

Graduate Handbook

Graduate Studies in Political Science



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Presented To :
GRADUATE COHORT 2025/26

Presented By :
POLI GRAD PROGRAM

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INTRODUCTION

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Welcome Message

Welcome to the Graduate Program in Political Science
Dalhousie University – Department of Political Science

Dear Graduate Students,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Department of Political Science at Dalhousie University. Whether you are beginning your MA or PhD journey, you are now part of a vibrant intellectual community dedicated to rigorous inquiry, critical engagement, and impactful research.



Our program offers you the opportunity to explore a wide range of subfields in political science, work closely with faculty members at the forefront of their disciplines, and contribute meaningfully to scholarly and public conversations. We are deeply committed to supporting your academic, professional, and personal growth throughout your time here.

This handbook is designed to be your guide. It outlines key program requirements, milestones, policies, and the many resources available to help you thrive. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with its contents and to reach out with questions at any point. Our graduate office, faculty advisors, and staff are here to ensure your experience is enriching and rewarding.

Welcome again to Dalhousie. We look forward to the insights, energy, and curiosity you bring.

Warm regards,

Dr. Kristin Good

Graduate Coordinator, Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

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THE DEPARTMENT

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A Brief History of the Department of Political Science



The Department of Political Science at Dalhousie University has long been recognized as a centre of academic excellence in the study of politics, governance, and public affairs. Situated within one of Canada's original U15 research-intensive universities, the Department has built a strong and enduring reputation nationally and internationally for its contributions to political scholarship, teaching, and public engagement.

Graduate study in Political Science at Dalhousie formally began in the mid-20th century, in response to growing national and global interest in political systems, public policy, and international relations. The MA program was among the earliest offered in Atlantic Canada, establishing a legacy of rigorous intellectual training. By the 1970s, Dalhousie expanded its graduate offerings to include the PhD, making it the only full-service Political Science department in Atlantic Canada—offering degrees at the BA, MA, and PhD levels. Since then, the department has continued to distinguish itself across key subfields, including Canadian politics, international relations, political theory, public policy, and comparative politics.

A recent review of the Department noted:

"The Department of Political Science... at Dalhousie University, one of the U-15 research universities, has for many decades had a high reputation in the Canadian Political Science Community. It is the only full-service Political Science department (offering BA, MA, and PhD degrees) in Atlantic Canada. It has earned a strong reputation in several key subfields... through its research and the excellent students it graduates at all levels."

Although modest in size by international standards, the Department maintains a high level of scholarly output and is committed to fostering a supportive, collegial, and intellectually vibrant environment for its graduate students.

Graduate students benefit not only from close mentorship within the Department but also from Dalhousie's interdisciplinary strengths. Students are encouraged to take relevant courses across the university to deepen and enrich their research. Common interdisciplinary pathways include coursework in International Development Studies, Philosophy, Public Administration, and History, allowing students to tailor their graduate experience to their unique academic and professional goals.



The Department of Political Science is housed on the third floor of the Henry Hicks Administration Building, at the heart of Dalhousie's historic Studley Campus. The general office is located in Room 301. In addition to faculty offices and administrative spaces, the Department offers a spacious, Wi-Fi-enabled graduate student lounge—used for informal gatherings, research workshops, and colloquia. Graduate students also enjoy full access to the university's extensive academic, research, and wellness facilities, many of which are outlined later in this handbook.

As Dalhousie University continues into its third century, the Department of Political Science—now well into its second century of political inquiry—remains dedicated to training the next generation of scholars, analysts, and engaged citizens. Its graduate programs are rooted in critical thinking, methodological rigour, and a belief in the enduring relevance of political science to understanding and shaping the world around us.

A Brief History of Graduate Studies in Political Science at Dal.

Graduate studies in Political Science at Dalhousie University are grounded in a long and distinguished tradition of critical inquiry, public engagement, and scholarly excellence. As one of the oldest political science departments in Canada, the department has played a formative role in shaping the discipline nationally, with its graduate programs emerging as key sites for intellectual leadership and advanced research since the mid-20th century.

The Master of Arts (MA) program was formally established in the post-war period, a time when universities across Canada were expanding in response to growing societal demand for expertise in public administration, international affairs, and political theory. Dalhousie responded by developing a rigorous graduate curriculum that emphasized both foundational knowledge and research innovation. From the outset, the MA program was designed not only to prepare students for doctoral studies but also to equip them with the analytical and methodological tools needed for leadership in the public, private, and non-profit sectors.

The PhD program was introduced in the 1970s, marking a significant milestone in the department's evolution. It reflected a maturing research culture and the department's increasing prominence in Canadian and international political science. The doctoral program fostered advanced scholarship across diverse subfields, including Canadian politics, international relations, political theory, and public policy. Dalhousie's location in Halifax—with its close proximity to provincial and municipal governments, military institutions, and NGOs—has also enriched the graduate experience, offering students unique opportunities for field research, policy engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration.



Over the years, the department's graduate programs have been shaped by leading scholars whose research and teaching have influenced public discourse and academic debates alike. Faculty have brought expertise in areas such as democratic theory, Indigenous governance, security studies, climate politics, and global institutions—building a curriculum that is both globally informed and regionally grounded.

Today, the graduate program continues to attract a diverse cohort of students from across Canada and around the world. With a strong emphasis on mentorship, small seminar-style learning, and independent research, students benefit from a collegial and intellectually vibrant environment. Graduate students are actively involved in departmental life, presenting research at conferences, participating in reading groups, and contributing to ongoing projects and publications.

As the Department of Political Science looks to the future, it remains committed to supporting graduate students as emerging scholars, critical thinkers, and engaged citizens—ready to meet the complex political challenges of our time with insight, skill, and integrity.

AFFILIATED UNITS:



THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT (CSSD)

The Centre is a hub for collaborative research, policy analysis, and public outreach on various aspects of international politics, with an emphasis on security and development. It was launched in the summer of 2016, as the successor to the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies (founded 1971). The CSSD is anchored in the Political Science department but has active links to other departments and units within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, other faculties, and beyond Dalhousie. The Centre maintains a roster of active fellows, who are recognized experts on various aspects of international politics; helps to secure funding for and to coordinate collaborative projects; organizes seminars, workshops, and conferences; publishes research and policy analysis; supports teaching and mentoring of students; and facilitates fellows' engagement with the media, civil society organizations, government, and the military. The Centre can sometimes offer modest research opportunities to graduate students at Dalhousie, especially its Doctoral Fellows. For further information please contact the Centre's Administrative Secretary at 902-494-3769, Centre@dal.ca, or at <https://www.dal.ca/sites/cssd.html>.



THE JEAN MONNET EUROPEAN UNION CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (JMEUCE) and THE JEAN MONNET NETWORK IN HEALTH LAW AND POLICY

The JMEUCE is a research institute which engages in research on a range of topics pertaining to EU-Canada relations, comparative EU-Canada public policies, and EU policies more generally. It is one of five EU Centers across Canada and part of a network around the globe. As part of its research, the Centre focuses on pressing policy issues that affect both Europe and Canada. These themes include but are not limited to, health care delivery, environmental and energy security, international trade, and the connection between migration and security. By comparing Europe and Canada, our goal is to highlight relevant lessons that the two partners across the Atlantic can learn from each other. The JMEUCE also supports student learning of the EU through courses, speakers, research projects, scholarships, and the opportunity for student exchanges. The JM Network in Health Law and Policy is a consortium of international universities, led by Dalhousie University, focusing on building connections and capacity in health law and capacity across Europe and North America. The Centre and the Network are both located near the Department on the third floor of the Henry Hicks Building. More information is available at [Jean Monnet European Union Centre of Excellence \(JMEUCE\) - Dalhousie University](#).

Study Spaces



Library Carrels

Study carrels are available in the University Library for MA students who are working on their theses. Carrels are assigned by the library in September and interested students should visit the Killam Library Information Desk. Priority is given to those living some distance from campus.

Graduate Student Offices

There is a limited space also available in the Political Science Department for MA students. Students interested in a study space in the Department should contact the graduate secretary.

