
The terms of the fellowships are very attractive, providing a stipend of \$18,000 plus tuition for nine months. Recipients can apply for renewal of the fellowship for two additional years and to date all renewal requests have been approved. Applicants must be citizens of the United States. There is no restriction on field and no longer any age requirement.
- **Dissertation Writing Fellowships:** The College of Liberal Arts will contact the Graduate Adviser about opportunities for Dissertation Writing Fellowships for Spring and for Summer. Generally these are awards for students who are in the last stages of completing their dissertations. The stipend is \$10,000 for the Spring semester and \$6,000 for the Summer semester. The recipient will also receive the cost of full-time tuition and a supplementary amount equal to the cost of the premium for student health insurance.

2) Other Funding

- **Outstanding Government Department TA Award:** In 2015 the Government department instituted the "Outstanding Government Department TA Award". The Graduate Administrator solicits nominations from the faculty, and the recipient is announced at the annual Holiday Party in December. The Graduate Adviser and a committee of faculty members determine the recipient of the award. The amount of the award is \$500, and the recipient is submitted as the Government department's nominee for the [Graduate School's Livingston Award for Outstanding TA](#).
- **Conference Travel Awards:** The Government department receives a fixed allocation each year from the Graduate School for awards for graduate students to present a paper based on their research at a major domestic conference. The Graduate Adviser determines the amount of the award per student based on the number of awards that were requested by students in previous years. The application period is determined by the Graduate School and is generally for conferences held between August 25 - January 15 for Fall, January 16 - May 31 for Spring, and June 1 - August 24 for Summer. The

Graduate Administrator will announce the application process each semester.

- **Professionalization Awards:** The “professionalization fund” is intended for the following purposes:
 - 1) **Having graduate student co-authors attend specialized workshops at other institutions.** Sometimes a sponsoring non-local organization will invite and pay for the faculty member but not the student co-author. The “professional fund” is not to be used for regular conferences like the APSA or Mid-West.
 - 2) **Having graduate students attend special training events that are not covered by other programs.** We already support students with attendance at ICPSR and IQMR (see below). We would also like to support students with travel to other summer institutes that provide training in advanced methods or substantive specializations, through close contact with prominent experts in the field.
 - 3) **Being taken to meals when outside speakers come to Austin, or at conferences.** Graduate students can benefit from close contact with researchers who work on similar topics at other institutions. A meal with the faculty mentor, a graduate student or two, and an outside faculty member can be a great way to build networks. Compensation from the fund is limited to the mentor, the outside faculty, and up to two graduate students.
 - 4) **Flying in for practice job talks.** Many of our advanced graduate students have visiting teaching positions elsewhere and should come back to Austin to receive feedback on job talks. This applies also to people who have finished the Ph.D. and are in temporary teaching or post-doc positions. Priority will be given to graduates who are no further than two years past the granting of the Ph.D.

The process is as follows:

- 1) **Submit a request:** The sponsoring faculty member (not the student) submits the request to the Administrative Manager and the Graduate Adviser. The application should state the reason for the request, the name(s) of the student(s); and the anticipated amount of money needed. The Graduate Adviser will decide the allocation of funds.
 - 2) **Funding Caps:** There will be a cap of \$500.00 on out-of-town workshops; and a cap of \$400.00 to fly people in for job talks. Meals must stay within the entertainment caps set by the University. Please contact departmental staff for guidelines.
 - 3) **Deadlines:** October 1 is the deadline for workshop submissions for the Fall semester. February 1 is the deadline for workshop submissions for the Spring semester. June 1 is the deadline for submissions for summer expenses.
 - 4) **Availability of Funds:** Funds available for job talk “fly ins” and meals will be allocated on a “first come, first served” basis. When the funds are exhausted, no more awards will be made until the next academic year.
- **ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Science Research):** Each summer the Government Department sponsors up to three students to attend the ICPSR Summer Program at the University of Michigan. This is a four-week program that "provides a comprehensive, integrated program of studies in research design, statistics, data analysis, and social science methodology".

The application process is announced by the Graduate Administrator around the middle of February. Applicants should have completed Stats I and Stats II by the end of the current Spring semester. Preference is given to qualified applicants in their 2nd or 3rd year. The department provides funding for tuition and expenses (airfare, housing, food). A committee of Government Department faculty members (usually the Graduate Adviser, the chair of the Methodology field, and one other faculty member) will select recipients from among the applicants.

