PUBLIC POLICY PH.D.

Student Handbook

Student Handbook

THE STUDENT HANDBOOK FOR THE PUBLIC POLICY PH.D. PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTS THE GUIDELINES IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK.

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Advisory Committee

Requirements

A student will be advised by her or his Doctoral Program Advisory Committee. This committee, and especially the chair of the committee, will serve as the primary source of counsel and guidance as the student moves through the policy Ph.D. program. The chair of the Doctoral Program Advisory Committee will be selected from the student's area of specialization. The committee will have three to five, one of which must come from outside the specialization and be a core faculty member in the policy Ph.D. program. The committee's first task will be to design a program of study that maps out the student's course requirements. The link to the form to be used for the program of study can be found on the student's advising site.

The members of the Doctoral Program Advisory Committee may or may not be the same as the Dissertation Committee.

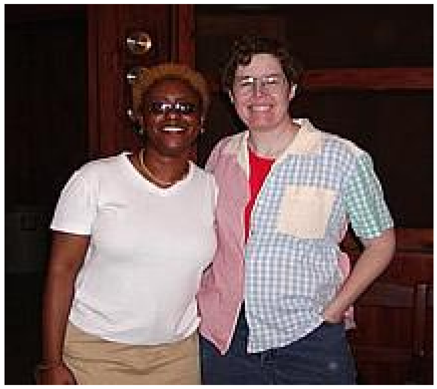
The policy program requires that the Doctoral Program Advisory Committee be established before the end of the student's second semester. It is best to have the committee formed and the degree plan agreed upon before registration for classes. After getting agreement on the makeup of the advisory committee with the proposed committee and the advising chair, the student should email the program office (policy@uark.edu) listing the committee members and indicating the who will be the advising chair.

Advice

One of the most important decisions you will make in your academic career is the decision concerning who to ask to be your advising chair. As with many steps in the path to the Ph.D., this is a negotiated and collegial process.

Typically new students do not know faculty well enough to make an informed decision about advising chairs before they begin classes. In order to give students a chance to get to know faculty, the program director or a specialization advisor will sometimes act as advising chair in the student's first semester. Students then have a chance to take some classes and interact with faculty. Before advising for classes for the second semester, the student should have found an advising chair.

The advising chair must be a Category 1 graduate faculty member. Many of the policy faculty members already have this designation. If students ask a faculty member who is not Category 1 to be their advising chair, then the program director will need to be consulted. It is possible that the faculty member who is chosen can complete the process of becoming Category 1 faculty member. Students might check with the program director, other more experienced students or faculty in their specialization before asking a faculty member to serve as their advising chair. Relying on friends and supporters in the program to give advice is one of the benefits of being part of an "academic community."



While in their undergraduate and master's programs students will usually see their advisor only for course registration, the Ph.D. process should be much more interactive. The advising chair will help the students prepare the degree plan. This plan, drafted by the advising chair and the student, is then presented to the student's advisory committee for review and approval. More than this, however, the advising chair is the student's mentor in the policy program.

Once a student secures an advising chair, it is important to develop that relationship. The advising chair (along with the program director as needed) will be your guide through the Ph.D. process and your advisor concerning how to make the Ph.D. process work for your career plans. You should talk with your advising chair about your career interests, your research interests and your struggles in the program. In a Ph.D. program the students should be on their way to becoming colleagues with the faculty. The relationship with the advising chair encourages this change in the students' status.

At the end of the student's course work, the advising chair and the advisory committee are the faculty members who create the questions for the qualifying exam and review the answers students submit. Again, this makes a good match very important. The advising chair will discuss the student's responses with the advisory committee members and will present the review to the student for their consideration. If the advising chair and the student have a good relationship and know each other well, this process will be smoother and more satisfying to everyone.

The advising chair may or may not be your dissertation chair. After the student finishes course work and the qualifying exams, the student is ABD (All But Dissertation). The student may choose to keep the same chair and members for their dissertation committee or the student may decide that a change would be good. Again, consult with the program director and talk with faculty and other students while you make this decision.

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Degree Plan

Requirements and Advice

Students should have their degree plan completed by class registration time during the second semester of course work. The spreadsheet is linked at: http://www.uark.edu/ua/policy/handbook/course plan/schedular.xls

Students want to take the courses that they want to take. That is quite natural. The student's advising chair has her/his own views on what is important to take. Again, this is natural and appropriate. The advisory committee, a third player in the process, has the responsibility to approve the degree plan and may have ideas somewhat different than the advising chair or the student. Finally, the core policy faculty and the director of the policy program have their own ideas about which courses meet a particular student's requirements for a degree in public policy.