03

FACULTY
& STAFF

FACULTY AND STAFF

There are currently seventeen faculty members on the academic staff. Please note that faculty research, publications, BIOS and CVs can be found on our website at <http://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/politicalscience/faculty-staff/our-faculty.html>.

Professors:

Peter Arthur, B.A. (Ghana), MSc (Lond.), MA (WLU), PhD (Queen's)

Chair EDIA Committee & EDIA Student Mentor

African politics and development; conflict and cooperation in extractive sectors; global development; post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice

David R. Black, B.A. (Trent), MA, PhD (Dal.) On Sabbatical July 1, 2025 -December 31, 2025

Acting Director, Centre for the Study of Security and Development

Lester B. Pearson Professor of International Development Studies

Canada's role in Sub-Saharan Africa; development assistance; global governance; human security; politics of sport

Brian Bow, B.A. (UBC), MA (York), PhD (Cornell)

Chair, Department of Political Science

Policy coordination; US foreign policy; Canada-US relations; North America; international security and defence policy; network governance

Katherine Fierlbeck, B.A. (Alberta), MA (York), PhD (Cambridge)

McCulloch Chair in Political Science

Director, JM Health Law and Policy Network

Program Coordinator, Health Studies Minor

Health care politics; health care governance; comparative health policy; Canadian political thought; theories of governance and policy formation; normative and historical political theory; epistemological political theory

Robert G. Finbow, B.A. (Dal.), MA (York), M.Sc, PhD (Lond.)

Eric Dennis Memorial Chair of Government and Politics

Deputy Director, Jean Monnet European Union Centre of Excellence

Free trade agreements and social policy; Canada-EU Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA); North American free trade and labour; regionalism in Canada

Ruben Zaiotti, BA (Bologna), MA (Oxford), PhD (Tor.) On Sabbatical January 1, 2026 - June 30, 2026

Director, Jean Monnet European Union Centre of Excellence

European Union governance and policy; migration and border control; public diplomacy; international relations; international security; transatlantic relations; social media

FACULTY AND STAFF cont'd

Associate Professors:

Kiran Banerjee, B.A. (Chicago), MA (Chicago), PhD (Tor.)

Canada Research Chair in Forced Migration Governance and Refugee Protection

Migration; refugees; citizenship; forced migration; immigration; global justice; history of political thoughts; international ethics; international relations; political theory

Louise Carbert, B.A. (Alberta), MA, PhD (York)

Acting Coordinator, Law, Justice, and Society (LJSO)

Canadian parliamentary governance; electoral systems; elections; federalism and intergovernmental relations; political behaviour

Margaret Denike, B.A. (Simon Fraser), MA (UBC), LLM (Queens), PhD (York)

Biopolitics and genealogical inquiry; feminist and queer philosophies; human rights (theory, institutions, politics); political activism of sexual and racial minorities; politics of terror; state-sanctioned discrimination

Kristin Good, B.A. (Man.), MA (Man.), PhD (Tor.)

Graduate Coordinator, Political Science

Canadian political institutions and constitution; Canadian city politics and governance; municipalities; comparative urban politics; federalism, intergovernmental relations and multilevel governance; local (municipal) immigration and diversity policy; Indigenous- newcomer relations in cities; Indigenous-municipal relations and decolonizing local government.

Anders Hayden, B.A. (McGill), MES (York), PhD (Boston College)

Honours Coordinator

Undergraduate Advisor

Critical perspectives on economic growth: politics of sufficiency; alternative measurements of prosperity and wellbeing ("Beyond GDP"); ecological modernization / green growth; sustainable consumption; environmental politics; politics of climate change

Scott Pruysers, B.A. (Waterloo), M.A. (Waterloo), PhD (Carleton) *On Sabbatical July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026*

Canadian politics; political parties and party systems; political psychology and political behaviour; federalism; gender and representation

Leah Sarson, BSocSc (Ottawa); MA (Waterloo); PhD (Queen's)

Director, Centre for the Study of Security and Development

International relations; Indigenous global politics; Canadian foreign policy; arctic studies; gender and international relations

FACULTY AND STAFF cont'd

Assistant Professors:

Chevy Eugene, BA (York), MA (York), PhD (York)

Reparatory Justice; Social Justice Movements; International Law; Human Rights; Caribbean Thought; Black Radical Thought; Decolonial Praxes; International Relations

Rachael Johnstone, B.A. (Dal.), M.A (New Brunswick), PhD (Queen's)

Canadian politics and public policy; gender and politics; the politics of reproduction; law and Politics

Marion Laurence, BA (Dal.), MA (Queen's), PhD (UofT)

International Relations; Global Security Governance; International Organizations; Qualitative and Interpretive Research Methods

Heather Tasker, BA (PEI), MA (York), PhD (York)

Gender Violence; Transitional Justice; International Criminal Law; Human Rights

Support Staff:

Tracy Powell, Administrator (psadmin@dal.ca)

Mary Okwese, Administrative Secretary for CSSD and Graduate Program (psgrad@dal.ca)

04

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

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MA PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

The regular MA program is designed to be completed within twelve months (September-August). The program has two major components: coursework and thesis.

Classes:

Courses offered by the Department are organized into four subfields, as follows:

- Canadian Politics
- Comparative Politics
- International Relations and Foreign Policy
- Political Theory

Each field (except for Political Theory) contains courses offered as core graduate seminars and others offered as subfield courses. The coding system normally for Political Science classes is the second digit in a course number indicates the field within which the course falls, as follows:

1. Methodology
2. Canadian
3. Comparative
4. Theory
5. International Relations & Foreign Policy

The course requirement for the MA program is 18 credit hours. Course programs normally include at least 6 of the 18 required credit hours in core graduate seminars (selected amongst International Relations, Canadian, and Comparative), 3 credit hours in a **mandatory** Research Methods class (POLI 5100.03), and the remaining 9 credit hours in graduate courses in any field. 6 of these remaining 9 credit hours can be taken as reading classes, or from courses in other departments (with permission of the instructor and Graduate Coordinator). One of the core graduate seminars may be substituted with an alternative if appropriate given the student's research area with approval of the graduate coordinator. However, such exceptions are usually discouraged.

Please visit <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/politicalscience/programs/graduate-programs/program-overview.html> for a full list of graduate courses offered in the department. Not all courses are offered every year. Please consult the current timetable for this year's offerings:

https://selfservice.dal.ca/BannerExtensibility/customPage/page/dal.stuweb_academicTimetable

Note: Many graduate courses are cross-listed with undergraduate courses. Graduate students will be required to satisfy appropriately higher standards. In addition, directed reading courses may be arranged on an individual or small group basis with appropriate faculty members.

Reading courses are particularly appropriate in areas closely related to a student's thesis research and are usually offered by a student's thesis supervisor. The course codes for reading courses are as follows: POLI 5602.03 (Fall term) and POLI 5603.03 (Winter term). Please contact the Graduate Coordinator if you are interested in taking a directed reading class. Advanced planning is required.

Students may want to consult past graduate course syllabi for more information about the content of courses by sending a request to psgrad@dal.ca.

MA PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS cont'd

Thesis:

The thesis is expected to demonstrate the student's capacity for disciplined thought, original research, and literate presentation. The thesis is prepared under the direction of the graduate coordinator and, primarily, the student's thesis supervisor. MA theses should be approximately 100 pages in length. It must be submitted in the format established by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. An oral defence of the MA thesis should be scheduled **no later than mid-August**, at the end of the student's first year. It is important to remember that the examination draft of the thesis will have to be submitted to the examiner two weeks before the oral examination (ie, **around August 1**). The MA thesis is designed to be completed within the twelve-month period of study. If you do not think that you will complete it within this time frame, please consult with the graduate coordinator.

To ensure timely completion of the program, students should select their thesis supervisor no later than October 1, 2025, and submit the form in Appendix B to the Graduate Secretary (psgrad@dal.ca) no later than that date.

The thesis supervisor should be selected from among the regular faculty appointments in the department (our Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors). Regular FGS members from other units as well as Adjunct Professors can serve on thesis committees. The creation of thesis committees is governed by the following FGS regulations in the academic calendar (section 9): [Thesis Supervisors and Supervisory Committees](#). An up-to-date list of our department's faculty members (including Adjunct Professors and cross-listed appointments) is available on our department's website: [Faculty & Staff Page](#).

