PUBLIC POLICY PH.D.
Student Handbook

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

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Requirements

A student will be advised by their 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 program. The advisory committee chair will be selected from the student's area of study. The committee will be composed of three to five faculty members, one of which must come from outside the area of study and be a core faculty member in the policy 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 this form, the Public Policy Course Scheduler, can be found on the program website at http://policy.uark.edu/documents/pubp-course-scheduler-fillable-11-2015.pdf

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 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, the student should email the program office (policy@uark.edu) listing the committee members and 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 an area of study 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 area of study 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 is 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. The advising chair is typically 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 provide guidance throughout the Ph.D. process. 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 before you make this decision.

DEGREE PLAN

Requirements and Advice

Students should have their degree plan (also referred to as the Public Policy Course Scheduler) completed by class registration time during the second semester of course work. Again, this form is located at: http://policy.uark.edu/documents/pubp-course-scheduler-fillable-11-2015.pdf

Students want to take the courses that they want to take. That is quite natural. The student's advising chair has their 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 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.

During the first semester in our program, the new student usually takes core courses and perhaps an obvious specialization/area of study 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. The Ph.D. student will talk with their advising chair and come up with a tentative plan. Next, the student and the advising chair will meet with the advisory committee to 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.

Why is this important? A "worst 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 in the middle of the night, 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.

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 advisory committee which may recommend to the program director that the exemption be granted. The request should include the following:

- Title of the course from which exemption is requested.
- Title, catalog description and syllabus (with readings assigned) for the course.
- 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.

RESIDENCY

A Philosophy Concerning Residency

We assume that those who work full time can be part of our program and have decided on the goal of a mix of full- and part-time students as an element of our enrollment strategy. With this strategy, we seek to achieve depth and diversity 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. Program graduates contribute knowledge in their area of 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.) Encouraging and supporting student participation in conferences and professional gatherings.
4.) Encouraging frequent contact with advising chairs and periodic meetings with the student's advisory committee.

We encourage students to be committed and focused on their Ph.D. studies as well as sufficiently engaged in their academic community to get the most out of the program.

To encourage policy 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 method to meet residency requirements:

Standard and Process

Students shall have met the residency requirement in the policy 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 their annual review.

Requirements for the Qualifying Exam

After completing approximately two years of graduate study, the prospective candidate must take candidacy examinations covering core, research methods, and area of specialization studies. The examinations will be both written and oral.

Goals of the Process

The qualifying exam process is designed to be an integral part of the Public 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, area of study/specialization, and methods classes and academic activities across subject areas and disciplinary approaches.

2.) The qualifying exam process provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate that s/he has the requisite core, specialization, and methods skills 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. 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 begin the qualifying exam process, the student should notify the program director and advising chair of their desire to begin the process. It is very useful to provide the advising chair with a summary of dissertation plans. This brief, 5-8 page pre-proposal (also referred to by some as the concept paper) will help the committee to write appropriate questions. An example of the paper format commonly used for this purpose is located on the program website at: https://policy.uark.edu/documents/pubp-concept-paper.pdf

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 prepare for these questions.

At least three months before the end of the semester, the student will ask their 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 with12 point font. Title and reference pages are in addition to the 15 pages. Again, one month will be given for the student to write their answers to the second set of questions. Although this exam is "open book," students should not communicate with other students or confer with anyone outside the exam committee concerning the exam during the exam process.

- One question will address competencies in research design and methods.
- One question will address the discipline of public policy (written based on the core policy courses).
- One question will address specialization competencies.
- 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 into 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(s) in one of the directions listed below. According to Graduate School regulations, all of the committee members must agree on the recommendation(s):

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

- 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 with which to help the student. 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 s/he 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. As stated previously, a concept paper would be very useful in formulating exam questions that are most relevant to the student's interests and needs.

THE DISSERTATION

Goals 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. The length of the entire process should take approximately 12-18 months.