These different sets of expectations can be either a rich context for thought and study (the preferred policy option) or a recipe for misunderstanding and conflict (an outcome to be avoided.) Given this, most Ph.D. programs define a process of negotiation, compromise and finally agreement on a student's course of study. The policy Ph.D. program is no exception in this regard. The process we have constructed recognizes that a student's Ph.D. career is determined by a series of negotiations, agreements and understandings.

The first semester in our program the new student usually takes core courses and perhaps an obvious specialization course. Classes for the first semester are determined in conversations with the student's advising chair. Before registering for the second semester, the student should begin the process of creating a degree plan. Included on that site is a form for creating a degree plan. The Ph.D. student will talk with his/her advising chair and come up with a tentative plan using that form. Next, the student and the advising chair will meet with the advisory committee and further discuss and negotiate. Finally, to give the program as a whole a voice, the results of this process are forwarded to the program director for comparison with the degree requirements. The new degree plan is then posted to the student's site.

Why is this important? A "worse case" scenario is a student who, as far as the student is concerned, completes all course work. The advisory committee then meets with the student to talk about qualifying exams. Advisory committee member, Professor X says, "You should have taken my course in …. You can't get out of this program without my course!" Several hours later the program director gets a phone call and everyone is upset. An official degree plan lets everyone know what the expectations are for the student. In some sense it is a "contract" between the student and the program concerning course work requirements.

Even if this "worse case" does not come to pass, there are good reasons to develop and approve a degree plan. The process of creating a degree plan will provide a forum for the advisory committee to share their experience and expertise. Working with the advising chair and the program director, the student will also be given help with the "cycle" of courses in our program. Some courses are taught every 18 months. If the student does not catch the course at the right time, it could be problematic.

It is understood that things change. A course may not be offered when it was originally scheduled or a student's interests may vary as they progress through the program. Consulting with the student's advising chair, the degree plan can be revised and then the changes forwarded to the program director. The official degree plan on the web is then updated.

Students may have completed graduate courses that they feel are equivalent to one or more core courses. In order to waive a core course requirement, a student must write the program director requesting an exemption. This request will be reviewed by the student's Doctoral Program Advisory Committee who may recommend to the program director that the exemption be granted. The request should include the following:

1. Title of the course from which exemption is requested.

2. Title, catalogues description and syllabus (with readings assigned) for the course which is suggested as the substitute.

3. Any papers or projects written for the course. (Optional, but useful material.)

No credit for exempted courses will be counted toward the total hours required for the Ph.D.

Questions? Contact your advising chair or email the Program Director.

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Residency

A Philosophy Concerning Residency

We have assumed that those who work full time can be part of our program and have decided on the goal of a good mix of full and part time students as an element of our enrollment strategy. With this strategy, we sought to achieve diversity and depth of experience (part time students), and substantial commitment to the program (full time students). Part time students bring real world experience. Full time students set the standards for dedication to the program and focus on the program. The policy Ph.D. is not a "professional degree" but rather a degree based on theory and research whose graduates have contributed to knowledge in the area they study.

Value of Residency: To be successful, the policy program must create and sustain an "academic community" which shares the goals and philosophy indicated above. To create and sustain this academic community, we have developed and encouraged faculty and student participation by:

1.) Creating a continuing series of public seminars focusing on research in public policy.
2.) Organizing social functions that encourage networking among faculty and students.
3.) Developing a "working paper" series with student and faculty editors and reviewers. To encourage submissions to this working paper series, we have awarded given annual "best paper" awards to a submission to the working paper series.
4.) Encouraging and supporting student participation in conferences and professional gatherings.
5.) Encouraging frequent contact with advising chairs and periodic meeting with the student's advisory committee.

We encourage students to be committed and focused on their Ph.D. studies and sufficiently engaged in their academic community to get the most out of the program. We are also concerned that students who are employed full time, yet who are making good progress toward the Ph.D., will often have difficulty in meeting the standard university residency requirement for Ph.D. Students. Many of these working students are already in policy making positions.