Thesis committee composition should be discussed with and approved by the Graduate Coordinator.

Oral examination:

The oral examination of a master's thesis is the culmination of the candidate's research programme. It exposes the work to scholarly criticism and gives to the candidate the opportunity to defend the thesis in public. The examining committee for the defence normally consists of the **thesis supervisor, the reader** (to provide additional assistance and feedback throughout the writing of the thesis), **the examiner** (another faculty member not on the supervisory committee), with the **Graduate Coordinator** (or alternate) acting as chair. The examiner will not see a student's thesis before submission. The defences are open to other graduate students and faculty. Readers should be selected, in consultation with one's supervisor, as early as October but absolutely no later than May 1. Because many faculty are travelling during the summer, it is important to select an examiner, in consultation with one's supervisor, well before the end of term. **Please be sure to bring your FGS MA Approval Form (on the FGS website) with you when you come to your oral defence.**

MA thesis defences are scheduled for three hours, but they usually last no longer than two hours. They begin with a 15-20 presentation that provides an overview of the argument, research design, findings etc. followed by two rounds of questions from the committee beginning with the examiner, followed by the reader and ending with the supervisor. Members of the examining committee have about 15 minutes per round of questioning (they may ask more than one question or follow up based on the student's response). After the rounds of questioning by the committee, the Graduate Coordinator may ask a question and then opens the floor to the audience to see if there are questions from the audience. The Graduate Coordinator is not an examiner though but is there to ensure that the process is fair and consistent.

MA PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS cont'd

When the questioning is complete, students are asked to leave the defence while the committee deliberates about the outcome and will be invited back to the meeting to learn the outcome (whether the thesis is approved or rejected). Theses can be approved as submitted or approved if specific changes/corrections are made. Find out more information about thesis defences in the FGS regulation section 10: [Thesis Regulations](#).

PHD PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS

The PhD programme requires two years (twenty-four months) of full-time study at Dalhousie University and can be completed in four years (students are strongly encouraged to complete the program in the four-year timeframe). There are three major components: coursework two written comprehensive examinations (with an oral comprehensive defence), and a thesis. Additional requirements include proof of second-language competence in French or in a language related to the student's thesis work. The language requirement can be met through the completion of a relevant language course (either for credit or as an audit), typically in the second or third year of the program.

Core classes include:

Canadian:	POLI 5207 Canadian Politics
Comparative:	POLI 5301 Comparative Theory POLI 5340 Approaches to Development
IR.:	POLI 5523 International Relations

Students normally take 9 credit hours of core courses and 3 credit hours in a research methods class (POLI 5100.03). The two principal requirements of the program consist of comprehensive examinations in two fields (a major and minor field) and an original thesis. Coursework will be required as appropriate to prepare the student for their comprehensive examinations.

Students may substitute one core class with other graduate classes selected by the student in consultation with the graduate coordinator. In addition to the classes offered through the Department of Political Science, students may choose classes in other departments of the University that are directly relevant to the student's research plans and preparation for comprehensive examinations. They may also, in consultation with individual faculty, choose to take a reading class in lieu of a regularly scheduled class.

All graduate students are required to register for POLI 5100 – Research Design and Professional Development. The seminar is designed to assist you to develop a theoretically/analytically rigorous and methodologically sound research design in a guided, collegial environment. Please note that this 3-credit class runs from September–April, although it will not meet every week.

Fields of Concentration:

The PhD programme is organized around the following fields:

1. International Relations and Foreign Policy
2. Canadian Government and Politics
3. Comparative Government and Politics
4. Political Theory
5. Alternative fields may be chosen where faculty specialization permits (requires approval of Graduate Coordinator)

Students must declare a major and minor field of concentration at the time of initial registration in September. The major field will be that field in which the thesis is to be written.

Classes:

Normally four classes, or equivalent, are required, although this number may be increased, if necessary, to cover deficiencies in a student's background. One of these four classes must be POLI 5100. Two classes should be core graduate seminars, in the student's major and minor field of concentration, respectively. PhD students can also explore the possibility of pursuing a directed reading class, particularly with their intended thesis supervisor.

PHD PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS cont'd

Comprehensives:

Candidates for the PhD must pass written examinations in each of their major and minor fields, with an oral examination following the major written comprehensive exam. For more detailed information, please see the relevant appendix at the end of this document.

Language Competence:

PhD students whose native language is English must demonstrate their ability to read with comprehension a second language. The second language should be French unless the student's approved research programme requires another language. Students can satisfy the language requirement through coursework (usually in the form of a language class after regular classwork is completed).

Thesis:

The PhD thesis must demonstrate the student's capacity for disciplined analytical thought, original research, and literate presentation, and must conform to the Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations.

A thesis proposal must be submitted by the student and approved by the student's thesis committee after an oral examination of the proposal. The proposal should usually be submitted within 2-3 months after completing the comprehensive exams. For more detailed information about what is required in a PhD thesis proposal, please take a look at the relevant appendix at the end of this document.

The supervisor and, through the supervisor, the other two members of the thesis committee will assist the student throughout the thesis preparation. The student will, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and supervisor, assemble the thesis committee **before** submission of the thesis proposal.

The completed thesis must be accepted by the thesis committee as ready for defence. This does not mean that the thesis is finally approved but rather signifies that the thesis may go forward to a public defence with an external examiner.

Please refer to FGS regulations for submission of thesis found at this link. **It is important to note that the preparation planning of a thesis defence, including filing the appropriate documentation with FGS, commences at least 6 months prior to the anticipated defence date:**

<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html>

Oral Examination:

The oral examination of a doctoral thesis is the culmination of the candidate's research programme. It exposes the work to scholarly criticism and gives the candidate the opportunity to defend the thesis in public. The Examination is chaired by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies or a member of the Panel of PhD Defence Chairs. The examining committee consists of a departmental representative (the chair or a designate, usually the Graduate Coordinator), the research supervisor, and at least three additional members, one of whom shall be the external examiner from outside the University. For more information on the PhD Defence, see the appropriate appendix at the end of this document.

PHD PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS cont'd

Ethics Review:

All research involving human participants requires review and approval by a Research Ethics Board (REB) before any research is undertaken. The process of ethics review for research involving humans is managed through the Dalhousie Research Services. PhD students should discuss research requiring ethics review with their supervisor during the development of their thesis proposal. This process should be completed immediately after your PhD proposal has been approved by the dissertation committee. However, this review process can be lengthy, so you should consider working on the application even before the formal defence of your proposal.

Copies of the Dalhousie University Guidelines and Forms for Ethical Review of Research involving humans are available at <https://www.dal.ca/dept/research-services/responsible-conduct-research-ethics-apply-for-reb-approval.html>. Please allow six to eight weeks to complete the ethics review process from time of submission.

All enquiries regarding ethics review at Dalhousie should be directed to: Research Ethics, Henry Hicks Administration Building, 6299 South St., Suite 231. 902.494.3423; ethics@dal.ca

05

IMPORTANT
DATES

Deadlines and important dates for MA students 2025 - 2026

In order to facilitate the timely completion of the thesis, a set of deadlines has been established. Students who allow the deadlines to slip will likely have to extend their program beyond a year and pay additional registration fees. For MA students, deadlines for component elements of the thesis are built into POLI 5100. Your thesis supervisor may also impose their own set of deadlines. Please note that the dates listed below are subject to change. When in doubt, please consult with the Graduate Coordinator. A full list of important academic dates can also be found on the Dalhousie University [Academic Calendar](#).



August TBD: FGS ORIENTATION

Faculty of Graduate Studies Orientation. See Together@Dal: Grad Edition: <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/student-life/together-at-dal.html>

September 2: Classes begin (Fall Term)

September TBD: Graduate Orientation (in the morning - agenda to follow) followed by Departmental Welcome Lunch (12:00-1 p.m.) (subject to change)

September TBD: Teaching Assistant Professional Development Days: https://www.dal.ca/dept/clt/events-news/annual-events/TA_Days.html

September 16: Last day to add classes (Fall Term)

October 1: Submission of thesis title and name of supervisor

October 1: Last day to drop Fall Term classes without a 'W'

December 3: Classes end (fall term)

January 7: Classes begin (winter term)

January 22: Last day to add classes (Winter Term)

February 5: Last day to drop Winter Term classes without a 'W'

March TBD: MA poster presentation of thesis proposal to department (and 3-minute thesis competition) with faculty and other graduate students present.