A timeline for meeting the graduate school requirements maybe found in the UA's Graduate Student Handbook: https://uark.sharepoint.com/sites/GSIE-Graduate-Students/SitePages/Graduate Student Handbook/introduction.aspx

Candidates should also review, and keep current with, the UA's Academic Integrity Policy: http://honesty.uark.edu/

The Dissertation Chair and Committee

After 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. 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 level1 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. Students should send an email to policy@uark.edu with the name of the chair of the committee and the committee members. Students should also complete (e.g., names and signature) and submit to the program director the graduate school form (https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/graduate/current-students/forms.php) listing the committee membership.

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 by the chair of the dissertation committee to the rest of the committee for their feedback. 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 maybe 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 students and faculty to work together on such publications. Before such collaborative projects begin, clear and written agreement should be reached concerning what the specific roles of the student and faculty member will be (coauthors, 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 (and later, orally defend) their dissertation subject. Shortly after the creation of the dissertation committee, the PhD candidate will sit for their proposal defense and submit the PUBP Dissertation Defense Form: https://policy.uark.edu/current-students/current-student-docs/pubp-dissertation-proposal-fillable.pdf

In consultation with the dissertation committee chair, the candidate should review the appropriate Institutional Review Board policies and complete the related forms located here: https://research.uark.edu/index.php

The Dissertation Defense

Announcement of a doctoral candidate's dissertation defense must be submitted to the Graduate School and International Education (GSIE) at least TWO (2) WEEKS prior to the date of the defense. This should be set with the Assistant to the Associate Dean of the GSIE.

These dissertation defense sessions are important learning times for the defending student 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 s/he 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, s/he can participate by electronic means (video, telephone, computer, etc.). If a faculty member cannot participate at all, s/he can resign from the committee or request an exception from the Associate Dean of the GSIE.

Completing the Dissertation

Students who are completing dissertations should refer to the *Guide for Preparing Theses and Dissertations* (https://graduate-and-international.uark.edu/ resources/forms/thesis-dissertation-guide.pdf).

Also, a student must bring a preliminary copy of the 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.

Annual Dissertation Award

The public policy program may present a "Best Dissertation" award each year. 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 to the student and the dissertation chair in recognition of the work both have contributed. The nomination process is detailed below:

Nominations: Dissertation Committee Chairs may nominate dissertations in public policy from the previous academic year for this award. To be eligible, all degree requirements, including acceptance of the dissertation by the Graduate School must have been completed by June 30th.

Nomination Materials: Each nomination packet should include a letter from the chair explaining why the dissertation should receive this award and an abstract (without author designation and not to exceed six double-spaced pages) of the nominee's dissertation. As appendices, the nominee may include relevant charts or tables from the completed dissertation. In addition, the packet should contain one additional letter of reference (regarding the significance and overall quality of this research) selected by the nominee. The nominating dissertation chair should send (either by campus mail or via email) four copies of the nomination packet (nominating letter, abstract, appendices, and one letter of reference) to the Award Committee. Nominations will be accepted throughout the month of July. The winners will be notified typically by January 31st.

Criteria: The Award Committee will evaluate each nominee packet by a review of the methodological and substantive quality of the dissertation as well as its scholarly significance. The Award Committee may employ additional consultation when necessary.

Award: The top two dissertation award winners will split the $500 ($250 from the PUBP program and $250 from the Graduate School) total award.

Deadline: All materials must be received by the Award Committee members no later than Oct 15th. A smaller pool of finalists will be selected from these nominees with the Committee reviewing their full dissertations to determine the award recipient typically by December 15th.

Address: All nominations must be sent to the following address: Dr. Valerie Hunt via email vhunt@uark.edu, or campus mail: 428 Old Main.

Policy Career Options for Graduates

Those of you nearing completion of your Public Policy Ph.D. 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 teaching, 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; nongovernmental 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 your advisor and other faculty members. Go to conferences. Networking is very important for many job placements. Internships are another good way to network.