The standard requirement at the University of Arkansas assumes a traditional student who is not employed full time outside of the Ph.D. program. We have researched residency requirements at other universities. The requirements for residency vary. A good number of schools of equal or higher status have no requirement at all. Others have stricter or milder requirements.

To encourage policy Ph.D. students to become part of an academic community, we have made the evaluation of the student's participation in the academic life of the program a regular part of the annual evaluation process. We have also developed a menu of events and gatherings that students can choose from in order to participate in the academic life of the program.

In light of these policies, and the need to accommodate students who are working full time and to continue to promote academic community during an extended period of the student's career, we propose the following alternative method to meet residency requirements:

Standard and Process

Students shall have met the residency requirement in the public policy Ph.D. program if they meet the following criteria:

1.) After admission, the student registers for a minimum of twelve hours per year for a minimum of two years (including fall, spring and summer semesters),

and

2.) The student makes satisfactory progress including positive residency evaluations in his or her annual review.

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The Qualifying Exam

Requirements for the Qualifying Exam

After completing approximately two years of graduate study, and at least one year before completing all other requirements, the prospective candidate must take candidacy examinations covering both core and specialization studies. The examinations will be both written and oral. All students must demonstrate a capacity for research by writing an original dissertation on a topic in their area of concentration. The student's final examination will be an oral defense of the dissertation.

Taking the Exam

The qualifying exam must be completed at least one year prior to completing all other requirements for the degree.

Goals of the Process

The qualifying exam process is designed to be an integral part of the policy Ph.D. student's academic career. We consciously use the word "process" in our title and in our design. The qualifying exam process should meet the following goals:

1.) The qualifying exam process serves as an opportunity for discussion between the faculty and the student as the student integrates core/specialization classes and academic activities across subject areas and disciplinary approaches.

2.) The qualifying exam process provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that he or she has the requisite core and specialization skills that are necessary to progress to the dissertation stage. The qualifying exam serves as a diagnostic that provides the policy program and the student's advisory committee with the information that the committee needs to make recommendations if there are academic needs which still must be addressed. Students do not "pass" or "fail" the exam process. This process is designed to assure that the student is ready for dissertation research and, if not, to design strategies for remedying deficiencies.

How the Process Works

Near the last semester of the student's class work, the student should begin the qualifying exam process. The steps in the process are listed below.

1.) In the semester previous to the semester in which the student wishes to enter the qualifying exam process, the student should notify the program director and advising chair of her or his desire to begin the process. It is very useful to provide the advising chair with a summary of dissertation plans. This can be brief, but will help the committee to write appropriate questions.

2.) The advisory committee, in consultation with other program faculty as needed, will compose the exam committee. The exam committee, under the leadership of the student's advising chair, will write four questions that are relevant to the student's class work, career goals and dissertation agenda. Students will be given guidance by the specialization and program faculty to help them prepare for these questions.

At least two months before the end of the semester, the student will ask his or her advising chair for the first two of the four questions. One month after receiving the first two questions, the student is to turn in the answers and receive the second two questions. The answers are to be the result of the student's individual work. Answers should be no longer than 15 double spaced pages per exam question with 12 point font. Title and reference pages are in addition to the 15 pages. Again, one month will be given for the student to write her or his answers. Note that while this exam is "open book," students should not communicate with other students or confer with anyone outside the advisory committee concerning the exam during the exam process.

a. One question will address competencies in research design and methods.

b. One question will address the discipline of public policy. (Written and graded in cooperation with the program faculty who teach the core policy courses).

c. One question will address specialization competencies.

d. One further question will be written by the specialization faculty and will cover another area(s) that the committee feels is/are important.

3.) The student's exam committee, in consultation with other program faculty as necessary, will then evaluate the written answers. Students must have their responses in to their faculty advising chair at the agreed upon time. This must be two weeks before the oral exam is scheduled. The chair can then distribute the responses to the advisory committee and the relevant policy faculty. The faculty will then have one week to provide responses to the chair in order for the chair to meet with the student previous to the oral exam as described in the process above. The student's advising chair will meet with the student and provide the student will relevant feedback before the oral exam. This would include advising the student concerning any areas that were problematic in the written exam and that might need to be addressed in the oral exam.

4.) The advising chair will then schedule the oral exam with the student's exam committee and other program faculty as necessary. Oral exams cover only material covered in the written exams. Students may be asked to expand a great deal on their written responses but will not be asked to cover completely new ground not already initiated by the written exam questions.