April 7: Classes end (winter term)

Third week of July 2026: MA submission of the complete draft of the thesis to the supervisory committee. While the thesis committee is reading the examination copy, a draft of the thesis should be sent to FGS for a format check.

Second week of August: This is the last week in which oral defences of theses can be conducted in time for fall graduation. Candidates should have their theses ready for defences in early August.

To avoid paying fees for additional terms, you must submit final copies by the dates set by FGS. These dates are inflexible and outside the control of the department. Find out more information about thesis defences in the FGS regulation section 10: [Thesis Regulations](#).

06 REGULATIONS

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REGISTRATION, PROGRAMME APPROVAL & GRADUATION

There are two separate and distinct steps in the registration process for graduate students at Dalhousie. The first involves registering in the University; the second involves development and approval of an individual programme.

Registering at the University:

Graduate students must register for **all three terms** of the academic year (fall, winter, and summer). Please refer to <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html> for information on registration as a graduate student. Any questions regarding registration can be directed to the Graduate Secretary (psgrad@dal.ca). Questions regarding tuition fees should be directed to the Student Accounts Office.

Programme Approval:

Approval of individual programmes is the responsibility of the Graduate Coordinator. New graduate students should discuss their individual programmes with the Graduate Coordinator. The full requirements for the degree will be specified and confirmed by the coordinator. This programme may subsequently be changed, but only by agreement of the coordinator; it constitutes a form of academic contract. Such changes must be recorded on GSIS found at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html>.

Progress Reports:

Students whose programmes extend beyond one year (ie, all PhD students and all MA students who do not submit their theses to FGS by August 31) **MUST** complete an annual progress report in the spring of the second and each subsequent year. The form must be completed on GSIS at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html>.

Graduation:

Formal Convocations are held in May and October. Students should ensure that their names are included on the list of graduating students to be approved by the University Senate. For this purpose, each student must complete an "Intent to Graduate" form (deadlines, **December 1 [for May]** and **July 1 [for October]** through Dal Online). Students should consult the graduate calendar for the deadline for the submission of a thesis applicable to each convocation.

TUITION FEES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Tuition Fees:

All fees are paid through Student Accounts. Fees are not due until the appropriate deadline set by the Student Accounts Office. Inquiries regarding fee payments are handled through Student Accounts. Please visit their website at http://www.dal.ca/admissions/money_matters.html

External Scholarships:

For those students who wish to pursue a two-year MA, consider applying for an external scholarship for the second year if your GPA is 3.8 or above.

Faculty of Graduate Studies Scholarships:

The Department is able to offer a small number of graduate scholarships, at both the MA and PhD levels, through funds available through the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Applicants for full-time study are automatically considered for scholarship support unless they indicate otherwise in the initial application. Awards are generally determined with reference to GPA. MA students with a GPA under 3.7 may or may not be considered for funding. These scholarships are normally allocated to incoming students before arrival at Dalhousie.

Teaching Assistantships:

The Department provides a number of teaching positions to its graduate students. These are assigned to incoming students, who normally work 7-10 hours of work per week, for a stipend of \$2,705 per TA90 or \$3,907 per TA130 as a teaching assistant for the academic year as governed in the CUPE contract (pay rate subject to change.) Information can be found at <https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/hr/Academic-Staff-Relations/CUPE-2020-24-Collective-Agreement.pdf>

Teaching assistantships are assigned in September based on course enrolment numbers. It would be useful to inform the Graduate Coordinator prior to September 1 if you are interested in acting as a TA. If you have been offered a TAship as part of your funding package, then there is no need to contact the Graduate Coordinator (unless you either would like to be considered for an additional TAship or have decided not to serve as a TA and forgo that part of your funding package). Please copy Tracy Powell (psadmin@dal.ca) on all correspondence regarding TAships.

Note: Please do not contact the instructors of courses for which you would like to TA. The decisions about TA assignments are made solely by the Graduate Coordinator (in consultation with Tracy Powell, the department's Administrator) since we must consider a number of factors in our decision-making including the need for course coverage, the fit between a student's research interests and a course's content as well as commitments made to students as part of their funding packages.

It is also important to note that once your TAship has been assigned, it can be several weeks before you receive your first payment. The reason for this is because the university holds back two weeks of salary which will be paid out at the end of the TAship. In addition, we must meet specific payroll cut-off deadlines, if your TAship is agreed upon after that payroll deadline, it too can delay your payment.

A TA/Supervisory contract must be completed, signed, and provided to Tracy before she can process the payroll information.

TUITION FEES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT cont'd

Teaching Opportunities (PHD Students):

PhD students who have completed their comprehensives are also eligible to apply to teach undergraduate classes if they are offered in one of their fields. If a student is interested in teaching, they should notify the Chair and the Political Science Administrator in a timely manner.

Travel Grants:

Graduate students may apply for limited travel funds to **present** at a scholarly conference that is related to their research. Please reach out to Tracy Powell (psadmin@dal.ca) with the details of the conference (name/date/place), the title of your presentation, the reason why this conference fits with your area of research and how you will benefit from presenting at this conference. Also include the cost of the conference and indicate if you are receiving support from any other person/agency to attend the conference.

Research Assistantships:

Normally faculty will hire their own graduate students as Research Assistants (RA) should they have a research grant with the funds to do so. Tracy will assist the faculty member and the RA in processing the appropriate paperwork with payroll. However, on the occasion, when Tracy is aware of opportunities that might arise for someone seeking an RA, she will ensure that those opportunities are shared widely amongst the graduate student cohort. If you are interested in seeking out an RA position, it is important to discuss those interests with your supervisor. However, before taking on an RA position, it is also important to discuss this with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure you are not overloading yourself. It is recommended that full-time graduate students not work more than 16 hours a week (this would include any assigned TA hours).

MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDING

The minimum passing grade for graduate students in the department is B-. A student who obtains a failing grade, that is a grade below B-, is automatically dropped from the programme. It is possible to apply for readmission.

PLAGIARISM:

The following statement has been prepared by a sub-committee of the Political Science Department to make as clear as possible the Department's understanding of plagiarism and the policy the Department will follow in responding to possible acts of plagiarism. The statement and policy have been approved by the Department and are consistent with general University policy.

We define plagiarism in general as: the presentation by an author of the work of another author in such a way as to give one's readers reason to think that the other author's work is one's own.

In practice, the phenomenon of plagiarism appears in a variety of forms, some of which are more easily recognized than others. The most obvious examples are provided by cases in which passages are taken verbatim from the writings of other authors without appropriate identification (quotation marks, indented paragraphing, etc.) or attribution. But there are many other variants. They have much the same effect, and they raise essentially the same questions of principle. Close and extensive paraphrasing without appropriate attribution is a common example, rendered more difficult to assess because the slight alterations of wording that are normally involved in such cases tend to nullify the standard grammatical rules covering the use of identifying marks. The resulting ambiguity may encourage the author to argue that the work, while not entirely her or his own, is nonetheless sufficiently so to exempt her or him from the obligation to report the source. Other examples include quotations or paraphrasing accompanied, not by a footnote, but by a listing of sources in the general bibliography (which the author then claims to regard as the equivalent of a footnoted citation), the use of quotation marks to surround **some** of a quoted passage, but not all of it (a device by which the author presumably hopes, on the one hand, to cover herself or himself against the charge of plagiarism, and on the other to conceal the extent to which she or he has actually relied on the principal external source), the presentation of important factual information lying clearly outside the bounds of "common knowledge", or of a distinctive interpretation of some matter (e.g., an event or set of events, or a complex text), again without appropriate attribution, and so on, through an almost endless array of additional variants.

