

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

PH.D. HANDBOOK

Updated: 15 August 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW OF THE PHD PROGRAM	2
II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS	4
III. SELECTION OF DISSERTATION ADVISOR	12
IV. FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE	13
V. DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION	15
VI. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC & PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE	17
VII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY & SAFETY	22
VIII. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION	25
IX. WORK RELATED POLICIES	26
X. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES	35
APPENDIX A: ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE HEARING PROCEDURES	37

I. OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

A. Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the PhD Program is to produce graduates who become scholars and teachers at leading research institutions. To succeed, students must develop expertise in a major and minor field, research design, methods, and both written and oral communication skills.

B. Program Highlights & Checklist

1st Year	• Complete the three-course sequence in research methods: PLS 800, PLS 801, PLS 802 • Complete at least six courses (including two from the major or minor field) • Maintain a GPA of 3.25 or higher with no grade lower than a 2.5 in any PLS course • Select and meet with the Guidance Committee • Submit and receive approval of the GradPlan • Submit an Annual Progress Report to the PhD Director by May 1
2nd Year	• Enroll in at least 6 courses (18 credits) • Complete required major field coursework in spring semester. • Meet with the Guidance Committee to review progress • Receive certification from the Graduate Program Coordinator that all requirements have been completed to be eligible to take the major field Comprehensive Exam. • Submit a Second-Year Paper in the major field (Spring Semester) • Submit an Annual Progress Report to the PhD Director by May 1 • Complete the RECR requirements
3rd Year	• Successfully complete the Comprehensive Examination in the major field • Complete minor field coursework and courses identified in the degree program • Select a Dissertation Chair and Committee • Submit an Annual Progress Report to the PhD Director by May 1 • Complete RECR requirements
4th Year	• Write and defend a Dissertation Proposal by the second week of Fall semester • Enroll in PLS 999. MSU requires 24 (and no more than 36) credits of 999 to graduate. • Submit an Annual Progress Report to the PhD Director by May 1 • Complete RECR requirements • Prepare a dossier for the job market over the summer
5th Year	• Complete 24 credits of PLS 999. MSU requires 24 but no more than 36 PLS 999 credits. • Apply for jobs • Write and defend a dissertation • Submit an Annual Progress Report to the PhD Director by May 1 • Complete all RECR requirements

C. Starting the Ph.D. Program

All students begin taking courses in the Fall semester. The Director serves as the main advisor to all first-year students. A Faculty Mentor from the student's major field will also advise the student on the student's program of study and general issues throughout the first year. First-year students should consult with both the Director and Faculty Mentor prior to enrolling in courses.

D. Dual Degrees

All dual-major doctoral degrees require an MOU and must be reviewed and approved by the Graduate Program Directors of the units involved, the Associate Deans for Graduate Studies of the Colleges involved, and the Dean of the Graduate School. A request for the dual major degree must be submitted within one semester following its development and within the first two years of the student's enrollment at Michigan State University. A copy of the Guidance Committee report must be attached. See the Graduate School website for details [here](#).

E. Program Changes

If the department changes program requirements, a student retains the right to complete the Ph.D. program under the rules in effect when the student began coursework. However, the student may choose to adhere to the new standards that the department has adopted after initial enrollment in the Ph.D. program.

F. Accommodations

If you are a student or employee at MSU, and you have a disability that substantially limits a major life activity, you can register with the [RCPD](#) and you may be eligible to receive academic and/or employment accommodations. This information is kept strictly confidential and self-identification is voluntary. However, if you have a disability, not registering with the RCPD may delay or compromise the availability of accommodations. As many reasonable accommodations require significant pre-planning, ***registration with the RCPD prior to situations requiring accommodations is essential.***

G. Common Terms & Abbreviations

- Director/GPD: Graduate Program Director for the Department of Political Science
- Coordinator/GPC: Graduate Program Coordinator in the Department of Political Science
- Program: The PhD Program in the Department of Political Science
- Department: The Department of Political Science
- PLS: Political Science
- RECR: Responsible and Ethical Conduct in Research
- GPA: Grade-point Average
- Academic Dishonesty: Unethical behavior intended to gain an unfair academic advantage including: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication of data/information, or using AI in ways unauthorized by a course syllabus, Department, or university policy.

II. DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

A. Coursework Requirements

The Program requires that students take a minimum of 45 semester credits in coursework (which usually means at least 15 semester courses). The program has the following requirements:

- Research Methods—three semester courses (9 credits)
- Major Field—four semester courses (12 credits)
- Minor Field—three semester courses (9 credits)
- Electives—five semester courses (15 credits)

Students must take at least 3 of the above courses each semester during their first four semesters, totaling 36 credits completed by the end of the second year.

1. Required Core Courses in Research Methods

Students are required to take the following three courses in their first year:

- PLS 800: Proseminar in Research Methods (Fall or Spring Semester)
- PLS 801: Quantitative Techniques in Political Science I (Fall Semester)
- PLS 802: Quantitative Techniques in Political Science II (Spring Semester)

These three courses will give students an introduction to the fundamental theories and methods of political science research. They are requirements of the Program unless the Director waives them in advance. Waivers may be granted in the following circumstances:

1. The student has taken an equivalent course in another graduate program.
2. The student is majoring in Political Philosophy and wishes to substitute PLS 802 with another course in a foreign language, philosophy, or intellectual history. A petition for substitution must be made during the student's first semester in the program.

The waiver process must be completed *before* the course may be dropped. No waiver requests will be considered after the first week of class. The procedure for obtaining a waiver is as follows:

1. Complete the Request for Waiver form (<http://polisci.msu.edu/phd/academics/forms-handbook/>) and bring to the Director all supporting evidence of the course(s) you have taken (e.g., syllabi) or wish to take which you think might be equivalent to one or more required courses. The Director will review these materials and may then request that you consult with the current Chair of the appropriate Field Committee.
2. The Director will then consider this evidence, may consult with the Chair of the Field Committee or the student's faculty advisor, and may require a written examination.
3. If the Director approves a waiver, it will be stated in writing within the student's file.

2. Major and Minor Field Designations and Requirements

Students can choose *one* of the following five areas for a major field specialization:

- American Politics
- Political Philosophy
- Comparative Politics

- International Relations
- Public Policy

In order to satisfy the major field requirements, students must complete at least four courses in the area—one of which must be the mandatory proseminar in that field—with a minimum grade of 3.5. These courses must be completed before the student's fifth semester.

Students can choose one of the following six areas for a minor field specialization:

- American Politics
- Political Philosophy
- Comparative Politics
- International Relations
- Public Policy
- Research Methods

In order to satisfy the minor field requirement, students must complete at least three courses in the area—one of which must be the mandatory proseminar in that field—with a minimum grade of 3.5. These courses must be completed before the end of the student's fifth semester.

Students with a Minor Field in Research Methods must take at least two Research Methods courses in the department beyond PLS 800, PLS 801, and PLS 802. One of these additional courses must be the PLS 900 course designated as the exit course for the minor by the methods faculty.

Minor fields can also be specifically designed by faculty guidance committees to meet the interests and needs of particular students. Any individualized-designed minor fields must be approved by the Department's Graduate Studies Committee.

3. Elective Courses

Fifteen additional credits in elective courses must be completed on top of the 30 credits of required, major, and minor field courses. These 15 credits may be in additional courses in research methods, the major, a minor, or other categories. Elective course requirements can also be taken in appropriate areas outside the department (subject to Guidance Committee approval).

B. Guidance Committee

Students must form a Guidance Committee by the end of their first year. The Guidance Committee must consist of four faculty members with one designated as a Chair who serves as the student's main academic advisor for program planning. At least three of the four Guidance Committee Members must be regular members of the political science faculty, and there must be one faculty member representing the student's major field and one faculty member representing the student's minor field. See Section IV of this *Handbook* for further detail.

The Department requires that students arrange a formal meeting of their Guidance Committees at least once per academic year. The Chair of the Guidance Committee is responsible for preparing a short report which indicates the student's progress to date, as well as any potential problems in

course selections or field designations, and recommendations to resolve these issues. A written copy of the committee's feedback must be provided to the student and to the Coordinator.

Guidance Committees play an important role helping student's progress in the program and enabling them to attain their academic goals. So, the membership of a student's Guidance Committee should not be viewed as permanent. It is quite possible that a member of a Guidance Committee may be unavailable to serve in this capacity (e.g., because of sabbatical leave, field research outside of the country, assuming a faculty position at another institution, etc.). In other situations, students may need to change the composition of their committee because their interests have shifted or because of personality or professional conflicts. All changes in the directorship or membership of Guidance Committees must be submitted in [GradPlan](#).

All students in the Program must submit annual reports each Spring semester. The form can be downloaded at: (<http://polisci.msu.edu/phd/academics/forms-handbook/>). The Graduate Studies Committee will report at the Spring faculty meeting on any students in the Program not making satisfactory progress.

C. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RECR) Requirements

Per the College of Social Science, RECR training must be current at the time a graduate student completes each program milestone (e.g., comprehensive exams, second-year papers, prospectus defenses, or final defenses). "*Current*" means a) the student has completed and documented (in Campus Solutions) all required RECR training hours for each academic year through the end of the semester immediately prior to the milestone; or b) the student has completed and documented (in Campus Solutions) all required RECR training hours for each prior academic year and has identified the workshops to complete required training for the current academic year.

D. Second-Year Paper

During the second year of study, students should be enrolled in 3 courses per semester. During this time, students should maintain close contact with the members of their Guidance Committees to obtain ongoing feedback. Any degree program changes must be made in [GradPlan](#) and receive approval from the Director.

In the first week of classes in the spring semester of a student's second year, each student will submit a paper to the student's major field committee. If the Chair of the student's Guidance Committee is not a member of the major field committee, then the Chair will serve on the major field committee for the purpose of evaluating the second-year paper. The field committee will return comments to each student by the end of February and – if necessary – students will be able to make revisions based on these comments until turning in a final version by the end of March. Subfields may choose to require an oral presentation as a part of the evaluation process. Final evaluations of the second-year paper – with an assessment – are due to the Director before May 1.

Assessments may take the following forms: Pass, MA Quality, or Fail. Students must receive a Pass in order to continue in the PhD program. To obtain an MA degree, students must achieve a Pass or

a rating of MA Quality. Students that do not meet the MA Quality threshold will not be eligible to receive an MA degree even if they meet the other requirements.