- **IQMR (Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Methods Research):** In the Government department's continuing efforts to support the professional development of our graduate students, the Department joined the Consortium on Qualitative Research Methods (CQRM) several years ago. The primary advantage of joining this consortium is that it enables the Government department to send participants to the Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR). The Department's membership in the CQRM covers all tuition, lodging, and food expenses for participants. The Department provides travel funds to cover airfare for the participants that are selected. The application process is announced early in December and decisions are announced by the end of January.
- **Graduate Research Assistant Summer Subvention Awards:** Graduate students who work as a Graduate Research Assistants (GRA) during the Summer are required to be enrolled in--and pay tuition for--three hours during a Summer session. Often the pay they receive does not cover the cost of tuition. Therefore, the Government department sets aside funds in order to help GRAs pay their Summer tuition. Three conditions must be met:
 - 1) the faculty member who hires the student as a GRA must contribute to the cost of tuition
 - 2) the student must be a Texas resident or must have already received Texas resident tuition rates due to a Summer Teaching Assistant or Assistant Instructor position
 - 3) if the student has no other plans to take a course, the faculty member should agree to supervise a three-hour conference course with the student.

- **Miscellaneous Policies and Procedures**

1) Conference Courses: When graduate students have taken all the courses required for their program of work and are preparing to advance to candidacy, they can register for Individualized Instruction Courses, also known as Conference Courses. Because the Government department does not offer any organized graduate courses in the Summer, students who are required to be registered during the summer due to a TA, AI, or GRA appointment can register for conference courses if they don't want to take a course outside of the Government department. A three-hour conference course (GOV 397K) and a six-hour conference course (GOV 697K) are offered during the Fall and Spring semesters. Three-hour first-session (GOV f397K), second-session (GOV s397K), and whole-session (GOV w397K) conference courses are offered during the Summer.

An Individualized Instruction Permission Form is required to be filled out, signed by both the student and the instructor, and returned to the Graduate Administrator prior to registering for the course. Registration for Conference Courses is restricted until the Individualized Instruction Permission form is received by the Graduate Administrator. When the form is received by the Graduate Administrator, the registration restriction will be removed and the student can register for the Conference Course.

Conference courses cannot be counted toward the Major Field courses, the Minor Field courses, or the Writing course.

2) Commencement: Every May the Government department has its own Commencement Ceremony for graduating undergraduate students. Students who received their PhD in the Summer and Fall of the previous year and the Spring of the current year will be contacted by the Graduate Administrator to invite them to attend. The PhD recipients will sit with the faculty during the Commencement Ceremony and will be recognized as they are hooded by their

dissertation supervisor. Afterwards, a reception is held for the PhD students and their family members and/or significant others.

3) Graduate Student Organizations

- **Departmental Graduate Student Organization (GSO):** The graduate students in the Government Department have their own organization called the Graduate Student Organization (GSO). Each Spring the Graduate Administrator initiates an election process in which the graduate students elect their co-presidents. For the last several years there have been sets of three co-presidents representing a variety of sub-fields and cohorts. If there are issues regarding the Graduate Program that need to be addressed, the GSO co-presidents will meet with the Graduate Adviser.
- **Graduate Student Assembly (GSA):** The Graduate Student Assembly is the official voice of graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. One of the GSO co-presidents serves as the Government department's representative for the GSA. Another co-president serves as the department's alternate GSA representative.

4) Printing and Copying: A printer/copier that is provided by UTprint is available for graduate student use. It is located in Batts 2.104 (the Faculty Lounge/Mailroom). Students wishing to use the printer/copier must download the drivers onto their computer or device (type "UTPrint" into the search engine on the UT home page). The cost is \$0.10 per page. Payment is made through Bevo Bucks downloaded onto the student's UT ID card.