The Department of Political Science deems plagiarism "wrong" not merely in the sense that it is the mark of inadequate academic performance (if that were the case, the problem could be resolved simply by the assignment of a low mark), but also in the sense that it betrays trust and undermines the necessary conditions for that free and honest inquiry and dialogue which constitute the essential activity of an academic community. Of course, academic work, whether performed by first-year students or mature scholars, will often involve the use of work already carried out by others. What is required is that this use of the work of others be clearly identified as such, and it is the special consequence of the failure to do so which makes plagiarism a matter for disciplinary action.

MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDING cont'd

It is very important that all students review the Dalhousie University Faculty of Graduate Studies regulations on policies and processes on matters including but not limited to:

- a) Plagiarism
- b) Irregularities in the Presentation of Data from Experiments, Field Studies, etc.
- c) Other Irregularities
- d) Aiding in the Commission of an Academic Offence
- e) Misrepresentation Discipline
- f) Academic Dishonesty
- g) Faculty Discipline Procedures Concerning Allegations of Academic Offences
- h) Academic Integrity Officers
- i) Senate Discipline Committee
- j) How to initiate a hearing
- k) Hearing procedures
- l) Penalties

Find out more information about [Dalhousie University / FGS regulations](#).

LIMITATIONS:

Time Limits MA:

Students in the one-year MA are strongly encouraged to complete the program in the recommended 12-month period. The MA can be extended up to three years from initial registration, but only if legitimate circumstances warrant such an extension. In exceptional cases, a second, and final, extension of one additional year may be granted if the student and supervisor submit a detailed proposal showing progress to date and a schedule for completion of the thesis within the extension period. Incoming graduate students must understand that the MA programme is intended to be completed within one year. Given the yearly intake of new graduate students and the corresponding demands it places on supervisors to accommodate the new cohort, it becomes increasingly more difficult over time to supervise students who extend their degrees.

Important note: After the one- or two-year residency period expires, students who have not completed their programme must continue to register each term and pay the appropriate fee as part-time or full-time "thesis-only" students. MA students wishing to switch to part-time must consult with the Graduate Coordinator and their Supervisor before doing so. Switching to part-time does not extend the number of years that are allowable to complete the program.

Time Limits PHD:

The recommended timeframe for PhD students is four years, but a programme may be extended by the department for two years if the thesis supervisor so recommends, and if the student is making satisfactory progress on the thesis and has a realistic plan for its completion. In exceptional cases, a second, and final, extension of one additional year may be granted, if the student and supervisor submit a detailed proposal showing progress to date and a schedule for completion of the thesis within the period of the extension. Incoming graduate students must understand that the PhD programme has been designed to be completed in four years. Given the yearly intake of new graduate students, and the corresponding demands it places on supervisors to accommodate the new cohort, it becomes increasingly more difficult over time to supervise students who extend their degrees.

Important note: If programme is not completed after the four-year residency period, students must continue to register as full-time continuing each term and pay the appropriate fees as "thesis-only" student.

MINIMUM ACADEMIC STANDING cont'd

Outside employment:

In order to maintain the integrity of their programmes, full-time graduate students are limited to **a maximum of 16 hours per week of paid employment**. Please raise any questions about this limitation or its application to particular situations with the Graduate Coordinator. Full-time students engaging in employment outside of the department must inform both the Graduate Coordinator and their supervisor.

Leaves of absence:

Students who are unable to continue their programme continuously after initial registration due to medical reasons may apply for a leave of absence of up to one year. If approved, the period of leave does not count toward fulfilling residency requirements, nor does it count in terms of time limits. In the case of PhD students granted a leave before completion of the comprehensives, the dates for submission of papers or written and oral examinations will be adjusted appropriately.

For information on alternative forms of leaves (parental leaves, program continuance, and suspension of studies) please visit: [Registration Procedures and Regulations section 5](#).

07 THESIS PROCESS

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THESIS INFORMATION FOR MA STUDENTS

MA Thesis Proposal Template

Thesis proposals should be 15-20 pages + bibliography (double spaced; 1-inch margins; 12 pt. font). It is recommended that you view the formatting guidelines and templates provided by FGS (<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html>) before you begin writing so that stylistic changes after the fact are kept to a minimum.

1. Thesis Statement and Research Objectives (2-3 pages):

The main purpose of the MA proposal is to convince your thesis committee that you have identified an 'important' question that demands a clear answer, and you are the right person, with the right approach, to provide that answer. You should begin with a very clear description of the problem(s) you intend to address in your thesis, and an explanation for why they are important. Try to be as precise as you can about your questions, puzzles, hypotheses, perspective, or the debates you will engage (or resolve) through your research.

- What is the purpose of your study?
- What do you wish to prove or disprove?
- What is your thesis/hypothesis? How conventional or counterintuitive is this thesis?
- Why do you want to undertake this project?
- Why is it important/relevant and what do you hope to contribute?
- Do you expect to uncover/reveal key policy recommendation?

2. Relation to Current Knowledge/Literature/Theoretical Perspectives (8-10 pages):

You will need to provide a detailed overview and assessment of the relevant literature. The only way to establish the originality and/or importance of your 'contribution to knowledge' is to situate your research within the literature. It is imperative in this section to clearly establish how your research will challenge, critique, reinterpret, build on or deconstruct conventional wisdom on the topic, puzzle, or cases you've selected.

- What is the received/accepted/conventional wisdom in the literature on the issue? How do other authors explain/address the issue in which you are interested (or do they)?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of knowledge on the subject?
- What central puzzles will you be focusing on or attempting to resolve?
- How will your study, approach or case contribute to or challenge conventional wisdom?
- How will your research create new knowledge on the subject?
- Why is your work original and important?

3. Methodology (3-5 pages):

This is perhaps the most important part of the proposal and thesis -- the quality of your conclusions depends heavily on the logical and empirical soundness of your methodology. It is imperative that you provide a crystal-clear explanation of the methods you will use to collect the data, facts, and evidence you need to support your theory, interpretations, conclusions, or policy recommendations. It would help to provide in this section a brief (critical) review of the methods and approaches used by others to answer similar questions.

INFORMATION FOR MA STUDENTS cont'd

- What are the problems/impediments with approaches previously used?
- How will your approach overcome these impediments?
- Where will you go to find the information you need?
- What types of data are pertinent?
- What variables and concepts are relevant?
- How will you collect and process the data/information on these variables?
- What are the limitations of your methodological approach? How serious are they? And how will they be addressed?

4. Chapter Outline (1 page):

Include brief summary paragraphs describing each chapter, explain how the chapters are connected, and provide an outline of how the arguments will unfold.

- How will you structure your argument?
- How do you intend to break down the content of your study?
- What will the chapters include and how are they related to the main thesis?

5. Timetable and Research Strategy (1 page):

Briefly describe your schedule over the next several months with a monthly breakdown of research plans, priorities, and expectations.

6. Bibliography (3-5 pages):

Provide a list of references cited in the proposal, preliminary sources you think might be useful, and any other material you plan to review.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS

1. Timeline

The PhD in Political Science is designed to be completed in four years. This timetable assumes there are no breaks in the course of study (e.g., for internships, teaching assignments, illness, extended field research, employment opportunities, etc.). If you do wish to extend your PhD by engaging in any activities because you think it will enrich your course of studies, be sure to discuss this with your PhD committee and the Graduate Coordinator.