The second-year paper should be an article-length solo authored original work of scholarship – not just a review of literature or a research proposal – written at a level of quality sufficient for a successful presentation at a national professional conference in political science. It is appropriate to submit a revised seminar paper from a class, or a paper prepared for a professional conference.

In extreme circumstances, a student may petition the Director for an extension on the second-year paper requirement. The Director will work with the field committee in granting accommodations.

E. Obtaining an M.A. Degree

After the second year, a student may have met the requirements to apply for an M.A. degree. There are five requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Political Science:

1. Complete 30 semester credits of work in 400-, 800- and 900-level courses. A minimum of 24 semester credits of the 30 required must be in Political Science. Fewer than 24 credits are allowable as long as this is approved in writing by the Director and by the student's Guidance Committee. Thus, as many as 6 semester credits from other departments may be applied to your program. Special reading courses (PLS 993) will not normally be used to contribute to the M.A. degree requirements.
2. Complete the PLS 800-801-802 required courses
3. Among the courses constituting the 30 credits offered for the degree, no grade can be lower than 2.5
4. Maintain an overall GPA of at least 3.25 for all coursework
5. Students must complete the second-year paper milestone and receive a "Pass" or an "MA Quality" rating from the evaluating committee.

To receive an M.A. once these requirements are met, the student must apply online for the degree by the first week of the semester in which the degree is to be granted. In order to apply for an M.A. degree, contact the Graduate Program Coordinator. This must be done before you can apply online for your M.A. degree.

F. Comprehensive Field Examinations

After completing the required courses and before writing a dissertation, students must pass a Comprehensive Field Examination in their Major Field. Students must successfully pass the exam before the beginning of their fifth semester in the program. Failure to meet these deadlines will result in removal from the program unless a waiver is approved by the Director.

1. Eligibility to Take the Comprehensive Field Examination

Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible to take the Comprehensive Field Exam:

1. Completion of all the required/core methods courses (PLS 800, 801, 802). If any of these courses was not available, the Director may waive the requirement, though the student

must still complete the requirement in a later semester. PLS 801 and 802 can count as both required methods courses and as courses for a methods second field.

2. Completion of the required proseminar and minimum number of courses in the Major Field. If this has not been feasible (e.g., the required courses were unavailable), the Director may approve a substitute – such as a readings course or a topics course with content that crosses subfield boundaries – for these prerequisites.
3. A minimum of 36 credits of graduate level coursework (up to 9 may be taken in other departments) must be completed satisfactorily. PLS 999 (Dissertation Research) credits do not count toward this total.
4. No grade lower than a 3.5 in courses counting toward the major or minor field and an overall GPA of 3.25 in Political Science courses taken at MSU.
5. Complete fulfillment of any other specific course requirements identified by the student's Doctoral Program Guidance Committee and listed in GradPlan
6. Registering for at least 3 credit hours during the semester of the exam
7. Petitioning the Graduate Program Coordinator at the end of the semester prior to taking their Comprehensive Field Examination (https://polisci.msu.edu/_assets/pdfs/Petition-Take-Comprehensive-Exams.pdf)
8. Certification by the Graduate Program Coordinator of a student's eligibility to take the examinations (https://polisci.msu.edu/_assets/pdfs/Comprehensive-Exam-Eligibility.pdf)

Requests for exceptions, delays, or extensions relating to any of the Comprehensive Field Examination requirements must be made to the Director. The Director will confer with the Graduate Studies Committee and a student's Guidance Committee concerning after which the Director will determine whether and how to grant the request. Comprehensive examinations taken at other institutions cannot be used in place of those given at MSU.

2. Administration of the Comprehensive Field Examinations

The Department will offer Major Field Comprehensive Examinations during the two weeks prior to the start of courses of each Fall term. The specific date will be determined by the Director in consultation with the Field Committees chairs. All faculty and graduate students will be notified of the dates for the administration of the Comprehensive Examinations.

The Coordinator will administer the examinations by distributing exams, receiving completed exams from students, distributing student responses to field committee members, collecting faculty evaluations, and maintaining files of all previous examinations.

Each field examination will be supervised by a Field Committee. Selection of Field Examination Committees, including the Chair of each Committee, will be determined by the Chair of the Department in consultation with the Director. If a student's Guidance Committee Chair is not a member of the Field Examination Committee in that student's Major Field, the student's Guidance Committee Chair will automatically serve as an additional member of the Field Examination Committee for that student.

Each Field Committee formulates questions, format, and procedures for their field exam. *Students must be given some choice of the questions they will answer on comprehensive exams.* The Chairs of the Field Committees will be responsible for collecting and assembling the questions for the comprehensive exams as well as for communicating the format and procedures of the examination to the Director – and students – at least one month prior to the examination.

All committee members should grade all questions regardless of which committee member wrote the question. Student exams are not anonymous when graded. The full Committee shall determine the student's grade and submit the result of this evaluation to the Coordinator on the appropriate departmental form. The grading options available to the Committee are: pass with distinction, pass, and fail. If a student turns in a Comprehensive Field Examination, it must be assigned a grade. If a Comprehensive Field Examination is not turned in at the designated time and place, it will be counted as a failure.

Changes in the format and procedures of written Comprehensive Field Examinations must be submitted to the Director and approved by the Chair of the Department.

3. Retaking a Comprehensive Field Examination

If a student fails to pass the Comprehensive Field Examination in the major field, the student shall be allowed one retake of this Field Examination. This retake shall be completed no later than the end of the student's fifth semester, which is defined as the last day of finals week.

The format of the retake is decided by the Field Committee. For example, a retake may require answering new questions in a full exam, answering questions from a single section, or rewriting answers from the original exam. The Chair of the Field Committee is responsible for making arrangements with the student and Coordinator to administer any retakes. A student who fails a retake may not continue in that field for the Ph.D. degree.

At any time, a student may petition the Director to change one field for examination. But any student who fails a retake may be required to leave the Ph.D. program. If a student petitions the Director to change one field for examination *after* failing a retake of a Comprehensive Field Examination, and if the Director approves the change in fields, the Director shall also specify a semester in which the Comprehensive Field Examination in the new field shall be taken.

4. Academic Dishonesty in a Comprehensive Field Examination

If a department or unit decides that in addition to failing the comprehensive exam, an act of academic dishonesty deserves additional sanctions, e.g., not permitting a re-take of the comprehensive exam, thus resulting in dismissal from the program, then the guidelines provided by [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (GSRR), section 5.5 must be followed as well as guidelines from the [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). To dismiss a student for reasons other than academic dishonesty, the department will follow GSRR 2.4.9. If a student believes that the evaluation of his/her performance in the comprehensive exam was unfair, then the guidelines provided by GSRR 5.3 must be followed.

G. Dissertation Proposal and PLS 999 Credits

After passing the major field Comprehensive Field Examination, students must write and successfully defend a doctoral dissertation in order to complete their Ph.D. requirements.

1. Required PLS 999 Dissertation Credits

The University requires that students register for at least 24 credits but no more than 36 credits of PLS 999, Dissertation Research. PLS 999 credits can be taken at any time, but are most common for advanced students. After passing comps, students are considered to be enrolled full time by taking just 1 credit of PLS 999. If a student completes the dissertation before receiving 24 PLS 999 credits, they must pay for the remaining hours. These credits cover the student's use of University facilities and the cost of faculty consultation while conducting dissertation research and writing.

All students using University services (faculty consultation included) for graduate work must be registered each semester. Minimum registration consists of three credits per semester for doctoral students with an assistantship, and six credits per semester for doctoral students without an assistantship. For students who have passed all required comprehensive exams and achieved All But Dissertation (ABD) status, the minimum requirement is one credit per semester. Students should complete 24 credits of PLS 999 by the end of their tenth semester in the program.

2. Dissertation Proposal

Students must prepare a written proposal of their dissertation project. They should work closely with their Dissertation Chair and committee members to identify the necessary components of the proposal, as well as the expected timelines for their completion. The proposal should indicate the following items: (a) The problem under examination; (b) the major variables which will be included; (c) the type of data and methods of data collection that will be used; (d) the setting or context of the research; (e) the major theoretical relationships which will be considered; and (f) a brief review of major relevant literature.

The Dissertation Committee is responsible for reviewing written drafts of the proposal and providing comments. After the proposal has been tentatively approved by each committee member, a meeting of the whole Dissertation Committee will be held at which the student gives an oral defense of the proposal. The Dissertation Chair will set the general parameters of this defense and advise the students of these guidelines. If the proposal is acceptable to all members of the Dissertation Committee, final approval is granted, and the student should proceed with the project. All members of the Dissertation Committee must find the dissertation proposal acceptable and indicate this in writing (by a signed departmental form) before final approval of the proposal is given. A Dissertation Committee may schedule several oral defense meetings prior to its approval of a dissertation project. If the Committee indicates only provisional approval, signatures from all members of the Dissertation Committee are again required when final approval is granted. A copy signed by the student and by the committee members must be given to the Coordinator to be placed in the student's file (https://polisci.msu.edu/_assets/pdfs/defense-proposal-form.pdf).

The dissertation proposal should be completed, defended, and approved by the Dissertation Committee by the second week of the first semester of the student's fourth year in the program (i.e., the student's seventh semester in the program). The Dissertation Committee then supervises the subsequent dissertation research. Failure to complete, defend, and receive approval from the Dissertation Committee before the specified deadline may result in the loss of fifth-year funding.

3. Dissertation Proposals Involving Human Subjects

University and federal regulations require that *all* research directly or indirectly involving the gathering of data from human subjects—including interviews, and mail or telephone surveys—be reviewed and approved *before* initiation by the MSU [Human Research Protection Program](#) (HRPP).

Students and the Chairs of their Dissertation Committees are jointly responsible for seeking prior review and approval by HRPP of dissertation research *before* it is initiated. Graduate students may contact the Graduate School or the HRPP office for application forms and detailed instructions.

H. Doctoral Dissertation

Once the dissertation proposal is approved, students must conduct the research for the dissertation, write up the findings, present written drafts of the proposal to their committees, and successfully defend the completed project (https://polisci.msu.edu/_assets/pdfs/Record-of-Dissertation.pdf). An acceptable dissertation contributes original research and significant knowledge to the field of political science. Dissertations must be formatted and submitted following guidelines provided by the Graduate School (<https://grad.msu.edu/etd>).