5) Offices & Lockers

- **TA and AI Offices:** Government Teaching Assistants are provided desk space in either Batts 1.102 or Batts 1.116. There are 29 cubicles in Batts 1.102 and 22 cubicles in Batts 1.116. Access to these rooms is provided via a card reader using the student's UT ID card. Cubicles are chosen through the Graduate Administrator, who will also grant card ID access.
Government Assistant Instructors are assigned an office in the second-floor Infill between Batts Hall and Mezes Hall. Generally the AI will share an office with another AI or a fellowship student. The Graduate Administrator will assign an office to AIs during the Summer before the Fall semester begins.
- **Fellowship Offices:** The Government department endeavors to provide a desk for every Government fellowship student who is in Austin during the term of their fellowship. Generally the fellow will share an office with another fellow or AI. The Graduate Coordinator will assign an office to fellowship recipients during the Summer before the Fall semester begins.
- **Lockers:** Lockers with a combination lock are available on the first floor of Batts Hall for students who would like to use them. The cost is \$10 per semester or \$20 for the academic year. Students who wish to have a locker should contact the Graduate Administrator.

6) Graduate Student Listserv: The Government department provides a listserv for Government graduate students to receive e-mails from the Graduate Administrator and other departmental staff, the Graduate Adviser, and Faculty. Graduate students are also allowed to post message to the listserv. The Graduate Administrator will add all incoming graduate students to the listserv and will remove graduating or departing students.

7) Information about Registration and Grades

- Registration Requirements:** Full-time registration for graduate students is considered to be at least nine hours (3 three-hour courses) in the Fall and Spring. For the Summer, full-time registration is considered to be at least three hours (1 three-hour course) in either the first Summer session, the second Summer session, or a whole Summer session. The minimum number of hours for a graduate student to be registered (part-time) is three hours during a long semester. International students and students who hold an academic position (Teaching Assistant, Assistant Instructor, or Graduate Research Assistant) are required to be registered full-time. University and department fellowships, as well as some outside fellowships, require that recipients be registered full-time.

Students who have advanced to candidacy must maintain [continuous registration](#) every long semester (Fall and Spring) until they graduate. If a student who has advanced to candidacy fails to register for a semester but wishes to continue their studies during a subsequent semester, the student will have to apply for readmission to the Graduate School and pay tuition for any missed semesters. Students who have advanced to candidacy do not have to be registered for Summer sessions unless they are employed as a TA, GRA, or an AI, or unless they are planning to graduate in August.

Students who will be conducting research outside of the United States may want to consider applying for [International Study and Research \(ISR\)](#). Students who have been approved for ISR need only pay a one-time application fee of \$75, a \$600 registration fee, and the cost of mandatory overseas insurance. International students returning to their home country are automatically exempt from this coverage and associated charges, although they are able to opt in. ISR satisfies the continuous registration requirement for students who have advanced to candidacy.
- Grading Basis for Graduate Students:** Graduate students have the option of taking some graduate courses on either a letter-grade or credit/no credit grading basis. Please note that the grading basis of credit/no credit for graduate students is not the same as the pass/fail grading basis that is offered to undergraduate students. A graduate student must receive the equivalent grade of C or better to receive a grade of “credit” for a course. No more than 20% of the courses that count toward a graduate student’s Program of Work may be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis. Foundation courses, Major Field courses, Minor Field courses, and Writing courses may not be taken on a credit/no credit grading basis. Supervised Teaching in Government (398T) can be taken only on a credit/no credit grading basis. Master's Thesis (698A and 698B), Master's Report (398R) and Dissertation courses (i.e., GOV X99W) can be taken only on a credit/no credit grading basis and do not count toward the 20% Program of Work limit. The default grading basis for most organized graduate courses is letter-grade basis, so a graduate student wanting to take a course on a credit/no credit grading basis should take an extra step to change the grading basis at the time of registration.
- Taking a [Leave of Absence](#) from Graduate School:** Graduate students may apply for a leave of absence for no more than two semesters. If a student has not yet advanced to candidacy, they must submit an Authorization for Leave of Absence form to their Graduate Adviser for his/her signature and then to the Graduate School for approval. It is up to the discretion of the student’s Graduate Adviser and Graduate Studies Committee to approve a leave of absence for a student who has not advanced to candidacy. The only rule is that a leave of absence must be “in the best interests of the academic progress of the student”. The form must be submitted to the Graduate School in advance of the semester for which a leave is granted.