YEAR (Y)	PROGRAM PROGRESS
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classwork/TA-ship September-April • At the beginning of April, students will consult with their supervisor regarding preparation for the major comp exam. The supervisor will, in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, ensure that the subfield comprehensive committee has been constituted and the chair of the committee identified. The reading list for the major comprehensive will be distributed to students no later than the last day of April. • Before the end of August, students will consult with their supervisor regarding preparation for the minor comp exam. Once the student and supervisor have determined what the minor comp shall be, the Graduate Coordinator will be advised and will ensure that the minor comprehensive committee has been constituted, and the chair of the committee identified.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write major comp in the first two weeks of September. Unless there are scheduling issues, the major comp will be written on the first day of classes. • Oral exam is 7-10 days after the major comprehensive exam • Reading list for minor comprehensive exam should be ready for distribution by September 1st. Students should receive the reading list for the minor comprehensive exam within two weeks of completion of the oral exam for the major comp <i>at the very latest</i>. • Write minor comp in the first two weeks of December. Unless there are scheduling issues, the minor comp will be written on the last day of classes. • Receive written feedback on minor comp by Jan 1st • Meet with supervisor/committee to discuss PhD proposal in early January. • Defend PhD proposal by the end of February. • Begin fieldwork/research. • If you do not have second-language proficiency, year 2 is the best time to take the required training (see Graduate Coordinator)

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

<p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish research; begin writing stage • Ensure that the format of your writing adheres to the FGS thesis formatting guidelines. https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html. • Schedule regular meetings with the supervisor • Keep the committee informed on your progress
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish writing • At least six months before you intend to defend your thesis, begin preparing for your thesis defence. In doing so, please ensure you review and follow all steps on the FGS website: https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html. • At least six months before your defence, you should identify, in consultation with your committee, a list of three potential external examiners (in rank order of preference). Your supervisor will formally consult with the Graduate Coordinator on this list. • At least 12 weeks before your defence, the Department must submit a Request to Arrange an Oral Defence Form to FGS. This form will include the name(s) of requested external examiners (to be decided by the Supervisor in conjunction with the student) and a timeframe for the defence to be scheduled. Once the external has been approved by FGS, a solid defence date must be established and should include your Supervisor, Thesis Committee, Department Chair, and Graduate Coordinator. The chair will designate the Graduate Coordinator as the Department Representative at the defence. Usually • At least 6 weeks before the defence, submit a draft of your thesis to FGS for a format check before FGS submits the examination draft to the External Examiner. Once checked and changes made, deliver to FGS the completed PhD Thesis Submission Form and PhD Examination Information Form. Email a PDF version of your thesis and version of your CV to thesis@dal.ca. Deliver copies of your thesis to your committee and graduate coordinator. Send a word formatted copy of your abstract (max 350 words) to thesis@dal.ca. • All required forms for your thesis process with FGS can be found on their website at https://dalu.sharepoint.com/sites/graduate-studies/SitePages/forms.aspx#students • At least 4 weeks prior to your defence prepare your summary presentation in consultation with your supervisor for your oral examination. The presentation must be approximately 20 mins. • At least 1 week prior to your defence, familiarize yourself with the oral defence location and arrange for a test run in the defence room. • Day of the defence, arrive early • Following the defence, submit the required changes to your supervisor within a specified timeframe. Once completed submit your thesis to dalspace and deliver any additional required forms to FGS.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

2. The PhD Comprehensive Examination Process

A. Purpose

The purpose of the comprehensive examination process is to ensure that candidates have the depth and breadth expected of PhD students in their two stated subfields. Comprehensive examinations serve as the intellectual baseline that will allow them successfully and efficiently to engage in their independent research. A clear sense of the key literature in their subfields will allow candidates to determine with precision and clarity precisely what it is that they will focus on during their research stage, to see how their empirical data “fits” within this literature, and (perhaps more importantly) to identify any anomalies that do not fit well within existing frameworks. Moreover, the comprehensive exams are a check on the synthetical and analytical skills of the candidate above and beyond their ability simply to show their understanding of what the literature sets out.

A PhD is a contribution to an existing intellectual discussion, and a strong grasp of this literature allows a student to position their own original ideas or findings within the narrative flow of this discussion. It also serves as the presentation of one’s academic “bona fides” and distinguishes scholarly approaches from other kinds of discussion. For those seeking to pursue an academic career, comprehensive exams provide the breadth of knowledge and understanding required for candidates to present themselves as specialists in particular subfields. Should they choose to pursue academic teaching, the process of preparing for comprehensive exams permits students to design and teach undergraduate courses in their chosen subfields.

B. Process

Before beginning the PhD program, candidates will identify their two subfields to the Graduate Coordinator. Students will then take the core class for each of these subfields. If a core class is not being offered for the subfield (e.g., in theory) the Graduate Coordinator will arrange a reading class to be offered in this area. The core classes will cover many of the debates and readings to be covered in the comprehensive exams, and the reading list prepared by the Core Committee in each area will identify additional readings and debates that should be covered.

Students will normally write their major comprehensive in the first two weeks of September, and the minor comprehensive in the first two weeks of December. It is the student’s responsibility to identify in advance the particular date for the exam, in consultation with the supervisor and Graduate Coordinator. Keep the Graduate Administrator in the loop when a date has been set as she/he will invigilate the exam writing and record dates/outcomes accordingly.

Reading lists for each subfield will be roughly commensurate, and will be approximately 8-10 pages in length, or 100-125 sources. In addition to the core list, some sub-fields will have more specialized “node” lists of 1-2 pages in length (for example, the comparative field may have nodes in democratization, peacebuilding, new social movements, etc.; in IR, nodes may include regionalism, violent extremism, and migration). These node lists generally depend on the particular research interests of the students. No more than two separate node lists may be added to the main subfield reading list.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

It is essential for PhD students to consult regularly with their supervisor to prepare for the comprehensive written examinations. These regular meetings should discuss progress in working through the reading list. A supervisor may, for example, ask a student to write brief papers summarizing and analyzing sets of readings or answering practice comprehensive questions as part of the preparation process.

The **major comprehensive** is a 5-hour, closed-book exam written on a laptop that is supplied by the department. There are three questions, the structure of which will vary across subfields. The first question on the comparative major comprehensive, for example, focusses on paradigms and state theories, and the second and third questions focus more specifically on nodal lists. For the IR exam, the first question looks at core theories, the second on critical theories, and the third focusses on a specific node. The exam will be structured as to permit some choice among the questions to be answered. **Candidates are allowed to bring unmarked readings lists printed by the graduate secretary into both the major and minor comprehensive examination. Candidates are allowed either one 30-minute break or two 15-minute breaks while writing their major comprehensive exam.**

There will be no written feedback on the major comprehensive, but students will be told which of the four categories their result fits into:

1. **Pass:** Students can proceed to the next stage, subject to a successful oral exam.
2. **Conditional pass:** Examiners have identified issues that may or may not be resolved during the oral examination stage. At the end of the oral examination, the student will be informed whether they have a clear pass or whether they will have to rewrite a portion of their comprehensive.
3. **Rewrite in whole or in part:** The candidate must rewrite the entire exam or one or more questions. Students in the third category can rewrite the designated section or sections; this should happen no more than a month after the original exam. PhD candidates will only have an oral examination on the major examination. The oral exam will be 7-10 days after the examination is written; it should be scheduled while the candidate schedules their major comprehensive.
4. **Fail:** This will constitute dismissal from the graduate program.

The **minor comprehensive** is currently a 4-hour closed-book exam written on a laptop supplied by the department. It has two questions, the nature of which will be determined by each subfield committee. An unmarked reading list can be brought into the examination (sent to and printed by the graduate secretary). The exam will be structured to permit some choice among the questions to be answered. **Candidates writing the minor comprehensive are allowed one 15-minute break.**

The examination will be judged as pass, rewrite in whole or in part, or fail. Students in the second category will be given one opportunity to rewrite the designated section or sections; this should happen no more than a month after the original exam. There will be no oral examination for the minor examination. Students should receive feedback on their minor comprehensive within two weeks of writing.

Students will be told well in advance who will be marking each comprehensive exam. If changes to the composition of the examining committee for either exam are required for any reason, the student must be informed without undue delay.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

C. Expectations for the Written Examinations

In the case of the major subfield, the 5-hour examination is designed to test for an incisive and comprehensive understanding of the literature in the subfield as a whole. It will also have a sub-section tailored to the candidate's particular research interests. The 4-hour examination in the minor subfield is similar in format to the major one but is designed to test for a broad understanding of the minor subfield with somewhat less depth than what is expected in the major subfield.

Expectations include the following:

1. can the student show clear comprehension of the literature on the reading list? (i.e., can they precisely identify the key points or arguments in a particular school of thought?)
2. is the student able to identify the standard criticisms of key sources and approaches? (What, according to key critics, does an author get wrong or right? why are these sources still valuable despite their limitations?)
3. how well can a student evaluate an article or school of thought in light of specific (usually recent) political, social, or economic trends? (How well, for example, do certain theories of foreign policy hold up to recent events under the Trump administration?)
4. how well can a student make connections between various readings or schools of thought? (What readings fit together well? on what points do various authors or schools of thought agree? why do similar theories diverge on key points?)