III. SELECTION OF DISSERTATION ADVISOR

Each student should identify a Dissertation Committee Chair by the end of their fifth semester. If a student has co-chairs, one faculty member must be selected as the primary advisor for the purpose of completing RECR credits and serving as Dissertation Director. Dissertation Committee Chairs serve as main advisors and must be willing to supervise a dissertation, provide mentorship, and assist the student in professional development. Students will collaborate with their main advisor to create individual development plans that consider students' strengths and challenges in achieving their career goals. Dissertation Chairs and committee members should follow [MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#).

Advisors can be changed through GradPlan if the student, faculty, or circumstances require it. Either the student or faculty may initiate the change by notifying the Director. The Director will advise students in navigating a change of advisor and will work with students to ensure that they select someone who can provide them with appropriate mentoring, supervision, and guidance.

Students need at least three additional faculty members to serve as members of their Dissertation Committee. The committee must comply with University rules (see "Planning a Doctoral Program and Appointment of a Guidance Committee" in the [Academic Programs catalog](#)). To summarize:

- A Dissertation Committee must have at least *four* tenure stream MSU faculty members. Faculty from outside the Department may serve on a Dissertation Committee, but at least three members of the Dissertation Committee must be regular faculty members of the Department of Political Science. Faculty from outside the Department cannot serve as the Chair of the Dissertation Committee.
- People who are [not regular faculty at Michigan State University, but who can contribute to the student's program](#), may serve as additional members of the Dissertation Committee and assist in the work of the committee.
- With the approval of the Department Chair, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the College of Social Sciences an exception may be granted to allow an Emeritus faculty member to serve as one of the four required faculty members; in addition, an Emeritus faculty member may continue to serve as the Chair of a Dissertation Committee.
- Faculty on leave may be replaced if the Dissertation Committee Chair deems it advisable.
- Students should work with their Dissertation Chairs/Advisors to select committee members who can facilitate their dissertation research. The Director can also provide advice and suggestions to students on the membership of Dissertation Committees.
- If a faculty member chooses to leave a committee, students should work with the Dissertation Chairs/Advisors to identify a suitable replacement.
- All changes in the directorship or membership of Dissertation Committees must be done in GradPlan and all faculty involved must be notified of these changes.

IV. FORMATION OF THE GUIDANCE COMMITTEE

A. Timeline and Procedures for Forming the Guidance Committee

All students are assigned a faculty advisor based on their stated interests upon acceptance into the program. The Director will meet with each incoming student during their first semester to assist them in selecting a Guidance Committee, including whether to keep their assigned advisor as the chair. To facilitate this process, students will submit to the Director a brief statement of their overall program interests, focus, and objectives. Based on this information, the Director will suggest appropriate faculty members on the student's Guidance Committee.

B. Guidance Committee Composition

The Guidance Committee consists of at least *four* faculty members. (With the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School and the Chair of the Department, a non-tenure-stream faculty member or academic specialist may be substituted for one of these faculty members.) At least three of the members must be regular faculty members of the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University. Both the major and minor fields must be represented: At minimum, there must be at least one political science faculty member from the major field and one political science faculty member from the minor field on the committee. One of the political science faculty must be identified as the Chair of the student's Guidance Committee.

C. Guidance Committee Meetings

Students must meet with their Guidance Committees by the last day of April of their first year to plan their Ph.D. coursework. It is each student's responsibility to schedule this meeting. Students should have the following items available when their committee meets:

- a statement of their academic goals
- a brief vita
- a suggested course of study for their major and minor fields in preparation for the Comprehensive Field Examination(s) (see the Guidance Committee Worksheet on the Political Science Department website: <http://polisci.msu.edu/phd/academics/forms-handbook/>)

The Guidance Committee evaluates the overall focus of the student's proposed program and assists in defining the student's research interests. The Guidance Committee approves the final selection of the fields that a student is proposing for their doctoral coursework. The Committee suggests coursework to aid in the preparation of major and minor fields. The Guidance Committee may require that a student take additional coursework, both within and outside the Department, to supplement the basic requirements for the doctoral program. The Guidance Committee evaluates the student's research plans and makes suggestions to facilitate the development of appropriate language and/or analytical skills.

D. Entering the Degree Program into GradPlan

After the first meeting of the Guidance Committee, students must enter their proposed degree program into GradPlan. SIS (<https://student.msu.edu>) provides access to GradPlan, which is the online space for all doctoral student program planning, guidance committee reports and changes,

comprehensive and final defense reports, submission of the dissertation to the Graduate School, and final University degree certification. It provides electronic circulation for checking/approvals and generates automatic emails when needed.

The Director will review each student's degree program in GradPlan. Programs which are inconsistent with departmental or university policy will be returned to the student with specific information on areas of confusion, incompleteness, or incompatibility. The Director can ask the Graduate Studies Committee to review degree programs and provide advice in this process. It is the student's responsibility to correct any problems, obtain the approval of their Guidance Committee Members, and resubmit the appropriate changes in GradPlan.

Degree programs must be approved by the Director, the Department, and the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies in the College of Social Sciences. Students must have approved degree programs on file in GradPlan by the end of their first year of study.

Students must follow the degree plans approved by their Guidance Committees (as listed in GradPlan) and notify members of their Guidance Committees and the Director of any deviations from their degree plans.

E. Additional Information

See [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (GSSR) 2.4 for more information on MSU policies related to Guidance Committees, including how to change committee members.

V. DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

A. Enrollment Requirements

MSU requires that students must be formally enrolled at MSU, for at least 1 credit hour, during the semester in which they *defend* their dissertation.

B. Dissertation Defense

There must be an Oral Defense of the Dissertation. The Oral Defense should be held after all chapters of the dissertation have been approved by each member of the Dissertation Committee.

The dissertation must be defended at a forum open to all members of the Department including other graduate students and announced by email at least three days in advance. Contact the Coordinator two weeks before the defense and provide your dissertation title and defense date. The defense must be held during business hours on a weekday while classes are in session (including finals week). A summer defense is at the discretion of the faculty members involved.

Oral Defenses consist of two parts. First, the presentation and is open to everyone. Second, only the Dissertation Committee members with a vote will deliberate privately. For a successful defense, an extraordinary majority of the committee must provide written approval. A student may lose only one member of the committee to a dissenting vote and pass the oral defense. If more than one member of the Dissertation Committee fails to approve the dissertation, the defense must be repeated.

No substitution on the Dissertation Committee is permitted at the defense stage without approval of the Director. No more than one member of the committee may be a faculty member who has left the University or retired or a faculty member on leave. S/he may continue on the committee for one academic year but need not attend the final oral defense. Faculty members on leave for more than a year must be replaced as members of the Dissertation Committee.

C. Final Approval of the Dissertation

Students must receive final written approval of the complete dissertation from an extraordinary majority of the Dissertation Committee; that is, the dissertation receives final approval if no more than one member of the Dissertation Committee dissents. Final approval occurs only after the extraordinary majority of the committee has approved the written dissertation and the defense.

D. Dissertation Submission

Upon final written approval, the dissertation must be prepared and submitted, according to University regulations, to the Graduate School Office. See: <https://grad.msu.edu/etd>.

E. Receiving the Ph.D. Degree

Submit the on-line graduation application form the first week of the semester you expect to complete your degree requirements. If this is during Summer, submit this application on or before the end of the first week of Spring semester. The on-line- graduation application form is located here: <https://www.reg.msu.edu/StuForms/GradApp/GradApp.aspx>

Students are not required to enroll for classes during the semester in which their degree is actually granted, if this is later than the oral dissertation defense.

Upon completing their degree, students are required to fill out the Graduate School's doctoral exit survey: <https://grad.msu.edu/academics/theses-and-dissertations/required-paperwork>

F. Placement Services for Doctoral Candidates

All students entering their 5th year are assumed to be on the job market. Students should make an appointment with the Placement Director *before* entering the job market so that they may be advised about placement procedures and become informed about job openings. No extensive Department placement efforts for Ph.D. candidates will be made until all requirements (with the exception of the dissertation) have been met.

VI. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

A. Assessments of Academic Performance

Students have a right to periodic evaluation of their progress, performance, and professional potential ([GSRR 2.4.8](#)). The Department of Political Science has established procedures, designed to facilitate the review of graduate student performance on a regular, ongoing basis.

Students are required to meet with their Guidance Committees at least once each year until they pass their Comprehensive Field Examinations. It is each student's responsibility to initiate, schedule, and arrange the annual meetings of Guidance Committees. It is the responsibility of the Guidance Committee to review the student's progress in research activities, as well as plan for work in the coming year ([GSRR 2.4.8](#)).

By May 1st of each year, students and the Chair of their Guidance/Dissertation Committees should complete and submit an Academic Progress Report (<http://polisci.msu.edu/phd/academics/forms-handbook/>) to the Director. The Director will then prepare an Annual Evaluation that assesses progress, which is distributed to students and their Guidance/Dissertation Committee Chairs by May 31st. The Coordinator will place copies of the Academic Progress Report and the Annual Evaluation in the graduate student's file.

In addition, students undergo first- and third-year reviews, as detailed in the above sections.

B. Academic Credits and Grades

Graduate courses in political science are three semester credit hours except for variable credit reading courses (PLS 993) and dissertation research (PLS 999). Students holding graduate assistantships may take three graduate courses per semester, but they must complete at least two courses (6 hours of credit) each semester in order to retain their assistantship. Students holding fellowships should take three courses per semester, prior to writing their proposal and dissertation.

All PLS 993 courses shall include either one major research paper or several shorter papers. These papers shall be graded on the same criteria as those written for regularly scheduled seminars. Reading courses must be individually arranged with the instructor and must not parallel regularly offered courses. Before enrollment, complete this form:

<https://polisci.msu.edu/assets/pdfs/Permission-Register-PLS993.pdf>.

MSU is a member of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC). Through this committee's "Traveling Scholar" program a doctoral student can take a limited number of courses at any Big Ten University or the University of Chicago. See the description of program requirements at: <https://www.btaa.org/resources-for/students/traveling-scholar-program/introduction>.

University grades are issued in numerical form, ranging from "0" to "4.0" in increments of 0.5. (There is, however, no grade of 0.5.) In Political Science, the shared understanding of what these grades mean is as follows:

4.0 indicates superior performance

- 3.5 indicates satisfactory performance
- 3.0 is the minimum acceptable grade, but a predominance of such grades suggests inability to complete the graduate program
- 2.5 or less indicates unsatisfactory performance.