If a student has advanced to candidacy, the Petition for Leave of Absence Form must be submitted along with a letter from the Graduate Adviser to the dean of the Graduate School explaining the reason(s) for the leave. Leaves of absence for students who have advanced to candidacy are permitted only in rare and unusual circumstances.

Students who have been on a leave of absence must apply for readmission.

- **Incomplete Work:** Occasionally a graduate student may find that he/she is unable to complete the required work by the end of the semester. The student should discuss this situation with their professor. The professor can then decide to give the student a grade of “X” or temporary incomplete for the course. The student must complete the work before the end of the following long (Fall or Spring) semester. If the student does not complete the work, the grade of “X” will automatically become a grade of “I” (permanent incomplete).

Department of Government Advising Guidelines*

May 15, 2023

1 Introduction

Quality mentoring is an integral part of graduate education. Graduate faculty is expected to serve as good advisors to help graduate students succeed academically and professionally. As laid out in the following sections, good advising is not only about formal training of students but also involves providing students with a support system and helping them develop their scholarly identity and network. In turn, students are expected to be good advisees and keep an open line of communication with their advisors.

The Graduate Student Mentoring Committee at UT-Austin has the Mentoring Graduate Students: Faculty Guide. The faculty guide provides the departments and their faculty with best practices, different approaches to mentoring, and resources for further reading. Interested readers can refer to this guideline for further information.

In what follows, we first lay out the department's formal advising practices. Next, building on the Mentoring Committee's faculty guidelines, we list advising best practices for faculty advisors in the Department of Government. Next, we list advising best practices for graduate student advisees.

We emphasize that while the current formal advising practices must be followed according to the schedule, the best practice guidelines for faculty advisors and graduate student advisees are only suggestions to improve advisors-advisee relationships. We recognize that each faculty advisor and graduate student advisee has their own unique approaches and preferences that may deviate from our suggestions below. Keeping an open line of communication between the advisor and advisee is, therefore, essential to establish and sustain a good and productive relationship.

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2 Advising Details in the Department of Government

2.1 Who are the advisors and what are their roles?

- The Graduate Adviser (also known as the Director of Graduate Studies, DGS) advises graduate students about their program of study, certifies that students meet departmental and university requirements, and administers departmental funding and annual review of all graduate students. Representing the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies in all matters pertaining to the graduate program in the Department, the Graduate Adviser is the principal liaison between the Department and the Graduate School.
- The Director of Graduate Admissions and Placement (DGAP) administers admissions and oversees the placement of the current graduate students.
- During the course of their graduate school career, students will have two kinds of advisors – academic advisors, who guide them through the first two-three years of their studies; and dissertation advisor(s), who will lead their dissertation research and chair their dissertation committee. There is no expectation that the former will coincide with the latter, and the students have full freedom to choose their dissertation advisor(s).
- Academic advisors and dissertation advisors are (usually) in a student’s principal field of interest and provide specific advice about faculty, courses, research, and job placement in that field. Dissertation advisors must be members of the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC).

2.2 Advisor Assignments

Upon entering the program, students will start working with two academic advisors. One of these academic advisors will be chosen by the student, in consultation with the Graduate Adviser. The second advisor will be assigned by the Graduate Adviser by taking the field and topic of interest of the student into account.

In the summer before the first semester of study, the Graduate Coordinator will contact incoming students with information about the faculty advisor selection process. If an incoming student has not chosen their preferred faculty advisor by the end of November of their first semester, the Graduate Adviser will also select this academic advisor for the student.

Students are free to change academic advisors at any time before advancing to candidacy, subject to the approval of a new academic advisor and notification of the Graduate Adviser and Graduate Coordinator. This notification can take place via e-mail.

Dissertation advisor oversees the Ph.D. dissertation writing process. Academic advisors that the student works with during their first three years in the program are under

no obligation to serve as students' dissertation advisors once students have advanced to candidacy. In addition, students are free to work with different faculty as their dissertation advisor(s). Students can have more than one dissertation advisor (co-chair of the dissertation). Changing a dissertation advisor (or adding a co-chair for the dissertation) requires the approval of the advisors, the Graduate Adviser, and the Graduate School. The paperwork can be completed in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator.