Note that examiners will also be judging the overall written quality of the examination independent of substantive questions: is the writing style at a level appropriate for a doctoral student?

D. Expectations for the Oral Comprehensive Examination

The oral examination is designed to allow examiners to probe students' written responses in more detail. E.g., why was a particular answer given? can the student clarify a particular point? can they address any points they might have left out? have they recognized possible consequences that could follow from a position they have taken? why did they not address any given theorist/school of thought on a particular point? Can they think of empirical examples to ground a theoretical point they have made? and so on. Students will be judged both according to whether they have clearly and directly answered the questions put to them, and according to the substantive merit of their responses.

Students will be provided with an unmarked copy of their written exam by the graduate secretary no less than four days prior to the oral exam. They will not be given additional written material to prepare for the oral exam once the written portion has been completed. Students will be informed of the result of their oral examination within 24 hours.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

3. The PhD Proposal

A. Crafting Your Proposal

The proposal is the first major stage of the dissertation writing process, and the first opportunity the dissertation committee will have to read about your plans and to offer feedback and recommendations. There is no expectation at this stage that you will have arrived at any clear conclusion. While you should offer a working hypothesis, you should also avoid the impression (in your proposal) that you already have the answers. At this stage, the committee is interested only in how you plan to answer the important questions you are asking, and whether the methodology is appropriate and sound. Throughout the process of proposal formulation, you should be consulting with your supervisor on a regular basis by submitting multiple drafts of the proposal in preparation for the formal defence.

Dissertation proposals should be 25-30 pages (double-spaced; 1-inch margins; 12 pt. font).

i. Thesis Statement and Research Objectives (3-5 pages):

The main purpose of the PhD proposal is to convince your dissertation committee that you have identified an important question that demands a clear answer, and you are the right person, with the right approach, to provide that answer. You should begin with a very clear description of the problem(s) you intend to address in your dissertation and an explanation of why they are important. Avoid the impression that you already have clear answers to your central research questions. Try to be as precise as you can about your questions, puzzles, hypotheses, perspective, or the debates you will engage in (or resolve) through your research.

With respect to specific questions to be answered in this section:

- What is the purpose of your study?
 - What is the “problematic” that you believe ought to be addressed?
- What do you wish to prove or disprove?
 - What are you not addressing? (Ringfence your discussion so that it doesn’t become too broad)
- What is your thesis/hypothesis?
 - How conventional/innovative is this thesis?
 - What kind of evidence would disprove your thesis?
- Why do you want to undertake this project?
 - Why is it important/relevant and what do you hope to contribute?
- Do you expect to uncover/reveal key policy recommendations?

ii. Relation to Current Knowledge/Literature/Theoretical Perspectives (10 pages):

You will need to provide a detailed overview and assessment of the relevant literature. The only way to establish the originality and importance of your dissertation’s contribution to the field’s body of knowledge is to situate your research within the literature. It is imperative in this section to clearly establish how your research will challenge, critique, reinterpret, build on or deconstruct conventional wisdom on the topic, puzzle, or cases you’ve selected. With respect to key questions for this section:

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

- What is the received/accepted/conventional wisdom in the literature on the issue?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps of the current state of knowledge on the subject?
- What central puzzles will you be focusing on or attempting to resolve?
- How will your study, approach or case contribute to (or challenge) conventional wisdom?
- How will your research create new knowledge on the subject?
- Why is your work original and important?

iii. Methodology (5-8 pages):

This is a key part of the proposal (and dissertation) - the quality of your conclusions depends heavily on the logical and empirical soundness of your methodology. It is imperative that you provide a clear and precise explanation of the methods you will use to collect the data, facts, and evidence you need to support your theory, interpretations, conclusions, or policy recommendations. It would help to provide in this section a brief (critical) review of the methods and approaches used by others to answer similar questions. Questions to consider:

- How have others attempted to address these or similar questions?
 - What are the problems/impediments with these traditional approaches?
 - How will your approach overcome these impediments?
- Where will you go to find the information you need?
- What types of data are pertinent?
- What variables and concepts are relevant?
- How will you collect and process the data/information on these variables (interviews?)
 - What are the limitations? How serious are they? And how will they be addressed?

iv. Chapter Outline (2 pages):

Include a summary paragraph describing each chapter. Explain how the chapters are connected, and provide an outline of how the overarching argument will unfold through chapter sequencing:

- How will you structure your argument?
- How do you intend to break down the content of your study?
- What will the chapters include and how are they related to the main thesis?

v. Timetable and Research Strategy (1-2 pages):

Briefly describe your schedule over the next several months with a monthly breakdown of research plans, priorities, and expectations; field work; conference presentations; teaching obligations, and so on. Use a Gantt chart if possible.

vi. Bibliography (5 pages):

Provide a list of references cited in the proposal, preliminary sources you think might be useful, and any other material you plan to review.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

B. Defending Your Proposal

PhD candidates must defend their proposals before their committee (including the Graduate Coordinator) and must receive the unanimous recommendation of the committee that they are ready to proceed to the research/writing stage of their dissertation. Students will submit their formal written proposal to the committee at least 10 days before the defence, and they should prepare a 10-15-minute verbal presentation of their proposal (with or without a slide deck) for the defence. Committee members will ask questions of the candidate, and then confer in camera to determine the status of the proposal. The candidate may be asked to revise the proposal within a specified period. The supervisor must inform the Graduate Coordinator when these revisions have been completed.

4. The Oral Dissertation Defence

As noted in the FGS regulations:

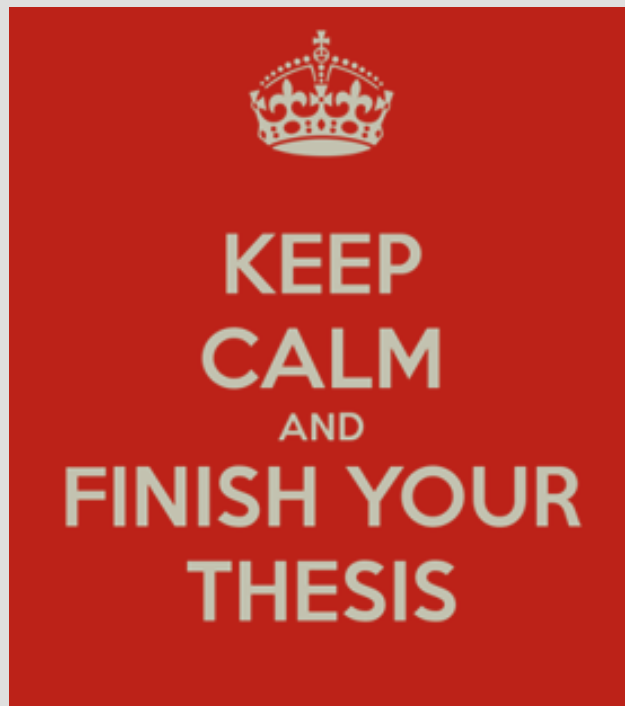
The oral examination of a Doctoral thesis is the culmination of the candidate's research program. It exposes the work to scholarly criticism and allows the candidate to publicly defend the thesis. The roles of the committee members are as follows:

1. **Chair of the Defence:** The Examination is chaired by a panel of PhD Defence Chair member.
2. **Examining Committee:** The Examining Committee consists of the research supervisor or co-supervisors, at least two additional members, and the External Examiner from outside the University. A Departmental Representative (the academic unit chair or a designate) is included as a non-voting and non-examining committee member.
3. The **Departmental Representative** attends the defence's public and in-camera sessions. The representative's role is to ensure the academic unit's expectations are adhered to and report such to the Defence Chair.
4. **Order of Examination Proceedings:** a) the Chair of the Defence opens the proceeding with a brief description of the protocol; b) the candidate is questioned on the thesis following a summary presentation no longer than 20 minutes; c) the Chair will give priority to questions from the External Examiner and then from the other members of the Examining Committee in some pre-arranged order; d) the audience will then be invited to ask questions; e) the Chair adjourns the examination when the Examining Committee decides that further questioning is unnecessary, and the candidate and all members of the audience are required to leave the room; f) the Chair then presides over the Examining Committee during its deliberations in camera; g) following the in camera session, the candidate is invited back into the room and is informed of the decision of the committee; h) the Chair oversees the completion of the PhD Thesis Approval Form as appropriate and completes the Defence Report and returns it immediately to the Faculty of Graduate Studies Office.
5. **In camera Deliberations and Grading:** The decision of the Examining Committee is based both on the thesis and on the candidate's ability to defend it. The thesis is graded as approved or rejected. A thesis can be a) accepted by the Examining Committee as submitted; b) accepted on condition that specific corrections with a clear timetable for completion, generally within one month, are made, or c) rejected. The thesis can be rejected on grounds of form as well as content. If specific corrections are required, the thesis will be returned to the candidate with a time limit for completing all corrections, usually no more than one month. Specific corrections will usually be left to the satisfaction of the research supervisor.