Courses may also be taken on a Credit/No-Credit basis. If two or three graduate courses per semester are taken for credit and grades, it is possible to take other *non-PLS* courses of interest on the Credit/No-Credit system. The Credit/No-Credit system is intended to allow students to study in areas outside the major field of study without jeopardizing their GPA. An instructor will expect graduate students to perform at or above the 3.0 level in order to earn credit for the course. Students must register for the course in advance on this basis.

The University provisions for incomplete coursework are described in the following passage from the [Academic Programs catalog](#): “When special or unusual circumstances occur, the instructor may postpone assignment of the student's final grade in a course by use of an I-Incomplete, a DF-Deferred, or an ET-Extension marker.”

I-Incomplete

The I-Incomplete may be given only when: the student (a) has completed at least 6/7 of the term of instruction but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reason; and (b) has done satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Provided these conditions are met, the instructor files an Agreement for Completion of (I) Incomplete at the time course grades are due (see form [here](#)). This agreement specifies what the student must do, and when, to remove the I-Incomplete. The department or school office gives a copy to the student and retains a copy for at least one year.

The required work must be completed, and a grade must be reported to the Office of the Registrar, no later than the middle of the student's next semester in attendance (summer session excluded) if that semester is within one calendar year following receipt of the I-Incomplete. Exception to this deadline: An instructor may submit an Administrative Action stating that course structure necessitates delay of make-up grading until the end of the student's next semester in attendance.

Failure to complete the required work by the due date will result in a grade of I/0.0, I/NC or I/N, depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled. A student who does not register for MSU courses subsequent to receipt of an I-Incomplete has one calendar year to complete the required work; after that, the I-Incomplete will become U-Unfinished, changed to I/U on the student's academic record, and the course may only be completed by re-enrollment.

An extension of time for completion of the required work may be approved by the college offering the course only by means of an Administrative Action documenting physician-certified illness or other extraordinary circumstances.

An Extension of Time is a formal agreement between the instructor and the student. After an Extension of Time has been filed, the work must be done by the deadline determined by the instructor or the I-Incomplete will be changed to I/0.0, I/NC, or I/N depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled.

DF-Deferred

The DF-Deferred applies to the numerical, the CR-NC, and P-N grading systems.

DF grades are given only to students who are doing satisfactory work but cannot complete the course work because of reasons acceptable to the instructor.

The required work must be completed and a grade reported within six months (190 calendar days from the last class day of the term of instruction), with the option of a single six-month extension (190 calendar days). If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF-Deferred will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

ET-Extension

The ET-Extension applies to the numerical, the CR-NC, and P-N systems.

Given to undergraduate, graduate, and graduate-professional students only in courses specifically approved by the University Committee on Curriculum. Approval requires specification of the time period within which work must be completed. Courses that involve field experience or thesis work and courses in which work normally extends beyond one semester are the types of courses normally considered.

A final grade must be reported upon completion of the final course in the sequence or in the time approved for the completion of the work. If a final grade is not reported in these periods, the ET will be changed to ET/0.0, ET/NC or ET/N, depending on the grading system under which the student was enrolled. Ph.D. students who have more than one incomplete or deferred grade at the end of any given semester will be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee, which will recommend appropriate action up to and including dismissal from the program.

C. Academic Standing and Satisfactory Progress

The minimum acceptable cumulative GPA for a student is 3.25. A student who receives a 2.5 grade or less in a course will be reviewed by the Graduate Studies Committee and may be dismissed from the program. Per university [policy](#), courses with grades below a 2.0 cannot be used to fulfill graduate program course requirements.

A student who maintains an acceptable cumulative GPA and satisfies the program requirements is considered to be making satisfactory progress in the program. Students who are not making satisfactory progress in the program will be notified in their Annual Evaluation letters.

D. Time Limits

The Comprehensive Field Examinations, including any necessary repeats, must be passed within *five years* and all remaining requirements for the degree, including the dissertation, must be completed within *eight years* from the first semester of enrollment in the PhD program. Should the degree requirements not be completed within this eight-year period, the Comprehensive Field Examinations must be passed again.

E. Dismissal from the Ph.D. Program

All PhD students must meet the requirements and standards identified within this Handbook and the list below. Students have a right to receive notification in writing when academic progress or performance is judged to be unsatisfactory. See [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities \(GSSR\) 2.4](#) for more information. The Graduate Studies Committee rules on each dismissal.

Dismissal from the Ph.D. program can occur if a student:

- is not making satisfactory academic progress in the program as defined by the Program Highlights & Checklist (pg. 2).
- has more than one incomplete or deferred grade at the end of any semester
- has not maintained the minimum acceptable GPA for students in the Program (3.25), or has received grades below expectations (as defined in Section C. above)
- has not completed key milestones in accordance with the time limits specified by the Department, College, or University
- fails a retake of the comprehensive examination
- was found to have engaged in academic dishonesty or misconduct
- has “poor” performance ratings in Graduate Assistant roles over two or more semesters
- or if a student’s behavior or performance violates MSU, College, or Departmental standards and confirmed by the Graduate Studies Committee.

Students in danger of dismissal will be required to meet with the Director and their main faculty advisor. Together, the student, advisor, and Director will create a plan of action for bringing the student back on track to meet milestones and graduate. Students that fear they are falling behind are encouraged to reach out to their advisor and/or the Director for assistance.

Procedures for dismissal will be conducted in accordance with [GSRR sections 2 and 5](#). The department has a hearing board (see Appendix) for adjudication of cases that cannot be resolved otherwise. The hearing board will operate in accordance with [GSSR section 5](#).

F. Waiver and Transfer Credits

Graduate-level coursework may be transferred from other accredited institutions of similar quality if they meet all of the following provisions:

- Only courses in which at least a 3.0 (B) grade was received will be considered.
- Only courses from other accredited or similar quality institutions will be accepted.
- Only courses completed within the eight-year time limit approved for earning a PhD.
- Only courses appropriate to a student’s program of study.

- No more than 9 credits can be transferred into a doctoral program.

Students must submit syllabi to their Guidance Committee and the Director for all of the courses that they would like to have transferred. The student's Guidance Committee will evaluate the desirability of transferring course requirements in terms of the student's particular program of study and career goals. If a student's Guidance Committee approves a student's request to transfer a course, then it is forwarded to the Director for review. Approval for transferring/waiving courses must be given by the student's Guidance Committee and the Director.

G. Departmental Records

The Coordinator maintains an academic file on each student. Academic files contain the records of application materials, assistantship letters, Guidance Committee plans, annual review materials, teaching assistant evaluations, grades, results of comprehensive exams, formation of Dissertation Committees, and all documentation pertaining to the preparation and defense of the dissertation.

Students should have the following items in their academic files:

1. Any correspondence related to assistantship or fellowship support
2. Ph.D. Degree Plans in GradPlan
3. Any changes in the fields or courses initially agreed upon by a Guidance Committee, and subsequently approved by Guidance Committee members (if applicable)
4. Petition to Take Comprehensive Examinations
5. Report of Comprehensive Examinations and Final Evaluation
6. Record of Oral Defense of Dissertation Proposal
7. Record of Oral Defense of the Dissertation
8. Approval of Dissertation

Students have a right to access the materials in their own academic files as needed. In order to do this, they should submit a request to the Coordinator.

The Department also maintains a second set of Personnel files for students employed by the Department. Personnel files contain appointment forms and evaluations of student performance as teaching or research assistants. Students also have a right to access the materials in their own personnel files. According to the [Graduate Employment Union](#) (GEU) contract, requests must be in writing and each student is limited to three reviews of personnel files a year. To access one's personnel file, a student should submit a request to the Graduate Program Coordinator.

VII. DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES: INTEGRITY AND SAFETY

A. Professional Development

The Ph.D. Program is designed to prepare students to become active members of the political science community. Students should attend talks, presentations, workshops, and colloquia held on campus and particularly Department events. Each year, the GSA will elect a member to organize events and provide feedback to the Department on professionalization needs.

Students should also gain experience in presenting their own research. Such experience can be developed through active participation in course seminars and workshops. It is also important for students to become involved in the intellectual activities of the discipline of political science by attending professional conferences and meetings. Students should work closely with faculty members – especially their committee – to discover research and professional opportunities.

B. Ethical and Professional Standards

The American Political Science Association (APSA) has compiled “A Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Sciences” containing a statement on professional ethics and a list of ethical principles which are relevant for any and all aspects of political science scholarship. The Guide is available online on the APSA Web Page, and it should be reviewed by every student (<http://www.apsanet.org>).

The Department is committed to creating an environment that promotes ethical conduct and intellectual integrity. All graduate students should practice intellectual honesty in their work. In accordance with the [University's Task Force Report on Research Mentoring](#), the Department believes that intellectual integrity entails a range of practices. These include: Honesty in proposing and reporting research; recognition and credit to prior research; confidentiality of the peer review process; disclosure of potential conflicts of interest; collegiality in scholarly interactions and sharing of resources; and adherence to fair and open relationships between coworkers.

Additionally, the department supports a professional environment of inclusivity and respect. We are committed to the expectations of the [MSU College of Social Science Code of Conduct](#). If a graduate student experiences behavior they believe to be inconsistent with the values in the College of Social Science Code of Conduct, we encourage you to discuss it with the individual involved if appropriate or bring it to the Director or Department Chair.

C. Mentorship

The Director is responsible for transitioning new students into the Program and ensuring that they have access to advising on academic matters. The Director will also foster shared values and uphold the rights and responsibilities in situations where conflicts between faculty and graduate students arise. Faculty advisors have mentoring responsibilities involving professional training, ethical research practices, career development, and networking to support graduate student mentees. Graduate students are responsible for meeting and following the requirements for degree completion in the political science program, staying in regular contact with their faculty advisor,

and practicing both integrity and honesty in their research activities. See [here](#) for more detailed information about mentorship at MSU.

D. Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures on ethical misconduct in research and creative activities (see [Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)), to report known acts of misconduct of which they have direct knowledge to university officials, and to protect the rights and privacy of individuals making such reports in good faith. Students who fail to satisfy the University's and the Department's standards of ethics and intellectual integrity will be dismissed as students from the Program.

E. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research Requirement

The Department requires all students to undertake training in the responsible and ethical conduct of research. The Graduate School's Research Integrity website offers specific information about how this requirement can be satisfied (<https://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity>). The Department will notify students of specific requirements and training dates on an annual basis.

F. Use of Human Subjects in Political Science Research

All students must comply with the guidelines and regulations of the [Human Research Protection Program](#) (UCRIHS) in the conduct of their research or in the process of conducting research for other students or faculty. Students must obtain HRPP approval for all research that directly or indirectly involves human subjects. This includes data gathered from interviews, mail surveys, or telephone surveys. Students must obtain HRPP approval *before* they begin their research projects. Contact the HRPP office directly to obtain application forms and to receive more detailed information about this process.

Details on the procedures for graduate students to obtain approval for human subjects research and the procedures for submitting an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application are provided here: <https://hrpp.msu.edu/help/A-Z/graduate-student.html>

Typically, the student's major advisor or another faculty member should be designated as the Principal Investigator (PI) and the student should be designated as co-Investigator. Graduate students may also be designated the role of PI Proxy- more information on this role is available here: <https://hrpp.msu.edu/assets/click-resources/designate-proxy.pdf>

G. Academic Integrity & Misconduct

Dismissal from the Program can occur if a student fails to adhere to responsible and ethical conduct in research and scholarship. See the related MSU policies on [Academic Integrity](#) and [Misconduct](#) as well as the [General Student Regulations](#). You can also review this University handout defining key terms: [Guidelines for Academic Integrity](#).

Examples of criteria for dismissal due to unethical or dishonest behavior:

- Violations of academic integrity include cheating on exams, plagiarism, improper use of generative artificial intelligence, and falsifying data. Failure to follow these guidelines can lead to consequences for those involved (e.g., dismissal from the program).
- Failure to satisfy the University HRPP regulations is considered grounds for dismissal of a student from the program.

Procedures for dismissal will be conducted in accordance with [GSRR sections 2 and 5](#). The department has a hearing board (see Appendix A) for adjudication of cases that cannot be resolved with informal and direct discussion. Hearing boards operate in accordance with [GSSR section 5](#).

H. Annual Progress Report & Evaluation

According to Section 2.4.8 of the MSU Graduate School's *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities*, "Graduate students have a right to periodic evaluations to assess their academic progress, performance, and professional potential... Written evaluations shall be communicated to the graduate student at least once a year, and a copy of such evaluations shall be placed in the graduate student's file."

To fulfill this requirement, students are required to meet with their advisor at the end of every academic year to fill out an Annual Progress Report. This report is based on a questionnaire form provided by the Director that details academic progress, GPA, coursework, completed and remaining milestones, student accomplishments, goals, and areas of concern. A completed form is due to the Director by May 1st of each year and must be distributed to both the student and advisor.

Based on the Annual Progress Report and further academic records, the Director will prepare an Annual Evaluation letter that assesses each student's progress in the program as of June 1st of that year. The letters will address academic progress, RECR completion, major milestones, funding, progress towards the degree, and areas of concern or requiring attention. The student and advisor both receive a copy of the evaluation, which will be kept in departmental records.

I. Links to University Policies and Resources

- | | |
|--|--|
| ○ Graduate Career Development | ○ Mentoring |
| ○ Community programs | ○ Out-of-State tuition waivers |
| ○ Events | ○ Policy information |
| ○ Forms | ○ Professional development |
| ○ Funding | ○ Research integrity |
| ○ Graduate Educator Advancement and Teaching (GREAT) | ○ Traveling scholar opportunities |
| ○ Graduate School Office of Well-Being (GROW) | ○ COGS |
| | ○ University Committee on Graduate Studies |

Additional Resources: [OISS](#), [RCPD](#), [Office of Spartan Experiences](#), [the Libraries](#), [the Olin Health Center](#), [Inclusive Excellence and Impact](#), [the Burgess Institute for Entrepreneurship & Innovation](#), [the Writing Center](#), and [University Outreach & Engagement](#), and [the Ombudsperson's Office](#), [Student Parent Resource Center](#), the [Gender and Sexuality Campus Center](#), and the [Student Veterans Resource Center](#).

- **VIII. STUDENT CONDUCT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

A. Asking Questions, Eliminating Confusion

Students must arrange meetings with their Guidance/Dissertation Committees at least once a year in order to inform them of their progress and activities. These meetings can also serve as valuable forums to discuss any problems students might be encountering and to raise issues that need to be addressed. Students should also feel free to consult with the Director in order to obtain additional clarification and advice about course scheduling, degree requirements, program deadlines, etc.

B. Resolving Problems and Conflicts

Most problems within a graduate program are due to miscommunications or conflicts between graduate students and faculty, particularly students and their Guidance/Dissertation Committee Chairs. Such conflicts can arise over a variety of issues, and they can be difficult to resolve. Hence, it is important to find ways of avoiding such conflicts before they develop into intractable situations.

Students should try to resolve problems within the Department. Students should consult with the Director regarding those issues that they might find difficult to discuss with their Committee members. If the student's Committee Chair is also the Director, students should consult with the Chair of the Department, who has ultimate responsibility for the successful functioning of the graduate program and the entire department.

Matters that cannot be handled informally by the Director or the Department Chair shall be handled via the procedures in Appendix A.

Students can also obtain advice and information about conflict resolution from the following university source: [Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

C. Dismissal from the Ph.D. Program

Students may be dismissed from the program if they meet the criterion for dismissal noted in the sections above. In all cases, procedures for dismissal will be conducted in accordance with [GSSR sections 2 and 5](#). The department has a hearing board (see Appendix A) for adjudication of cases, which will operate in accordance with [GSSR section 5](#).

Students that have met the criterion for dismissal but are finishing a semester before exiting are still expected to attend their courses if enrolled, complete their Graduate Assistant assignments if they have one, and respond to administrative and other requests as needed. Failure to meet these expectations may result in sanctions consistent with GSSR, MSU, and departmental rules.

IX. WORK RELATED POLICIES

A. Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assignments

All students admitted to the Program are offered funding for five years, contingent upon meeting program milestone, maintaining academic standing, and availability of funding.

Graduate students are encouraged to seek extra-departmental funding, either inside or outside the University. Fellowship and grant information is made available for this purpose on a continuing basis via messages sent to students' MSU email accounts. Students are encouraged to review this information and to discuss potential applications with the Director or other faculty members.

Any work outside of MSU for pay in addition to the Graduate Assistantship must conform to MSU policies.

PhD students beyond their five years of funding will be contacted about their progress in the Program, their financial needs, and their desire for funding for the following year. Such funding generally can occur only if temporary or unexpected funds become available to the Department. Funding is typically granted only when the Department has teaching needs that cannot be fulfilled by available faculty or graduate students in earlier stages of their programs.

1. Departmental Assignments and Assistantship Appointments

a. Terms of Commitment for Graduate Assistantships

The Department considers five years as an appropriate period for funding of students in the Program, assuming the candidate maintains satisfactory progress, completes the minimum number of credit hours each semester, and receives average or above performance evaluations.

When the Department makes a commitment to a student for five years of assistantship support, that refers to support from any source that is part of the Department's budget or is secured by the Department rather than the student. This includes the general graduate student budget, temporary funding that may be available from other Department accounts (e.g., from the faculty salary budget if a faculty member is on leave), research grant funds secured from external sources by members of the Department, other non-Departmental funds secured and generally managed through the Department, or other University funds arranged by the Department. Funding from any of these sources will be counted as part of Departmental support, even though students may have made separate application, either in writing or informally, for such funding.

Funding packages for students entering the program with outside funding (e.g. a government fellowship from their native country) will be specified in the first funding letter. In general, these funds will be combined with a Department assistantship to produce a five-year funding package.

b. English Proficiency Requirement for International Students

International students must fulfill the English language proficiency requirement. International Students can satisfy this requirement by attaining the minimum score of 50 or higher on the Test of

Spoken English (given by the Educational Testing Service), the SPEAK test ([given by the English Language Center at MSU](#)), or the ITA Oral interview (also given by the English Language Center at MSU). The Department can terminate the financial assistance of any student who does not meet the English language proficiency requirements by the end of their first year in the Program. The Department may require students who do not pass the English proficiency requirement by the end of their first semester in the program to enroll in an English language course at MSU during their second semester in the program. The Department does not pay for the extra credits required to enroll in this course.

c. Work Assignments for Graduate Assistants

Assignments are made by the Director and students with any special goals for their assistantships are encouraged to consult with the Director about potential assignments. Other assignments may be made by faculty members with research grants or with program initiative funds. Students who have definite arrangements for assignments with anyone other than the Director should inform the latter of these commitments, so that duplicate assignments are not made.

[A half-time appointment is considered to entail twenty hours weekly of departmental work responsibilities. A quarter-time appointment is considered to entail ten hours weekly of work responsibilities.](#) According to university rules, graduate students may not work more than *three-quarters* (3/4) time. Overload assignments cannot exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ time even if the assignments involved, considered separately, might be the same as two half-time time assignments. Assignments at $\frac{3}{4}$ time are made only when the department has extraordinary teaching obligations that cannot be met by the normal complement of faculty and teaching assistants, and a particular individual is extraordinarily well qualified to take on the additional responsibility.

2. Expectations and Responsibilities of Graduate Assistants

a. Course Registration

Graduate assistants must register for courses each semester in which they hold assistantships. The University has identified the following set of minimum enrollments for doctoral students holding graduate assistants based upon their appointment status:

- Quarter-time assistants (10 hours per week): Minimum enrollment is 3 credit hours for Ph.D. students (including credits in courses number 899 or 999)
- Half-time assistants (20 hours per week): Minimum enrollment is 3 credit hours for Ph.D. students (including credits in courses numbered 899 or 999)
- Three-quarter time assistants (30 hours per week): Minimum enrollment is 3 credit hours (including credits in courses numbered 899 or 999)

Minimum enrollment for doctoral students who have successfully completed all comprehensive exams is 1 credit hour per semester. Doctoral students must be enrolled in one credit hour during the semester of their oral defense for their doctoral dissertation. International students are required to maintain full time course enrollment in fall and spring semesters (<https://oiss.isp.msu.edu/immigration1/visa-immigration/status/>) 6 credits per semester for

students without an assistantship, 3 credits per semester for students with an assistantship, and 1 credit per semester for students with ABD status.