2.3 Advising Milestones: Required and recommended practices

Table 1: Required and recommended milestones

	Required	Recommended
1st Year	Meeting with advisors by April 1	Meeting with advisors by October 15 Meeting with advisors by July 15
2nd Year	2nd year-review by February 15	Meetings with advisors by October 15 Meeting with advisors by July 15
3rd Year	(Re-)2nd year review if required	Meeting with advisors by October 15 Meeting with advisors by April 1
4th Year	Dissertation proposal defense by Sept 1	Regular meetings with advisor(s)
5th-6th Year		Regular meetings with advisor(s)

First-year in the program

- **Recommended by October 15:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss student's progress in the program and to decide on the Spring semester courses.
- **Required by April 1:** A group meeting to discuss Fall course and TA evaluations (if available) and student's progress in the program and to decide on the first summer goals and Fall courses. Students must provide the committee with a statement of the student's self-evaluation of their time in the program and their research interests. The Graduate Coordinator will provide each student's advisors with copies of the student's Program of Work and Graduate Student Course and TA Evaluations as well as a copy of the "First-Year Advising Form" to take with them when they meet with their faculty advisors. Either the faculty advisors or the student can return the completed form to the Graduate Coordinator. The completion and return of the "First Year Review" form is required prior to student registration. Students who fail to meet with their faculty advisors and submit a completed advising form will not be permitted to register for the next semester.
- **Recommended by July 15:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss Spring course and TA evaluations (if available) and student's progress in the program. Upon arranging the meeting date(s), the advisors must request the Spring course and TA evaluations from the Graduate Coordinator (at least one week before the meeting) to be able to provide feedback to the student.

Second-year in the program

- **Recommended by October 15:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss student's progress in the program and to decide on the Spring semester courses.
- **Required second-year review by February 15:** A group meeting with both advisors and a third faculty chosen by the Graduate Adviser to provide an opportunity for students to discuss their program of study and research interests, and to receive constructive feedback from faculty working in their general areas of interest. The student's Major field and Minor field are confirmed during this review. In addition, one of three recommendations will be made regarding the student's progress in the Government PhD program: 1) the student is approved to take the preliminary examination in the student's Major field; 2) the student should be re-evaluated during the next long semester; or 3) the student should be terminated from the Government PhD program.

Each student will be responsible for conferring with their Second-Year Review Committee to schedule a time for their second-year review. Students must provide three items so that the committee can review their progress: (1) a solo-authored paper reporting on research the student has conducted or discussing a significant research problem in political science; (2) a statement of the student's research interests and tentative ideas or plans for a dissertation; and (3) the student's C.V. These three items should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator at least one week before the review. The Graduate Coordinator will provide each student's Second-Year Review Committee with copies of the materials named above, along with copies of the student's Program of Work and Graduate Student Course Evaluations. In addition, the Graduate Coordinator will provide a copy of the Second-Year Review Report for the student. At the completion of the meeting, the Second-Year Review Committee will fill an evaluation (the Second-Year Review Report) with the Government Graduate Office. The Report will summarize the student's strengths and weaknesses and the Committee's recommendation for the student's continuation in the PhD program. Students who fail to meet with their review committee will not be permitted to register for the next semester.

- **Recommended by July 15:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss Spring course and TA evaluations (if available) and student's progress in the program, and to discuss how to best prepare for the comprehensive exam. Upon arranging the meeting date(s), the advisors must request the Spring course and TA evaluations from the Graduate Coordinator (at least one week before the meeting) to be able to provide feedback to the student.

Third-year in the program

- **Recommended (or required if the second-year review outcome is the student should be re-evaluated after the preliminary exam) by October 15:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss the preliminary

exam performance, the research program, and the way forward.

If the meeting is to reevaluate the student for their second-year review, the original Second-Year Review committee reconvenes. If the student wants to replace one or more members of the committee, the student must petition the Graduate Adviser with reasons for requesting the change by September 1. Each student will be responsible for conferring with their committee to schedule a time for their second-year review. Students must provide a statement of no more than two pages (double-spaced) laying out what they have accomplished since their original Second-Year Review. While this document is required, the committee can ask for additional material and the student may add revised papers, statements, or CV if they prefer. These materials should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator at least one week before the review. The Graduate Coordinator will provide each student's Second-Year Review Committee with copies of the materials, along with copies of the student's Program of Work and Graduate Student Course Evaluations. In addition, the Graduate Coordinator will provide a copy of the Second-Year Review Report for the student. At the completion of the meeting, the Second-Year Review Committee will fill an evaluation (the Second-Year Review Report) with the Government Graduate Office. The Report will summarize the student's strengths and weaknesses and the Committee's recommendation for the student's continuation in the PhD program. One of two recommendations will be made regarding the student's progress in the Government PhD program: 1) the student is approved to continue in the program; 2) the student should be terminated from the Government PhD program.