THESIS INFORMATION FOR PHD STUDENTS cont'd

6. **Proceedings in the Case of Rejection:** If the thesis is rejected, the committee can recommend that the student be encouraged to resubmit a revised thesis. An Examining Committee will re-read the revised thesis, at least two of whose members were on the original committee. The thesis shall be submitted to an External Examiner who may be the original External Examiner if the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies considers this desirable. The candidate shall defend the thesis before an Examining Committee as usual. If the thesis is rejected again, there will be no third examination. Such a student will be academically dismissed without the possibility of reinstatement.

Variation of the procedures stipulated above may be permitted only with the written permission of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.



08

RESOURCES

LIST OF REQUIRED FORMS AND RELEVANT LINKS

The Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) has a number of administrative forms that are either required or needed on occasion throughout a graduate student's academic career at Dalhousie. You must familiarize yourself with the following list of forms found at <http://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies.html> or through GSIS on your Dal online student record.

- Annual Progress Report ([Dal Online - GSIS](#))
- Confirmation Letters
- Directed Reading Class (template attached)
- Graduate Student Exit Survey
- Graduate Student Program Form ([Dal Online - GSIS](#))
- Leave of Absence (LOA)
- Letter of Permission (LOP)
- Program Continuance
- Registrar's Office Forms (Class Add/Drop, Temporary Loan, Intent to Graduate)

In addition, MA students who are close to completion must familiarize themselves with all thesis forms found at <https://dalu.sharepoint.com/sites/graduate-studies/SitePages/forms.aspx#students>

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS

Graduate students in Political Science are automatically members of the Dalhousie Graduate Society of Political Science (DGSPS). This mostly informal association, through its executive, represents the interests of graduate students in departmental affairs and organizes scholarly and recreational activities of interest to its members.

The Society is supported by the university-wide Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) of which all graduate students are members.

HOUSING

Decent, affordable housing is in short supply in Halifax, and especially close to Dalhousie. Students should make every effort to arrange for accommodation before registering in September. When considering where to live and whether to bring a vehicle, note that student fees automatically include a bus pass. Several sources of information and assistance are available. Detailed information is available at Dalhousie Housing's website http://www.dal.ca/campus_life/residence_housing/residence.html

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Through the International Student Centre, Dalhousie offers a number of services specifically directed to the special needs of non-Canadian students. For detailed information, visit their website at https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/international-centre.html

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please check out the Graduate programme web page <http://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/politicalscience/programs/graduate-programs.html> or <http://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies.html>

Or contact the Graduate Coordinator, Kristin Good (Kristin.Good@Dal.Ca) AND/OR **Administrative Secretary, Mary Okwese**, Dept. of Political Science Dalhousie University, Halifax, N.S., B3H 4R2 PHONE: (902) 494- 2396 FAX: (902) 494- 3825 EMAIL: psgrad@dal.ca

A FINAL WORD

As you begin—or continue—your graduate journey with us, we hope this handbook has provided you with a clear and supportive foundation. Graduate studies are not only about intellectual discovery, but also about persistence, curiosity, and growth. The path ahead may sometimes be challenging, but you are not alone. You are part of a dynamic academic community committed to your success.

At Dalhousie's Department of Political Science, we take great pride in the excellence of our students and the contributions they make to scholarship, public life, and their communities. Whether your future lies in academia, public policy, international affairs, or another field, we are honoured to be part of your development.

Please do not hesitate to contact faculty, staff, or your peers as questions arise. Your voice, perspective, and experience matter here.

Thank you for choosing to pursue your graduate studies with us. We look forward to the work we'll do together and the ideas you'll bring to the world.

Warm regards,
The Graduate Team
Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

*Good!
Luck!*

09

APPENDICIES

**APPENDIX A:
DIRECTED READING CLASS TEMPLATE**

**APPENDIX B:
PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM - ALL PROGRAMS**

**APPENDIX C:
SECOND LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT DECLARATION FORM - PHD ONLY**

APPENDIX A: DIRECTED READING CLASS TEMPLATE

Please note that students must also complete the Faculty of Graduate Studies Independent Study/Directed Reading Form listed on their website at <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students.html>.

Department of Political Science - DIRECTED READING CLASS

Please submit a signed hard copy of this form to the Graduate Coordinator –
ELECTRONIC FORM can be obtained from the Graduate Coordinator or Tracy

STUDENT NAME & BANNER NUMBER:

DEGREE:
START DATE IN PROGRAM:
DEPARTMENT:
TERM IN WHICH READING CLASS WILL BE HELD:

PROFESSOR:

BRIEF TITLE OF READING CLASS:

DESCRIPTION OF CLASS (150-300 words):

OBJECTIVES:

EVALUATION:

- First assignment (%): (include brief description – format, length, deadline, etc) –
- Second assignment (%):
- Third assignment (%):
- Fourth assignment (%):
- ...

TOPICS/READING LIST: Identify each topic to be discussed and provide a reading list for each topic.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- ...

SIGNATURE (STUDENT): _____

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE (PROFESSOR): _____

DATE: _____

SIGNATURE (GRADUATE COORDINATOR): _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX B: PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM

REQUIRED FOR MA AND PHD STUDENTS.

Please note that all students must complete this form and submit it to the Graduate Coordinator at kristin.good@dal.ca, copying the Graduate Secretary at psgrad@dal.ca.

(due Tuesday, October 1, 2024)

Student Name: _____

Student Number: _____

Supervisor: _____

Second Reader: _____

Third Reader: _____

Area of Specialization: _____

Thesis Title:

Student Signature: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX C: SECOND LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT DECLARATION FORM

REQUIRED FOR PHD STUDENTS ONLY.

Please complete this form and submit it to the Graduate Coordinator at kristin.good@dal.ca, copying the Graduate Secretary at psgrad@dal.ca.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Full Name:

Student ID Number:

Area of Specialization:

Supervisor's Name (if applicable):

SECTION 1: SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STATUS

Please select one of the following options:

A. I have proficiency in a second language relevant to my academic field.

-> Specify the language:

-> Describe how proficiency was acquired:

B. I have completed undergraduate or graduate coursework in French.

-> Course(s) Taken:

-> Institution:

-> Term/Year Completed:

C. I have not yet fulfilled the second language requirement.

-> Plan to fulfill the requirement:

-> Proposed completion date:

-> Advisor/Supervisor approval signature:

SECTION 2: SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION (IF APPLICABLE)

Please attach the following:

- Official transcripts showing completed language courses
- Proof of language proficiency test (if available)
- Language learning plan (for Option C)

Student Declaration

I certify that the information provided above is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that meeting the second language requirement is mandatory for completion of the PhD program.

Signature:

Date:



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

FACULTY OF ARTS AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department of
Political Science

Welcome!

We're delighted to have you join our graduate community. Whether you're beginning your MA or PhD journey, you'll find a supportive, intellectually vibrant environment here—one where your ideas are valued and your growth as a scholar is our priority.


Graduate studies can be both rewarding and demanding. Please know that we are here to help. Our faculty and staff are committed to guiding you through your academic journey and supporting your success every step of the way.

We look forward to working with you.

Contact Information :

 902.494.3769 / PSGRAD@DAL.CA

 www.politicalscience.dal.ca/psgrad

 HHAAB, Room 301, 6283 Alumni Crescent
PO Box 15000 | Halifax, NS B3H 4R2 Canada