Any deviations from the enrollment requirements listed above must be approved *in advance* (i.e., prior to enrollment) by the Dean of the College of Social Sciences. Graduate assistants should be enrolled in graduate-level courses that have been identified as relevant for their degree programs. Any exceptions must be approved in advance by the student's Guidance Committee and the Director. Visitor credits may count as part of a graduate assistant's credit load, if approved in advance by a student's Guidance Committee and the Director.

b. Maintaining Norms of Professional Behavior and Ethical Conduct

Graduate Assistants are expected to observe the following professional norms:

1. The faculty member(s) with whom a graduate assistant is working should clearly specify the assistant's duties and responsibilities during the contractually required meeting at the start of each semester or before.
2. Assistants should be available for work for the number of hours specified from the start (defined as the first day of classes for the semester) to the end of the semester (being defined as the last day of the final exam week).
3. Assistants should report to the person(s) to whom they are assigned during the week prior to the beginning of the semester.
4. Assistants have the responsibility of reporting to the person(s) to whom they are assigned at least once per week.
5. Inability to perform assigned duties should be communicated immediately to the Director.
6. Compliance with the provisions of the [University Code of Teaching Responsibilities](#).
7. Graduate assistants should consult informally and frequently with their faculty mentors on an ongoing basis through the course of their assignment.

Graduate assistants must also maintain the ethical standards and practices outlined by the Department, the University, and the American Political Science Association (and referenced in [Section VIII of this Handbook](#)).

Violations of the above expectations, norms, and standards will be heard by the Department's Graduate Studies Committee. Cases that cannot be resolved by the Graduate Studies Committee shall be heard by a Departmental Judiciary Committee. If the case cannot be resolved at the department level, it will be heard by the College Hearing Board.

c. Training of Teaching Assistants

MSU runs a training program for new teaching assistants prior to the beginning of Fall semester classes. Students are encouraged but are not required to attend this program. In addition, the Graduate School has many teaching resources: <https://grad.msu.edu/teaching>.

Many MSU courses use the D2L system to organize readings, assignments, and manage courses. More information and training can be found at: <https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/loginh/>.

d. Mandatory Training

All students must complete the on-line training about the [Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](https://ora.msu.edu/train/programs/rvsm.html) Policy. You can access it at: <https://ora.msu.edu/train/programs/rvsm.html>. *If you need assistance, contact the Helpdesk at 517-884-4600 or empower@msu.edu.*

e. Faculty Supervision and Evaluation of Graduate Assistant Performance

The Department wants its teaching assistants and graduate instructors to become effective teachers—and effective representatives of the Department—as quickly as possible. The teaching assistant training program mentioned above will accomplish part of the necessary training.

Another part of the training will be the responsibility of the faculty members who work with, and supervise, the teaching assistants and instructors. New students who are assigned as graders for a particular course will naturally be supervised by the faculty member teaching the course. Similarly, students who are assigned to a course to run a discussion section (or sections) will be supervised by the faculty member teaching the course. Students who are given the full responsibility to teach their own courses will be supervised by faculty who teach courses within that field. All teaching assistants and instructors will be required to meet with their faculty supervisor – and document this meeting – at the start of each semester to discuss the expected workload, which may not exceed 20 hours a week (GEU contract Article 13, 1).

(1) The Supervisory Relationship

Faculty supervision of graduate instructors should involve the following activities:

- a. When students are assigned responsibility for teaching a course, they should meet with the faculty mentor to discuss matters such as text selection, course structure, syllabus design, examination design, grading practices, and pedagogical approach (e.g., lectures vs. discussions, etc.). This should be done *before* books are ordered and a syllabus is prepared for the course in question. The intent is to utilize the faculty member's teaching experience so that the graduate instructor can avoid various pitfalls in teaching and course design.
- b. At some point in the semester, the faculty mentor should attend at least one class session taught by the graduate instructor. For a new instructor this should be done early in the semester, and it may be helpful to visit again later in the semester. For an experienced instructor a single visit late in the semester may be sufficient.
- c. Following the class visit, the faculty mentor should meet with the graduate instructor to discuss any issues involving presentational style and technique that may be appropriate.
- d. The graduate instructor should feel free to consult the faculty mentor for advice or assistance regarding any course-related issues that may arise.

For new graduate instructors, faculty mentors should exercise relatively close supervision. For experienced graduate instructors, relatively infrequent contact may be acceptable.

(2) The End-of-Semester Evaluation

Whether the graduate instructor is new or experienced, the faculty mentor has some evaluation responsibilities:

- a. At the end of the semester, the graduate instructor shall have the students in their class fill out online evaluations. The faculty mentor shall then review these forms. If it would serve a useful educational purpose, the faculty mentor may wish to meet with the instructor to consider issues raised by students in the evaluations.
- b. After visiting the class and reviewing the evaluations at the end of the semester, the faculty mentor should fill out an evaluation form (obtained from the Coordinator), give a copy to the graduate instructor, and place a copy in the graduate instructor's file.
- c. The graduate instructor should either sign the form (signifying that they have read the evaluation and has no complaint) or (within 20 days) respond to the evaluation in writing.
- d. If the graduate instructor wishes to appeal an evaluation, the appeal shall be considered by the Graduate Studies Committee.
- e. The Director may use evaluations to inform future graduate instructorships.

The primary intent of both the supervision and the evaluation is to ensure that the education provided by graduate students to our undergraduates is as good as possible.

3. The Criteria and Process for Determining Departmental Financial Support

a. Termination of Support during the Academic Year

An assistantship may be terminated in less than one academic year if a student fails to meet the grade standards of the department, because of unsatisfactory performance during a previous assistantship assignment, due to violations of professional and/or ethical standards, or because the student has not completed the minimum credit hour semester enrollment requirements.

b. Reappointment of Graduate Assistants from One Year to the Next

By March 31 of each year, the Director will advise each graduate assistant in writing whether:

- a. their assistantship will be renewed (or not) for the following academic year;
- b. the assistantship will be renewed provided certain specific conditions are met;
- c. the assistantship will be renewed provided certain Department conditions are met;

If the assistantship is not renewed, the reasons shall be indicated. Students must indicate in writing (by April 15) their intention to accept the assistantship to maintain the offer.

c. Termination of Financial Support from One Academic Year to the Next

The reappointment of graduate assistants shall be determined by the following criteria:

- The student must be making satisfactory progress in the program in terms of meeting milestones, course enrollment, and maintaining the minimum GPA;
- The student must receive average or above performance assessments of graduate assistant assignments (as determined by the End-of-the Year Evaluations mentioned earlier);
- The student must adhere to the professional and ethical standards of the Department, the University, and the Political Science Profession.
- The student may not be funded as a graduate assistant after 5 years.

d. Summer Semester Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Funding

The appointment of summer graduate assistants or the provision of other summer funding shall be determined by the following criteria:

- The student must meet the eligibility criteria for reappointment as described in section X.A(3c) immediately above.
- Summer funding is not guaranteed, and is separate from the award of an assistantship.
- Summer teaching appointments depend on the course schedule and enrollment.

4. Graduate Assistant Benefits

a. Stipends, Stipend Advancement, and Promotion

The Department has three levels—[Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3](#)—of graduate assistant appointments. In any one academic semester, the stipend per assistantship unit is the same for all assistantships in a particular level. Actual stipend rates are set in the summer and become effective on August 15.

- For a Level 1 assistantship the graduate student has a bachelor's degree and less than one year's experience as a graduate assistant at MSU. They conduct research, perform administrative tasks or other supervised duties such as reading and grading papers.
- For a Level 2 assistantship appointment the graduate student must possess a master's degree or the equivalent in a field deemed relevant to political science and/or have completed at least one year as a graduate assistantship at MSU. After completing two assistantship semesters, the student is automatically transferred to Level 2 for the duration of the appointment.
- For a Level 3 assistantship appointment, successful completion of doctoral comprehensive exams, as defined by the department in which the student is enrolled, and six semesters of experience as a graduate RA/TE at MSU. This designation will hold for the remainder of the time that the student is on an assistantship.

The pay period for Fall semester begins on August 16 and the assistant receives a paycheck biweekly during the semester. To have your paycheck directly deposited to the bank of your choice you may use the EBS portal to enter your information and details.

Graduate Assistantship stipends may not be subject to Social Security (FICA) taxes as long as they meet federal guidelines and federal requirements for enrollment. Stipends are subject to income taxes with few exceptions. The taxability of stipends is subject to review by the Internal Revenue Service. For more information, call the Payroll Office at 517-355-5010, ext. 204.

Only graduate student Teaching Assistants are covered by the MSU/Graduate Employees Union (GEU) Contract (<https://grad.msu.edu/assistantships>). Research assistantships are not.

General university policies covering graduate student assistantships are listed in the *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities* pamphlet, found [here](#).

b. Tuition Waivers

A waiver of out-of-state tuition is granted to out-of-state students during the semester of their appointments. A waiver of out-of-state tuition is granted for the full academic year to out-of-state students with full academic year appointments, as well as for the summer session that precedes or follows appointments for an entire academic year.

A nine credit-hour tuition waiver is granted in fall and spring semesters while holding an appointment. For summer session appointments, the waiver is five credits.

c. Graduate Assistant Offices

Each graduate assistant is assigned to office space in South Kedzie Hall in accordance with social distance guidelines required by the university.

d. Health Insurance for Graduate Assistants

Michigan State University and the Council of Graduate Students worked together to offer graduate assistants health insurance coverage beginning Fall Semester 1994. Graduate assistants (domestic and international) are automatically enrolled in a GA health insurance plan, the premium of which is paid by the University. Fall and Spring appointments coverage is from August 15 to August 14 of the following year. Enrolled students may also insure their eligible spouse and/or dependent children (residing with the insured). For questions concerning waiver processing or general information, contact the MSU Benefits office at 517-353-4434 or 800-353-4434, or via email SolutionsCenter@hr.msu.edu. Website: <http://www.hr.msu.edu>.

e. Graduate Assistant Illness/Injury/Pregnancy Leave & Withdrawal Policy

A graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of his/her appointment because of illness or injury shall notify the Director or Department Chair as soon as circumstances permit. Similarly, a graduate assistant unable to fulfill the duties of her appointment because of pregnancy shall notify the administrator of her major unit as soon as circumstances permit.