- **Recommended by April 1:** A group meeting or separate individual meetings with both advisors to discuss Fall semester course and TA evaluations and student's progress in the program, and to finalize the details of the dissertation supervisor(s) and the committee. Upon arranging the meeting date(s), the advisors must request the Spring course and TA evaluations from the Graduate Coordinator (and at least one week before the meeting date) to be able to provide feedback to the student.

Fourth-year and beyond in the program

- **Required by September 1: Dissertation Proposal Defense/Oral Qualifying Exam:** To determine whether the student is ready to begin work on the dissertation. There are two questions to be answered: (1) is the proposed research project feasible, and if it were completed, would it constitute an acceptable dissertation and, (2) is the student capable of carrying out work he or she proposes. Thus, both the proposal itself and the student's competence to carry it out are open to examination, and a student will not be admitted to candidacy until the examining committee is confident that the answers to both questions are positive. The oral examination is to be taken within one year after passing the preliminary examination (by the beginning of the Fall semester of the third year) unless permission has been granted by the

Graduate Adviser for a delay. Students need to prepare a written dissertation proposal and assemble a dissertation committee. It is the student's responsibility to see that each member of the oral committee has a copy of the dissertation proposal well in advance of the scheduled meeting. Students taking the preliminary examination before they have satisfied all course requirements must complete all the course requirements before taking the oral. Individual adjustments to this schedule must be made by the Graduate Adviser.

The oral examination committee is comprised of a minimum of three (maximum of seven) members of the faculty of the Department of Government. It is very important that all the members of the dissertation committee be on the oral examination committee, so that they can all commit themselves to acceptance of the plan of research described in the proposal.

The oral examination is the final step at which the Department certifies that all of the instructional aspects of the student's preparation are satisfactory. Typically, the student makes a short formal presentation of the proposal to the committee which is followed by questions and discussion. Members of the committee then select one of four options: (1) approval of the proposal; (2) approval contingent on specified changes to be checked by a designated faculty member or members; (3) rejection of the proposal, requiring a substantially new draft and another presentation; or (4) failure. The oral committee cannot request that a student retake a written examination that has already been passed. All committee members need to sign the "Report of Results of Oral Examination on Dissertation Proposal" form at the time of the oral examination. The form must also be signed by the Graduate Adviser to certify the examination results and to ensure that the student has received required ethical training and approval on copyright and research with human participants.

- **Recommended: Frequent meetings with the dissertation supervisor(s) and members of the dissertation committee during the remaining time in the program:** To discuss student dissertation progress, discuss TA and course evaluations (if any), to plan for the job market, to discuss the feedback from the 4th year and above field meetings that happen in October/November of every year.

3 Advising Best Practices for Advisors

Below is a list of suggested best practices for faculty and dissertation advisors:

- Aligning expectations and responsibilities by keeping an open discussion of expectations and responsibilities and setting these expectations, responsibilities, and goals early on in the relationship
- Proactively reaching out to advisees early in their graduate career
- Maintaining effective communication by clearly laying out the preferred medium of communication and frequency of meetings
- Providing information on what they should expect from you during long breaks (winter, spring, and summer breaks in addition to leaves and fellowships) and discuss the preferred method or methods of communication during those periods.
- Introducing students into the professional practices of the discipline (i.e., publishing, conference presentations, etc.)
- Helping student improve their performance in the program by discussing their course and TA evaluations with them in a timely manner
- Discussing summer plans and advising students about best practices for the summer
- Providing teaching advice and opportunities to students
- Directing students to appropriate research policies and training related to their research (e.g., IRB, responsible conduct of research, human-subject protection, animal care, hazardous materials, etc.)
- Providing a safe and secure environment for students to conduct their research
- Providing and discussing clear criteria for authorship of collaborative research
- Suggesting pertinent bibliographical sources and approaches
- Reading and returning work to the students promptly (ideally within couple of weeks) and with useful comments
- Maintaining active supervision of student work during leaves or extended absences from campus (faculty who are on sabbatical are expected to continue to supervise the work of their students)
- Helping students to prepare abstracts or papers for conferences and manuscripts for publication