5.) After the oral exam, the exam committee will meet and make a recommendation or recommendations in one of the directions listed below. According to Graduate School regulations, all of the committee members must agree on the recommendation or recommendations:

a. The student has the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to proceed with their dissertation work. The student is then admitted to candidacy (ABD).

b. Alternatively, the exam committee will describe what remedies are necessary. This may include retaking portions of the qualifying exam, another written paper, an additional course, an independent study or other options as are appropriate. Upon completion of these remedies the student will be admitted to candidacy (ABD).

6.) The advisory committee chair will send a written copy of the exam committee's decisions to the director of the program.

Hints for the Qualifying Exam

We focus on using the exam as a process to help the student rather than simply a point at which an exam is marked as passed or not passed. This is why we give the students a good amount of time and allow them to reference their notes and materials. We want the answers to be the best the student can do. The student should demonstrate that he or she knows the material and knows how to apply the material to their area of research. The qualifying exam is also a point at which there should be a good amount of dialogue between the student and the advising faculty. It is very useful to provide the advising chair with a summary of dissertation plans. This can be brief, but will help the committee to write appropriate questions. In that sense, also, it is a preparation for the dissertation process.

Students should have developed a good relationship with their advising chair and committee by the time of the exam. It is helpful if the student can give the chair a relatively firm idea of where their dissertation work is headed. It has also been found useful for the student to write a one page description of their thoughts that might be shared with the advisory committee. This can be very useful in formulating questions which are most relevant to the student's interests and needs.

Students should make sure that they answer the questions asked rather than use the question to go off in another direction. Responses must be turned by the time agreed. Note that while this exam is "open book," students should not communicate with other students or confer with anyone outside the advisory committee concerning the exam during the exam process.

An inability to successfully complete the qualifying exam, combined with a lack of progress in addressing remedies suggested by the advisory committee, can lead to “insufficient progress” on a student’s annual review and a reevaluation of the student’s participation in the policy program.

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The Dissertation

Goals of the Dissertation

What are the goals and purposes of the dissertation?

The goals of the dissertation in the public policy program are as follows:

1. Demonstrate the ability to do independent research
2. Test or expand upon our theoretical understanding
3. Contribute to new knowledge
4. Contribute to policy relevant knowledge

Timeline to Completion

Students should use their course work to explore areas of possible dissertation focus. Though not all course assignments will or should be directly relevant, submitting papers related to possible dissertation research is very important in developing the dissertation. Students should have a more or less developed idea of their dissertation area by the time they are preparing to take their qualifying exams.

The dissertation is to be an in-depth piece of original research. This, we believe, will seldom take less than one year. Therefore, the student's dissertation defense should be at least one year from the student's completion of her/his oral defense of her/his qualifying exam. In exceptional circumstances the student's dissertation chair should advise the program director of a shorter expected time line.

A timeline for meeting the graduate school requirements may be found at http://www.uark.edu/depts/gradinfo/current/DoctorialCalendar.html.

The Dissertation Chair and Committee

When a student passes the qualifying exams, a Dissertation Committee will be formed. The student's dissertation chair will come from the faculty in the specialty area as well as other policy faculty. The student may select from a list of accepted faculty or work with the program director to get graduate faculty status for other faculty as needed.

The qualifications for being a dissertation chair include: 1.) expertise and preferably research in the area of study and 2.) graduate level 1 status. To continue the emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of policy, the three or more member dissertation committee will include one or two faculty members from beyond the specialization's primary college. The Dissertation Committee should be formed shortly after passing the qualifying exams. The committee must be formed at least one year prior to the defense of the dissertation. Students should send an email to policy@uark.edu with the name of the chair of the committee and the committee members.

Generally the dissertation chair will coordinate the writing of the dissertation. The chair will review drafts of chapters, and when the chair and student are confident that the chapters are ready, they will submit these to the rest of the committee. For instance, the first chapter may be written and then submitted to the dissertation chair. The chair and the student will then go back and forth until a relatively finished product is completed. Then the chapter (or perhaps the first three chapters) is submitted to the rest of the committee for their feedback by the chair of the Dissertation Committee. This gives the chair a strong hand in guiding the process and keeps things from getting out of control with three or four reviewers suggesting revisions which may be contradictory or outside the intent of the dissertation. The dissertation chair and committee have wide latitude in how the dissertation is organized.