During the illness, injury, or pregnancy the major unit shall adjust (reduce, waive, or reschedule) the graduate assistant's duties as those duties and the assistant's physical circumstances reasonably dictate. A birthing parent is eligible for up to eight (8) weeks of paid leave. A non-birthing parent is eligible for up to four (4) weeks of paid leave and eight (8) weeks of total leave.

If total absence from duties becomes necessary, the major unit shall maintain the stipend of the appointment, provided the graduate assistant is still enrolled, for a period of two months, or to the end of the appointment period or of the semester, whichever should occur first. The graduate assistant shall have the right to return to the assistantship, within the original terms of the appointment, once they are able to reassume the duties of the position.

Medical Leaves are subject to the [Medical Withdrawal Policy for Class Tuition and Fees Refund Policy](#). If approved for Medical Leave, a student may need to provide documentation of readiness to return to MSU before they will be able to reenroll. More information can be found here (<https://reg.msu.edu/AcademicPrograms/Print.aspx?Section=351>)

Graduate students may withdraw from the University voluntarily through the Class Ends date, which is displayed in the student information system Class Search. University rules on refunds and grade reporting will apply given the date of withdrawal. Withdrawal requests after the Class End date are possible, but require approval (if medical, Office of Student Support & Accountability; if other, Office of the Registrar).

Academic withdrawal – or taking a break from classes – has several implications. First, your clock does not pause and you must still finish your degree within 8 years of your start. Second, you can not receive funding from the department – or remain as a TA – if you are not enrolled. Third, if you are not enrolled for over 3 semesters, you would need to reapply to the program in order to return.

f. Grief Absence Policy

It is the responsibility of the student to: a) notify their advisor/major professor and faculty of the courses in which they are enrolled of the need for a grief absence in a timely manner, but no later than one week from the student's initial knowledge of the situation, b) provide appropriate verification of the grief absence as specified by the advisor/major professor and faculty, and c) complete all missed work as determined in consultation with the advisor/major professor and faculty. It is the responsibility of the advisor/major professor to: a) determine with the student the expected period of absence – it is expected that some bereavement processes may be more extensive than others depending on individual circumstances, b) receive verification of the authenticity of a grief absence request upon the student's return, and c) make reasonable accommodations so that the student is not penalized due to a verified grief absence. If employed as a RA or TE, the graduate student must also notify their employer. Both employer and student will swiftly communicate to determine how the student's responsibilities will be covered during their absence. Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the bereavement policy in the [MSU GEU Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 18](#). Students who believe their rights under this policy have been violated should contact the [University Ombudsperson](#). More information on grief absence policy can be found here (<https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/GriefAbsence.aspx>).

g. Jury Duty Policy

Graduate teaching assistants (TAs) should refer to the jury duty policy in the MSU GEU Collective Bargaining Agreement Article 18, IV.

h. Parking Benefits

Students who own motor vehicles or bicycles and want to use them on campus must register them with the University Vehicle Office. Information on getting a parking permit can be found here: <https://parking.msu.edu/>.

B. Work Related Policies for All Doctoral Students Pursuing Degrees

1. Activating your MSU NetID and E-mail Account

MSU uses e-mail for a variety of official communications. It is important to activate your NetID because your MSU account is the only e-mail account to which official notices are sent. Students use their PID and PAN for activation. Every student enrolled at the University is assigned an e-mail address on the MSU computer system. All graduate students in the department are expected to use their MSU e-mail as a way of communicating on an ongoing basis with faculty, staff, and other students during the course of their studies at MSU. The link for activating your account: <https://tech.msu.edu/new-students/>.

2. Political Science Graduate Student Association (GSA)

Active members of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) will meet at least once a year, elect their own officers, determine their organization, and choose representatives to departmental committees. The GSA is represented at faculty meetings and graduate committee meetings by its President or an alternative elected officer as privacy concerns allow. One GSA officer will be designated to work with the Director to help coordinate professionalization workshops and events. Each year, the GSA sponsors several social activities for graduate students and faculty. The GSA also makes recommendations to the Department Chairperson or committees on matters of professional importance to graduate students.

3. Health Services

All PhD students carrying six or more credits are eligible for health services while enrolled. Other students who have fewer than six credits as well as spouses of students may purchase a Health Service card at Olin Health Center entitling them to Health Center services during the semester in which they or their spouse are enrolled. Unenrolled students and their spouses may purchase a Health Service card for one semester following their eligibility. For complete details see: <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/graduate-assistants/index.html>.

4. International Travel

Students traveling internationally on University-affiliated non-education travel must register their travel with MSU. Travel is considered University-affiliated if it is funded by MSU or occurs in connection with your enrollment at MSU. This includes registered student organizations, students traveling with MSU faculty/staff, or international programs. See: <https://oihs.isp.msu.edu/students>

X. UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

A. Special Services

Auxiliary aids and services are available to students with special needs and disabilities. Please contact the Department of Political Science office at 355-6590 and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-7273 for more information. The website for the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities: <https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>.

B. Frequently Contacted Offices

Department of Political Science: <http://polisci.msu.edu/>

MSU Graduate School: <https://grad.msu.edu/>

Office of Graduate Studies, College of Social Science: <https://socialscience.msu.edu/graduate/index.html>

Registrar's Office: <https://www.reg.msu.edu/>

Financial Aid: www.finaid.msu.edu

Parking, Department of Police and Public Safety: <http://www.police.msu.edu/>

Payroll Office: <http://www.ctr.msu.edu/copayroll/>

[Graduate Educator Advancement and Teaching \(GREAT\)](#)

[Graduate School Office of Well-Being \(GROW\)](#)

[Out-of-State tuition waivers](#)

[Traveling scholar opportunities](#)

[Professional development](#)

[Traveling scholar opportunities](#)

C. Campus-Wide Services and Support for Graduate Students

Office of the Ombudsperson: <https://ombud.msu.edu/>

[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Council of Graduate Students: <http://cogs.msu.edu/>

Student Affairs and Services: www.vps.msu.edu/vpsas/index.htm

Career Services Network: <http://careernetwork.msu.edu/>

Counseling & Psychiatric Services: <https://caps.msu.edu/>

English Language Center: www.elc.msu.edu

Graduate Employees Union (GEU): www.geuatmsu.org

Office for International Students and Scholars: www.oiss.msu.edu

International Studies & Programs: www.isp.msu.edu

Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities: www.rcpd.msu.edu

MSU Human Resources: <https://www.hr.msu.edu/benefits/graduate-assistants/index.html>

Student Health Services: www.olin.msu.edu

WorkLife Office: <https://worklife.msu.edu/>

Human Research Protection Program: <https://hrpp.msu.edu/>

[Gender and Sexuality Campus Center](#)

[Women's Student Services](#)

[Student Parent Resource Center](#)

D. Links to Select University Policies

[Academic Programs Catalog](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Policy \(ADP\)](#)

[Code of Teaching Responsibilities](#)

[Disability and Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)

[Digital Accessibility Policy](#)

[General Student Regulations](#)
[Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities \(GSRR\)](#)
[Guidelines for Integrity in Research and Creative Activities](#)
[Integrity of Scholarship & Grades](#)
[Law Student Rights and Responsibilities \(LSRR\)](#)
[Medical Student Rights and Responsibilities \(MSRR\)](#)
[MSU Guidelines for Graduate Student Mentoring and Advising](#)
[MSU-GEU Contract](#)
[Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct](#)

Appendix A: Academic Grievance Hearing Procedures

The student, as a member of the academic community, has both rights and duties. Within that community, the student's most essential right is the right to learn. The University has a duty to provide for the student those privileges, opportunities, and protections which best promote the learning process in all its aspects. The student also has duties to other members of the academic community, the most important of which is to refrain from interference with those rights of others which are equally essential to the purposes and processes of the University. (GSRR Article 1.2)

The [*Michigan State University Student Rights and Responsibilities* \(SRR\)](#) and the [*Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities*](#) (GSRR) documents establish the rights and responsibilities of MSU students and prescribe procedures to resolve allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings. In accordance with the SRR and the GSRR, the Political Science Program has established the following Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating graduate student academic grievances and complaints. (See GSRR 5.4.)

I. JURISDICTION OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM HEARING BOARD:

A. The Hearing Board serves as the initial Hearing Board for academic grievance hearings involving graduate students who allege violations of academic rights or seek to contest an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records). (See GSRR 2.3 and 5.1.1.)

B. Students may not request an academic grievance hearing based on an allegation of incompetent instruction. (See GSRR 2.2.2)

II. COMPOSITION OF THE HEARING BOARD:

A. The Program shall constitute a Hearing Board pool no later than the end of the tenth week of the spring semester according to established Program procedures. Hearing Board members serve one year terms with reappointment possible. The Hearing Board pool should include both faculty and graduate students. (See GSRR 5.1.2 and 5.1.6.)

B. The Chair of the Hearing Board shall be the faculty member with rank who shall vote only in the event of a tie. In addition to the Chair, the Hearing Board shall include an equal number of voting graduate students and faculty. (See GSRR 5.1.2, and 5.1.5.)

C. The Program will train hearing board members about these procedures and the applicable sections of the GSRR. (See GSRR 5.1.3.)

III. REFERRAL TO THE HEARING BOARD:

A. After consulting with the instructor and appropriate unit administrator, graduate students who remain dissatisfied with their attempt to resolve an allegation of a violation of student academic rights or an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records) may request an academic grievance hearing. When appropriate, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean, may waive jurisdiction and refer the request for an initial hearing to the College Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.3.6.2.)

B. At any time in the grievance process, either party may consult with the University Ombudsperson. (See GSRR 5.3.2.)

C. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, the Dean of The Graduate School will select the appropriate Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.3.5.)

D. Generally, the deadline for submitting the written request for a hearing is the middle of the next semester in which the student is enrolled (including Summer). In cases in which a student seeks to contest an allegation of academic misconduct and the student's dean has called for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student has **10** class days to request an academic grievance to contest the allegation. (See GSRR 5.3.6.1 and 5.5.2.2.)

E. If either the student (the complainant) or the respondent (usually, the instructor or an administrator) is absent from the university during that semester, or if other appropriate reasons emerge, the Hearing Board may grant an extension of this deadline. If the university no longer employs the respondent before the grievance hearing commences, the hearing may proceed. (See GSRR 5.4.9.)