- Encouraging students to participate in professional conferences and assisting them financially if possible (each graduate student receives a one-time (per academic year) small financial support from the Graduate School to attend a conference. However, it is a small amount that likely can't cover all essential expenses).
- Being the student's advocate in academic and professional communities.
- Facilitating interactions with other scholars, on campus and in the wider professional community.
- Advising students on applying for grants to support their research and writing and read drafts of grant proposals
- Providing timely and thoughtful letters of recommendation for students
- Discussing with the student how to prepare for the academic job market, if they pursue an academic career
- Recognizing and giving value to the idea that there are a variety of career options available to the student in their field of interest and accepting that the student's choice of career options is worthy of your support.
- Providing support to advisees beyond graduation

4 Advising Best Practices for Graduate Students

Below is a list of suggested best practices for graduate student advisees:

- Follow the instructions of the faculty and dissertation advisors carefully. If advice is not clear or conflicting with other advisors' recommendations, clarify the instructions, and when possible, put it in writing (in an email or on a document that the advisors and the students have copies of). If you disagree with a specific advice, have a respectful and open conversation with the faculty to find an agreed-upon solution.
- Initiate meetings with faculty when needed and provide an agenda well in advance
- When stuck, confused, or otherwise mixed-up, immediately schedule a meeting with a faculty member to discuss the issue.
- Submit the best versions of chapters or manuscripts possible, even when they are in the beginning stages
- Ask when an advisor can get back to you with comments and provide them ample time to read and comment on your work (ideally at least a couple of weeks).
- Respond fully to advisor's comments and critiques, including incorporating agreed-upon changes and revisions into work
- Plan for grant writing, job applications, and conference submissions by identifying possibilities well in advance of deadlines. If you need a letter of recommendation, provide the advisor and other faculty with an updated c.v. and a memo or outline on the state of work in progress. Ensure that your letter writers have ample time to write their letters (ideally at least one month).
- Keep your advisor informed in advance about any plans to take on other responsibilities, such as additional research opportunities, co-authorship with other faculty/peers, teaching, and other professional opportunities inside and outside the department while in graduate school. Discuss how you should adjust your writing and graduation plans accordingly in consultation with your advisors.
- Keep advisor informed of professional development after graduation

5 Potential Questions to Ask to Graduate Student Advisees (Taken from the UT-English Department's Mentoring Best Practices document)

• Goals

- What are your short and long-term goals (e.g., for graduate school, career, publication)?
- What steps are you taking to complete those goals and how can I help you to do that?
- What barriers do you see to achieving your goals and how can we work to mitigate those?
- What motivates your research and how does your project fulfill that motivation?
- How can I help you navigate the field or job application process?

• Mentoring style

- What kind of mentoring best helps you?
- How can we both be held accountable for this work?
- What would you like to get from a working relationship, and is this one working? What type of feedback and meetings have you found most helpful?

• Personal work

- What are some important things to know about you and your work?
- What are your strengths? What skills or knowledge do you need to work on most? What is your writing process and work style like?
- What are your current projects and what do you envision for the future?
- Is there any advice I can offer about time management or writing strategies?
- What aspects of your writing do you think need the most work?
- How is teaching going? Do you need any specific suggestions on what or how to teach?

• Program

- Do you have concerns about the program?
- What can the program or I do to better support you?
- How can we make you feel more safe and heard?
- How has your experience in the program been, both academically and socially? What do you think about [insert specific departmental issue]?
- What have your experiences with other faculty members been like?

- **Beyond work**

- Are you okay? How are you doing?
- What are you struggling with? How can I make this a safer space?
- Do you have resources to help you with mental health, physical health, or financial issues? Outside of academic work, is there anything else you are up to?

6 Further Resources

- UT-Austin Graduate School Graduate Student Mentoring
- APSA Mentoring Program