Doctoral Program Requirements

The Political Science doctoral program requires that a student gain competence in three fields, complete a three-course methodology requirement, sit for the comprehensive written examinations, write and orally defend the dissertation prospectus, and write and orally defend the dissertation.

Previous to completion of all requirements for three fields, the doctoral program requires that a graduate student write and defend an Essay of Distinction. The essay must be an article-length paper as close as possible to publishable standards and will be orally defended before a committee. The essay, completion of the methodology courses, and several student selected courses fulfill the requirements for an M.A. in Political Science. This University of Washington degree is a requirement for advancement in the Ph.D. program.

Department General Fields and Specialized Fields

The department recognizes four "general fields" in political science: American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, and Political Theory. The department requires each student to select at least one general field, in which the student must become familiar with the main body of literature, major intellectual issues and develop competence in that field's mode of analysis. To meet this requirement, students must take the core course in the designated field. All students are required to take at least one additional core course in another general field.

A student must also prepare in a second general field or in one of the specialized fields: area study (i.e., China Studies or Western European politics), Public Law, Political Economy, Public Policy Processes, Political Communications, Political Methodology, Middle East Studies and Minority and Race Politics. Specialized fields are periodically redefined given faculty/student interests. The third field may be a general or specialized field or the doctoral student may choose to substitute one non-designated field that is constructed from another academic discipline such as anthropology or sociology, or individually defined by the student. International law, public administration, urban politics, political psychology, ethnicity and nationality, philosophy of social science, and language policy are examples of recent non-designated fields.

General Fields

- American Politics
- Comparative Politics
- International Relations
- Political Theory

Specialized Fields

- Area Study – Chinese Politics
- Area Study – Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies
- Additional Area Study Constructed fields, i.e., Middle East Studies, South Asian Politics
- Minority and Race Politics
- Political Communication
- Political Economy
- Political Methodology
- Public Law
- Public Policy Processes

Methodology Requirements

All graduate students are required to achieve a minimum level of competence in political research methods. Prior to completing the MA requirement all students complete:

- POL S 500 Political Research Design
- Pol S 501 Advanced Political Research Design and Analysis,

Pol S 503 Advanced Quantitative Research Methods OR one course from a list of Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Courses.
Foreign Language Requirement

Demonstration of competence in a foreign language is not required for the Ph.D. Should the student select a field(s) where the supervisory committee believes that competence in a language would be beneficial, (s)he will be so advised.

University of Washington MA Requirement

Students entering the graduate program are expected to complete the MA degree (46 credits minimum) within two years. After completing the methodology courses, two core courses, and generally two to three additional courses in two fields, the graduate student will complete an Essay of Distinction and an oral examination, to demonstrate substantive field knowledge and the ability to synthesize and apply that knowledge to new problems.

The M.A. Essay of Distinction is a highly polished paper of approximately forty pages in length. They often build upon papers begun in seminars.

Ph.C. and Ph.D.

The doctorate usually takes an additional three to four years beyond the M.A. (124 credits minimum, including at least 27 credits for the dissertation). Students must pass comprehensive written and oral examinations in each of the three fields. Successful completion of the General Examination (the oral defense of the dissertation prospectus) constitutes advancement to candidacy for the doctoral student. A candidate then completes the research and writes the dissertation for faculty review. A final oral examination and committee approval of the doctoral dissertation complete the degree requirements.