F. A written request for an academic grievance hearing must (1) specify the specific bases for the grievance, including the alleged violation(s), (2) identify the individual against whom the grievance is filed (the respondent) and (3) state the desired redress. Anonymous grievances will not be accepted. (See GSRR 5.1 and 5.3.6.)

IV. PRE-HEARING PROCEDURES

A. After receiving a graduate student's written request for a hearing, the Chair of the Department will promptly refer the grievance to the Chair of the Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.3.2, 5.4.3.)

B. Within **5** class days, the Chair of the Hearing Board will:

1. forward the request for a hearing to the respondent and ask for a written response;
2. send the names of the Hearing Board members to both parties and, to avoid conflicts of interest between the two parties and the Hearing Board members, request written challenges, if any, within **3** class days of this notification. In addition to conflict of interest challenges, either party can challenge two hearing board members without cause (GSRR 5.1.7.c);
3. rule promptly on any challenges, impanel a Hearing Board and send each party the names of the Hearing Board members. If the Chair of the Hearing Board is the subject of a challenge, the challenge shall be filed with the Dean of the College, or designee (See GSRR 5.1.7.). Decisions by the Hearing Board chair or the College Dean (or designee) on conflict of interest challenges are final;
4. send the Hearing Board members a copy of the request for a hearing and the respondent's written response, and send all parties a copy of these procedures.

C. Within **5** class days of being established, the Hearing Board shall review the request, and, after considering all requested and submitted information:

1. accept the request, in full or in part, and promptly schedule a hearing.
2. reject the request and provide a written explanation to appropriate parties; e.g., lack of jurisdiction. (The student may appeal this decision.)
3. the GSRR allows the hearing board to invite the two parties to meet with the Hearing Board in an informal session to try to resolve the matter. Such a meeting does not preclude a later hearing. However, by the time a grievance is requested all informal methods of conflict resolution should have been exhausted so this option is rarely used. (See GSRR 5.4.6.)

D. If the Hearing Board calls for a hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly negotiate a hearing date, schedule an additional meeting only for the Hearing Board should additional deliberations on the findings become necessary, and request a written response to the grievance from the respondent.

E. At least **5** class days before the scheduled hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall notify the respondent and the complainant in writing of the (1) time, date, and place of the hearing; (2) the names of the parties to the grievance;

(3) a copy of the hearing request and the respondent's reply; and (4) the names of the Hearing Board members after any challenges. (See GSRR 5.4.7.)

F. At least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing, the parties must notify the Chair of the Hearing Board the names of their witnesses and advisor, if any, and request permission for the advisor to have voice at the hearing. The chair may grant or deny this request. The Chair will promptly forward the names given by the complainant to the respondent and visa versa. (See GSRR 5.4.7.1.)

G. The Chair of the Hearing Board may accept written statements from either party's witnesses at least **3** class days before the hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.9.)

H. In unusual circumstances and in lieu of a personal appearance, either party may request permission to submit a written statement to the Hearing Board or request permission to participate in the hearing through an electronic communication channel. Written statements must be submitted to the Hearing Board at least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.9c.)

I. Either party to the grievance hearing may request a postponement of the hearing. The Hearing Board may either grant or deny the request. (See GSRR 5.4.8.)

J. At its discretion, the Hearing Board may set a reasonable time limit for each party to present its case, and the Chair of the Hearing Board must inform the parties of such a time limit in the written notification of the hearing.

K. Hearings are closed unless the student requests an open hearing, which would be open to all members of the MSU community. The Hearing Board may close an open hearing to protect the confidentiality of information or to maintain order. (See GSRR 5.4.10.4.)

L. Members of the Hearing Board are expected to respect the confidentiality of the hearing process. (See GSRR 5.4.10.4.and 5.4.11.)

V. HEARING PROCEDURES:

A. The Hearing will proceed as follows:

1. Introductory remarks by the Chair of the Hearing Board: The Chair of the Hearing Board introduces hearing panel members, the complainant, the respondent and advisors, if any. The Chair reviews the hearing procedures, including announced time restraints for presentations by each party and the witnesses, and informs the parties if their advisors may have a voice in the hearings and if the proceedings are being recorded. Witnesses shall be excluded from the proceedings except when testifying. The Chair also explains:

- In academic grievance hearings in which a graduate student alleges a violation of academic rights, the student bears the burden of proof.
- In hearings in which a graduate student seeks to contest allegations of academic misconduct, the instructor bears the burden of proof.
- All Hearing Board decisions must be reached by a majority of the Hearing Board, based on "clear and convincing evidence." (See GSRR 8.1.18.)
See GSRR 5.4.10.1 and 8.1.18. For various other definitions, see GSRR Article 8.

2. If the complainant fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Hearing Board may either postpone the hearing or dismiss the case for demonstrated cause. (See GSRR 5.4.9a.)

3. If the respondent fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Hearing Board may postpone the hearing or, only in unusual circumstances, hear the case in his or her absence. (See GSRR 5.4.9-b.)

4. If the respondent is absent from the University during the semester of the grievance hearing or no longer employed by the University before the grievance procedure concludes, the hearing process may still proceed. (See GSRR 5.3.6.1.)
5. To assure orderly questioning, the Chair of the Hearing Board will recognize individuals before they speak. All parties have a right to speak without interruption. Each party has a right to question the other party and to rebut any oral or written statements submitted to the Hearing Board. (See GSRR 5.4.10.2.)
6. Presentation by the Complainant: The Chair recognizes the complainant to present without interruption any statements relevant to the complainant's case, including the redress sought. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the complainant by the Hearing Board, the respondent and the respondent's advisor, if any.
7. Presentation by the Complainant's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the complainant's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, any statement directly relevant to the complainant's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Hearing Board, the respondent, and the respondent's advisor, if any.
8. Presentation by the Respondent: The Chair recognizes the respondent to present without interruption any statements relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the respondent by the Hearing Board, the complainant, and the complainant's advisor, if any.
9. Presentation by the Respondent's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the respondent's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, and statement directly relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Hearing Board, the complainant, and the complainant's advisor, if any.
10. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Complainant: The complainant refutes statements by the respondent, the respondent's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
11. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Respondent: The respondent refutes statements by the complainant, the complainant's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
12. Final questions by the Hearing Board: The Hearing Board asks questions of any of the participants in the hearing.

VI. POST-HEARING PROCEDURES

A. **Deliberation**: After all evidence has been presented, with full opportunity for explanations, questions and rebuttal, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall excuse all parties to the grievance and convene the Hearing Board to determine its findings in executive session. When possible, deliberations should take place directly following the hearing and/or at the previously scheduled follow-up meeting. (See Section IV.D above.)

B. Decision:

1. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which a majority of the Hearing Board finds, based on "clear and convincing evidence," that a violation of the student's academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall recommend an appropriate remedy to the Department Chair or School Director. Upon receiving the Hearing Board's recommendation, the Department Chair or School Director shall implement an appropriate remedy, in consultation with the Hearing Board, within **3** class days. If the Hearing Board finds that no violation of academic rights has occurred, it shall so inform the Chair or Director. The Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly forward copies of the final decision to parties and the University Ombudsperson. (See GSRR 5.4.11.)

2. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which the Hearing Board serves as the initial hearing body to adjudicate an allegation of academic dishonesty and, based on "clear and convincing evidence," the Hearing Board finds for the student, the Hearing Board shall recommend to the Department Chair or School Director that the penalty grade be removed, the Academic Dishonesty Report be removed from the student's records and a "good faith judgment" of the student's academic performance in the course take place. If the Hearing Board finds for the instructor, the penalty grade shall stand and the Academic Dishonesty Report regarding the allegation will remain on file, pending an appeal, if any to the College Hearing Board within **5** class days of the Hearing Board's decision. If an academic disciplinary hearing is pending, and the Hearing Board decides for the instructor, the graduate student's disciplinary hearing before either the College Hearing Board or the Dean of The Graduate School would promptly follow, pending an appeal, if any, within **5** class days. (See GSRR 5.5.2.2 and 5.4.12.3)

C. **Written Report:** The Chair of the Hearing Board shall prepare a written report of the Hearing Board's findings, including recommended redress or sanctions for the complainant, if applicable, and forward a copy of the decision to the appropriate unit administrator within **3** class days of the hearing. The report shall indicate the rationale for the decision and the major elements of evidence, or lack thereof, that support the Hearing Board's decision. The administrator, in consultation with the Hearing Board, shall then implement an appropriate remedy. The report also should inform the parties of the right to appeal within **5** class days following notice of the decision, or **5** class days if an academic disciplinary hearing is pending. The Chair shall forward copies of the Hearing Board's report and the administrator's redress, if applicable, to the parties involved, the responsible administrators, the University Ombudsperson and the Dean of The Graduate School. All recipients must respect the confidentiality of the report and of the hearing board's deliberations resulting in a decision. (See GSRR 5.4.12 and 5.5.2.2)

VII. APPEAL OF THE HEARING BOARD DECISION:

A. Either party may appeal a decision by the Hearing Board to the College Hearing Board for cases involving (1) academic grievances alleging violations of student rights and (2) alleged violations of regulations involving academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records.) (See GSRR 5.4.12.)

B. All appeals must be in writing, signed and submitted to the Chair of the College Hearing Board within **5** class days following notification of the Hearing Board's decision. While under appeal, the original decision of the Hearing Board will be held in abeyance. (See GSRR 5.4.12, 5.4.12.2 and 5.4.12.3.)

C. A request for an appeal of a Hearing Board decision to the College Hearing Board must allege, in sufficient particularity to justify a hearing, that the initial Hearing Board failed to follow applicable procedures for adjudicating the hearing or that findings of the Hearing Board were not supported by "clear and convincing evidence." The request also must include the redress sought. Presentation of new evidence normally will be inappropriate. (See GSRR 5.4.12.1, 5.4.12.2 and 5.4.12.4.)

VIII. RECONSIDERATION:

If new evidence should arise, either party to a hearing may request the appropriate Hearing Board to reconsider the case within **30** days upon receipt of the hearing outcome. The written request for reconsideration is to be sent to the Chair of the Hearing Board, who shall promptly convene the Hearing Board to review the new material and render a decision on a new hearing. (See GSRR 5.4.13.)

IX. FILE COPY:

The Chair of the Department shall file a copy of these procedures with the Office of the Ombudsperson and with the Dean of The Graduate School. (See GSRR 5.4.1.)