Though circumstances may not always allow, the departmental expectation is that when a student submits a revision of material for the dissertation, the chair or committee members will endeavor to review and return the material within two to three weeks.

Students may use their dissertation research to develop publications either as the dissertation is being written or after the dissertation is finished. It may be useful for both students and faculty to work together on such publications. Clear and written agreement should be reached before such collaborative projects begin concerning what the specific roles of the student and faculty member will be (co-authors, first or second author) as well as who "owns" the data from the dissertation research (student owns, faculty owns as part of a larger project, co-ownership and publication).

Proposing the Dissertation

The student, having completed and passed the qualifying exams, will propose his/her dissertation subject. After consultation with the Dissertation Committee and the approval by the chair of the committee, the student should complete the graduate school form describing the dissertation research. This will be signed by the dissertation director and the policy program chair. That form may be found at: http://www.uark.edu/depts/gradinfo/ under "Current Students." In addition, the student should send a paragraph describing the dissertation research to the director of the policy Ph.D. program. This paragraph will be placed on the program web site.

The Dissertation Defense

Announcement of a doctoral candidate's dissertation defense must be submitted to the Graduate School at least TWO WEEKS prior to the date of the defense.

We (the policy program) would like more lead time to publicize the defense to program faculty and students. These dissertation defense sessions are important learning times for both the student defending as well as other participants in the policy program. Please contact the policy program director to plan for the dissertation defense. The suggested process for the dissertation defense is:

1.) Student presentation of 15 to 30 minutes, depending on need, in public.

2.) Questions from the committee members in public.

3.) The dissertation chair may or may not then ask for questions from the public and if so, then he or she acts as moderator and decides which questions are appropriate. If there are to be questions from the public, the student needs to be informed ahead of time.

4.) Public leaves. The committee then may have some clarifying questions that it may ask before it convenes to make a decision.

5.) Committee convenes without the student in attendance to make a decision. Student waits.

6.) Committee invites student into the committee meeting to discuss their decision.

7.) Committee notifies program director of the decision and completes appropriate paperwork as needed.

All members of the dissertation committee must actively participate in the student's final oral defense. If a faculty member is out of town, he/she can participate by electronic means (video, telephone, computer, etc.). If a faculty member cannot participate at all, he/she can resign from the committee or request an exception from the associate dean of the graduate school.

Completing the Dissertation

Students who are completing dissertations should refer to the *Guide for Preparing Theses and Dissertations*, which is available on the Graduate School's web site (http://www.uark.edu/depts/gradinfo/) under Forms and Publications, and is also available at the university bookstore. It is very important that students follow these guidelines, rather than using a fellow student's work as a template.

Also, it is extremely helpful for a student to bring a preliminary copy of the thesis or dissertation to the Graduate School office to be checked. You can avoid significant problems and a possible delay in graduation by checking the copy before the final draft is prepared.

Bi-annual Dissertation Award

The public policy program may present a "Best Dissertation" award every two years. This award will recognize the student dissertation which best fulfills the goals noted in the first section of this chapter. The award will be presented both to the student and to the dissertation chair in recognition of the work both have contributed.

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Policy Careers

Policy Career Options for Graduates

Those of you nearing completion of your Public Policy PhDs may be wondering about what kind of options are available for graduates in the field. The good news is that the field is wide open for public policy degree holders, whether they choose career, research, fellowships, volunteering or post-degree programs, at home or abroad.

Career Options

The field prepares you to work for private business; government (local, state and federal); nonprofit organizations; non-governmental organizations (NGOs); trade, professional, foundation and research organizations; political parties and advocacy groups; and consulting firms, among other entities.

Sample jobs include program coordinator, policy analyst, county administrator, city manager, director of development, grant writer, budget consultant, occupational safety coordinator, government relations, lobbyist, legislative/committee staffer, urban planner, cultural affairs or Foreign Service officer, information specialist, correctional facility manager, park manager, educator, political office and community activist.

Start thinking about career opportunities early in your academic career. Talk with you advisor. Go to conferences. Networking is very important for many job placements. Internships are another good way to network.

We have developed a list which links you to some of the possible options. This list does not purport to be all-inclusive, but it should provide much food for thought.

The career help list is at:

http://policy.uark.edu/policyphd/handbook/job/index.htm